



## FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

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June 30, 2008

Tim Gruenke  
La Crosse County District Attorney  
333 Vine Street, Room 1100  
La Crosse, WI 54601

Re: Village of Holmen

Dear Mr. Gruenke:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation to request prosecution of appropriate officials of the Village of Holmen for violations of the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law. We believe multiple violations of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law have occurred during deliberations regarding the sale of the Star Hill property by the Village of Holmen to the Holmen Lions Club. The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national not-for-profit organization with more than 12,000 members, which works to protect the Constitutional principle of the separation between church and state.

In early March 2008, a resident of the Village of Holmen, Professor Eric Barnes, complained informally about the lighted star and cross structure on village property in Holmen. A local March 10 newspaper report indicated that the village was "dealing with the situation right now." The story also indicated that Village President, Mr. John Chapman, was "hesitant to talk about the issue at all." Shortly thereafter, on March 11, 2008, the Village Administrator/Clerk, Ms. Catherine Schmit, reported to the Finance and Personnel Committee, as was recorded in the meeting minutes of the closed session, that "some Lions Club representatives had expressed interest in the purchase of the property where the star is located on Star Hill. The Executive Committee of the Lions Club is scheduled to meet 3/17. Formal discussion of the issue is expected."

Subsequently, on March 13, 2008, as is indicated in the Board Proceedings, a representative of the Holmen Lions Club was present. Under the Finance and Personnel Committee listing, the Board Proceedings state that the Board decided to go into closed session per Wisconsin Statute 19.85(1)(e) to discuss "property sales/acquisition." Unlike the earlier closed session of March 11, 2008, no indication was made of the nature of the subject matter, except that it was a "lengthy discussion." These same Board Proceedings include the following under the "Other" listing:

President Chapman stated that the Holmen Lions Club submitted a letter of intent to the Village to purchase from the Village of Holmen sufficient land to encompass the display of the star and cross on Village property generally known as Star Hill assuming that a satisfactory purchase agreement can be agreed to between the Village and the Holmen Lions Club.

