

**Great River Landing Committee
of the City of Onalaska**

Thursday, March 15, 2018

1

1 The meeting of the Great River Landing Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order
2 at 5:15 p.m. on Thursday, March 15, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been announced
3 and a notice posted at City Hall.

4

5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Erik Sjolander, Ald. Harvey Bertrand,
6 Debbie Clarkin, Victor Hill, Joe Etten

7

8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Aspenson,
9 Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, local artisan Joyce Diveley, Onalaska Hilltopper
10 Rotary Club Sandy Kjome

11

12 Excused Absences: Mary Cody, John Burnett

13

14 **Item 2 - Approval of minutes from previous meetings**

15

16 Motion by Ald. Bertrand, second by Victor, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as
17 printed and on file in the City Clerk's Office.

18

19 On voice vote, motion carried.

20

21 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual)**

22

23 Erik called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of the
24 meeting.

25

26 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

27

28 **Item 4 – Update regarding the La Crosse Community Foundation Grant application for
29 the Great River Landing**

30

31 Katie said the city was not successful in its grant application for the interpretive signage project.
32 Katie said she attempted to contact the La Crosse Community Foundation and was told the
33 application “looked good.” However, Katie also said it appears the La Crosse Community
34 Foundation was not interested in funding the project at this time. Katie said she is awaiting
35 additional feedback to determine if the La Crosse Community Foundation believes the city
36 should reapply for the grant or come forward with a different project, “which is definitely
37 possible at a later date.”

38

39 Victor asked Katie if she knows who had received the grant.

40

41 Katie said she does not know.

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42
43 Joe asked Katie if the La Crosse Community Foundation only awards one grant.

44
45 Katie said no, telling Joe she believes there are three different opportunities to earn grants:
46 winter, late spring/early summer, and autumn. Katie said the city either can reapply for the
47 interpretive signage grant at a later date or proceed with a different project if she is able to obtain
48 feedback from the La Crosse Community Foundation.

49
50 Erik asked Katie how much time is required to compile the information for the grant application.

51
52 Katie told Erik the grant application is four to five pages and includes supporting documents.

53
54 Joyce asked Katie how the grant funding would have been utilized.

55
56 Katie said it would have been utilized for the design, manufacture and installation of five
57 interpretive signs focusing on the City of Onalaska's history and culture at the Great River
58 Landing.

59
60 Joe asked Katie if there is an intent to reapply for the grant.

61
62 Katie said it will depend on the feedback the La Crosse Community Foundation provides, noting
63 the Great River Landing Committee had prioritized projects at a past meeting and telling Joe that
64 perhaps those projects "can be floated and reapplied for" if the interpretive signage project is not
65 one the La Crosse Community Foundation is looking to fund.

66
67 **Item 5 – Consideration of Public Art at the Great River Landing**

68
69 Katie noted this item had been brought forward to the Common Council at its January 9 meeting
70 and said the Council wishes to see public art at the Great River Landing and also have the Great
71 River Landing Committee work on the process. Katie invited Joyce, who attended both the
72 December 14 Great River Landing Committee meeting and the January 9 Common Council
73 meeting, to provide the committee with an update.

74
75 Joyce said, "What the committee had done – and I think I might have briefly had this discussion
76 last time – was we had put together some criteria that we thought was important for the
77 sculpture, then we had the discussion here in the group from Victor about maybe looking further
78 out into doing almost like an RFP [Request for Proposals], which is what you will have to decide
79 what you want to do on that. What the committee decided we would do is we would get our
80 criteria together. Jennifer Jahr, who is also working with me and is an interior designer for ISG
81 in La Crosse, [and I] fine-tuned some ideas and got some of our criteria together. We decided at
82 that point we would solicit the local sculptors that we have because as much as I think Victor's

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83 idea is wonderful, it's such a fine line of, do we go global or do we keep it local? There's always
84 that big discussion. That's something you will have to decide."

85
86 Joyce noted that Ald. Bertrand had been instrumental in securing \$50,000 for seating at the Great
87 River Landing and said she had told City Engineer Jarrod Holter that perhaps there might be a
88 way to incorporate the seating into part of the sculpture. Joyce said, "A percentage of that
89 money might even be able to be used toward the sculpture because to just set benches out around
90 the edge with no shade, I don't know how many people are going to sit there." Joyce said she
91 and Jennifer had "fine-tuned some ideas" and then contacted three sculptors: Michael Martino,
92 David Gates, and Elmer Petersen. Joyce said all three were interested in speaking to the local
93 group she had helped put together about the sculpture. Joyce noted she had met with all three
94 sculptors and said, "What I did was I didn't want to show them a lot of what we had come up
95 with – maybe some basic concepts – but said, 'We want you to take this to the next level.' I told
96 them you don't have to have anything final. But our plan is to, in April, hopefully have almost
97 like a small interview process with each of them and see if the group would like to try to work
98 with one of them from that point forward and maybe get a rough cost estimate of what they think
99 something of this size or how intricate it would be would cost to do. Our timeline was basically,
100 again, that we would meet with them in April and try to make a decision so that if they can do
101 some final drawings by May [or] June we could spend summer and fall if we have to do any
102 fundraising. It would be built in the winter and potentially installed a year from May or
103 something like that.

104
105 There's nothing in stone yet. Whatever the committee decides to do, I think we'll keep moving
106 forward and present it to you. No one will have spent a lot of time on this. I did tell the
107 sculptors to think about it, but this is not in stone yet so we can't pay you anything to do this.
108 But of course they were all enthusiastic about the project."

109
110 Erik asked, "Is there a process that we do have to follow when it comes to putting this out there?
111 I know that with bids the city does have protocol it has to follow for that. I don't know if that
112 applies to somebody who wants to do something in a donated effort."

113
114 Victor asked if the sculptors are being asked to donate their time and talent, or if there will be
115 funds available to pay for the sculpture.

116
117 Joe asked if a certain amount of funding for art had been approved the Great River Landing in
118 2018.

119
120 Katie said no.

121
122 City Administrator Rindfleisch said the Common Council had approved funding for the Great
123 River Landing in the 2018 Capital Improvements Budget. City Administrator Rindfleisch said it

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124 was suggested and approved that the funding should come from the Room Tax Commission.
125 However, City Administrator Rindfleisch also noted the Room Tax Commission had not
126 approved funding for the Great River Landing and said, “At this point there are no funds set
127 aside either for art or for improvements at the Great River Landing for the 2018 Capital
128 Improvements year.”

129
130 Joyce said her group wanted to develop an idea, obtain an estimate of what a sculpture would
131 cost, and determine if the money could be obtained via fundraising. Joyce said she does not
132 believe the group was ever under the assumption the city would pay for the sculpture. Joyce
133 reiterated she had thought that perhaps a percentage of the Great River Landing funding could be
134 utilized if the sculpture were to be incorporated into the seating. However, Joyce also
135 acknowledged that the sculpture would be on City of Onalaska property and therefore be under
136 the city’s tutelage.

137
138 City Administrator Rindfleisch told the committee, “We’re not really taking bids, so that process
139 is out. You could conceivably do an RFP [inaudible] of what you have with the financing or the
140 donations, the interest on each product before deciding that. But it would be a gift to the city
141 which the city would have to accept. Or there’s a request to say, would the city be willing to put
142 [a certain amount of] dollars toward that which go into the capital plan for next year?” City
143 Administrator Rindfleisch told the committee it has flexibility as the Common Council appointed
144 the Great River Landing Committee to take the lead in this process.

145
146 Erik said whatever the Great River Landing Committee discussed should be channeled to the
147 Parks and Recreation Board for discussion as the Great River Landing is a park setting.

148
149 Joyce told Dan two of the sculptors had told her it is important to create a sculpture that does not
150 need a thorough cleaning every year. Joyce said, “The minimal maintenance is also going to be
151 a big criteria. I think they’re keeping that in mind because they are public sculptors that do
152 outdoor things.”

153
154 Joe inquired about the next step for the group.

155
156 Joyce reiterated she hopes she and the rest of the members of her group will be able to meet with
157 the three sculptors in April and “test the waters for fundraising in the early spring.” Any
158 fundraising would occur during the summer and the fall. The sculptor would create the sculpture
159 over the winter, with the goal of installing it at the Great River Landing in May 2019.

160
161 Joe said, “As far as the process, basically if they would get to a point where someone privately
162 had funds, it sounds like it would be a matter of channeling that proposal with the offer of
163 donating funds through us and the Common Council.”

164

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165 Katie said the Parks and Recreation Board also would be included.

166

167 Dan suggested to Joyce that she attend the March 26 Parks and Recreation Board meeting as the
168 board has debated this topic. Dan told Joyce the board “is completely split on this whole idea
169 down there” and said he can put this item on the meeting agenda. Dan said there are individuals
170 who want an item that children are able to touch and play on rather than simply something to
171 look at.

172

173 Victor, who also sits on the Parks and Recreation Board, told Joyce he had shared with board
174 members the discussion that had transpired at the December 14 Great River Landing Committee
175 meeting and said there are board members who want to see something that will appeal to families
176 due to how much the Great River Landing is being utilized.

177

178 Joyce said some of the criteria the group had established for public art was that it not block the
179 view, that it has a story to tell, that it is intriguing and approachable, and that it has “an element
180 of surprise.” Joyce told committee members there are limitations as to what can be done with an
181 outdoor piece and said, “The reason I wanted to do this committee was because I thought it
182 would bring in some new ideas. As an artist, when somebody comes to you with a project you
183 kind of keep doing the same things a lot of the time. ... What we were hoping to do was push
184 them off that comfort level and say, ‘This is Onalaska. We want something different.’ ... I think
185 this community is a unique community. I think I would like to see something unique that when
186 you see it you say, ‘I haven’t seen anything like that before.’ I also don’t want anything that’s
187 weird or offensive; we had that discussion, too. ... We did have a very long discussion about the
188 fact that art in a museum is totally different than public art. You either pay or choose to go look
189 at art in a museum, whereas with public art [many different individuals] will drive by it and we
190 hope none of them are offended by it.”

191

192 Victor told Joyce there are members of the Parks and Recreation Board who are adamant that
193 any piece of art at the Great River Landing is not controversial.

194

195 Joyce referred to a letter to the editor written by a City of Onalaska citizen who said the city has
196 the “perfect opportunity” to create something that will honor Native Americans due to the
197 current controversy over the 1960s-era Hiawatha statue located in the City of La Crosse’s
198 Riverside Park. Joyce said she had told the group she no longer wanted to be associated with a
199 public art project if its members wanted to pursue that avenue.

200

201 Victor said there is a way to do functional art without offending anyone, stating, “It can be an
202 apolitical piece that brings in everybody.”

203

204 Joyce said one of the ideas brought forth was to tell different stories on parts of the sculpture,
205 including stories of Tom Monsoor and the Ho-Chunk Nation. Joyce said she would approve of

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206 this approach and stated, “I don’t want it to be the impetus of what the whole thing is about a
207 certain person or a certain group of people.”

208

209 Victor said the interpretative signage would tell these stories “in a format that is a little more
210 tailored to the educational side of it.”

211

212 Joe asked if anyone from the Great River Landing Committee is involved with her group.

213

214 Joyce said no and welcomed anyone who wants to participate.

215

216 Debbie asked if the criteria for the public art is documented so that it may be shared and said she
217 believes both the Great River Landing Committee and the Parks and Recreation Board would
218 benefit by having this criteria.

219

220 Joyce offered to send the criteria to the City.

221

222 Ald. Bertrand asked Joyce if she would be willing to allow Don Smith speak to her group about
223 his ideas regarding public art.

224

225 Joyce said yes.

226

227 **Item 6 – Consideration of fundraising efforts by Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary Club for the**
228 **Great River Landing**

229

230 Katie said city staff had been approached about possible fundraising for the Great River Landing,
231 noting that the committee had compiled a priority list (seating, binoculars for viewing eagles,
232 swings). Katie said Sandy Kjome, Treasurer of the Hilltopper Rotary Club as well as Co-Chair
233 of the club’s “Spring Fling,” is promoting the fact the city is looking at “doing fundraising on the
234 path to purchase something that would go in the Great River Landing.”

235

236 Sandy told committee members the club’s “Spring Fling” will be held March 22 and the
237 Onalaska School Gardens is the beneficiary of the event. Sandy said, “We hope to use some of
238 the proceeds for something for the Great River Landing as well. Depending on what your needs
239 are, we have more than just our club as an opportunity because the other Onalaska club is
240 interested in being involved in it. Depending on what we come up with for the needs, I hope
241 we’re able to apply for a grant through our Rotary district to match whatever funds we come up
242 with. That would enable us to do an even larger project. ... We’re looking for what you’re
243 interested in. We don’t view this as a one-year commitment; we view this as an ongoing
244 commitment for multiple years.”

245

246 Victor said the funds could be utilized for the interpretative signage, which would allow the city

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247 to pursue other grant opportunities the La Crosse Community Foundation might be more willing
248 to fund.

249
250 Katie addressed the interpretative signage project, telling Sandy she had had a previous intern
251 with a history background through UW-La Crosse perform extensive research and focus on
252 different topics such as Native Americans, early settlement, the local logging industry, and Lake
253 Onalaska and the dam. Katie said the summaries on each topic are one to two pages long apiece
254 and told Sandy the city had applied for an \$18,000 grant to create five signs (\$3,600 apiece).
255 The funding would have allowed the city to work with a local sign company that would have
256 assisted with the design, creation and installation of the signage. Katie admitted that \$18,000 is a
257 significant amount of money, but also said, "If we continue with the same company and use the
258 same materials we could do it on a more phased approach. Maybe we only start with two signs,
259 or we do three signs. Obviously we would need to work with the Parks and Recreation Board in
260 terms of where they should be installed because they would be the ones responsible for
261 maintenance of these. I do remember at a previous meeting the thought was that if we did not get
262 [the interpretative signage] funded through the grant that would become the priority for the next
263 thing to be funded. I think the \$50,000 was for seating and amenities. I don't think it was
264 strictly for seating because binoculars is a function of what we would like to do down there.
265 That money has been budgeted, but not allocated. We don't necessarily know if it's going to be
266 allocated because that's up to the Room Tax Commission to make that decision."

267
268 Sandy inquired about the timeline for installing the signs.

269
270 Katie said the committee had hoped to find out now if it had received the grant, with the goal
271 being to design the signs over the next six months. Katie said she is unsure of how long it takes
272 to manufacture the signs, but the idea was to unveil them in the spring of 2019.

273
274 Sandy noted she and Katie also had discussed trees and told committee members one of the goals
275 for 2018 is that every Rotarian plant a tree. Sandy said the Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary Club
276 must apply for all 2019 grants by May 15 and noted everything would have to be installed and
277 finished within one year. Sandy said, "It might make more sense if we can get more details on
278 the signage and get the commitment from the other Onalaska [Rotary] club. I could then work
279 on the grant writing for next year. Between the two clubs and the grant, we could hopefully
280 cover that whole \$18,000. Then we would also use that as, if we have a big project like this and
281 we have our annual fundraiser next year we could really be promoting that is what that money
282 would be covering."

283
284
285 Erik asked Katie if she is asking if she should obtain permission to pursue having the Onalaska
286 Hilltopper Rotary Club assist with fundraising efforts.

287

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288 Katie said yes.

289

290 Erik said he believes it would be wise to do so.

291

292 Katie said she can bring forward a request for a prioritized project to the Common Council at its
293 April 10 meeting and told Sandy she could have an answer for her within one month.

294

295 Victor said, "I just like the idea that if they're doing things that are education-related, the money
296 should be used for something educational if we can make it work. It might make potential
297 donors say this is great for the kids, too."

298

299 Debbie addressed the interpretative signage and said, "I hope we're looking at an overall blend.
300 ... I don't know how we accomplish that."

301

302 Erik, who along with Debbie had attended the January 9 Common Council meeting, said it is his
303 understanding the Council wants to ensure that the Parks and Recreation Department is agreeable
304 with any discussions that occur at Great River Landing Committee meetings.

305

306 Joe asked Sandy if funds raised at the "Spring Fling" are what the Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary
307 Club has allocated to utilize for the next year. Joe also asked if there is a grant through the
308 Rotary Club that is matched.

309

310 Sandy said, "Depending on how profitable our fundraising is, that's how we'll allocate it."
311 Sandy said the other Onalaska Rotary Club also is interested in being involved with fundraising
312 efforts for the Great River Landing. Sandy said she is unsure if the other rotary club has a set
313 amount in mind it wishes to commit or if it also plans on fundraising once it knows what the item
314 is. Sandy said the rotary district will be more inclined to approve matching the Onalaska
315 Hilltopper Rotary Club's funds as this is an educational purpose.

316

317 Katie said the interpretative signage is a potential project that could be funded. Katie said the
318 Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary Club is an outside group that wishes to do a project for the city and
319 be involved with fundraising. However, Katie also said it ultimately is up to the City of
320 Onalaska to accept this offer.

321

322 Erik said the committee also will have to determine how to recognize organizations for their
323 contributions and determine if there is criteria that need to be followed.

324

325 Katie asked the committee to put forth a motion she can take forward to the Common Council at
326 its April 10 meeting.

327

328 Erik asked if both rotary clubs would be applying for the grant.

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329

330 Sandy told Erik she would be applying for the grant. Sandy told committee members, “If it isn’t
331 going to work for this year, I think [it will] next year for sure because we’ll know where we’re
332 at. Then I will have plenty of time to apply for the grant.” Sandy added that no funds may be
333 expended until the grant is approved.

334

335 Motion by Joe, second by Victor, to recommend to the Common Council approval to pursue
336 fundraising efforts with the Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary Club for projects such as interpretative
337 signage at the Great River Landing.

338

339 On voice vote, motion carried.

340

341 **Adjournment**

342

343 Motion by Joe, second by Debbie, to adjourn at 6:03 p.m.

344

345 On voice vote, motion carried.

346

347

348 Recorded by:

349

350 Kirk Bey