

**Parks, Recreation & Library Board
of the City of Onalaska**

Monday, September 28, 2020

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1 The Meeting of the Parks, Recreation & Library Board of the City of Onalaska was called to
2 order at 5:15 p.m. on Monday, September 28, 2020 at City Hall. It was noted that the meeting
3 had been announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

4
5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ald. Steven Nott, Andrea Benco, Patric
6 McGuane, Brian Udermann, Greg Marso, Ohbe Johnson, Jon Klock

7
8 Also Present: Mayor Kim Smith, City Attorney Amanda Jackson, Parks and Recreation Director
9 Dan Wick, Parks Supervisor Mark Hanson, Recreation Supervisor Kraig Koelbl, Omni Center
10 Sales Manager Tony Meyers, Omni Center Event Coordinator Justin Swartling, Ald. Dan
11 Stevens

12
13 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

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15 Motion by Brian, second by Ohbe, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as printed
16 and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

17
18 On voice vote, motion carried.

19
20 **Item 3 – Public Input (Limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

21
22 Andrea called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of
23 the meeting.

24
25 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

26
27 **Item 4 – Election of Vice Chair**

28
29 The Parks, Recreation & Library Board must elect a new Vice Chair due to the resignation of
30 Connor Nagy.

31
32 Motion by Brian, second by Ald. Nott, to nominate and elect Patric McGuane as Vice Chair of
33 the Parks, Recreation & Library Board.

34
35 On voice vote, motion carried.

36
37 **Item 5 – Approve contract extension for City Hall Elevator Maintenance Services to Otis**
38 **Elevator Company**

39
40 The city’s contract with Otis Elevator Company would be extended through 2023.

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2

42 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by Brian, to approve contract extension for City Hall Elevator
43 Maintenance Services to Otis Elevator Company.

44

45 On voice vote, motion carried.

46

47 **Item 6 – Review results and comments regarding the Great River Landing**
48 **Trail/Boardwalk Project**

49

50 The results are as follows, per PowerPoint:

51

52 **Primary uses:**

- 53 • Walking trails (87.9 percent)
- 54 • Watching sunset (63.1 percent)

55 **Frequency of use:**

- 56 • Monthly (43 percent)

57 **Site upgrades:**

- 58 • Replace the current facilities (66.7 percent)
- 59 • Sixty-five percent would like benches, shade structure, and bike racks
- 60 • Other items include: fishing pole holders, small boat dock, kayak dock accessible by
61 vehicle

62 **Preferred concept:**

- 63 • “The Curve” concept was preferred at 54.6 percent

64 **Top trail responses:**

- 65 • Boardwalk with fishing pier (49.8 percent)
- 66 • Boardwalk with leaning wall and open rail (47.3 percent)
- 67 • Wood boardwalk with pergola (38.5 percent)

68 **Top railing responses:**

- 69 • Wood railing (60.2 percent)
- 70 • Wooden guardrail with angled top rail (34.5 percent)
- 71 • Metal handrail with timber post (30.6 percent)

72 **Gathering space responses:**

- 73 • Stepped paths with lawn (55.4 percent)
- 74 • Fishing pier on boardwalk (42.1 percent)
- 75 • Cantilevered overlook with shade structure (41.6 percent)

76 **Shelter responses:**

- 77 • Open air shelter with two single stall restrooms (56.9 percent)
- 78 • Open air shelter (41.6 percent)
- 79 • Shelter similar to Great River Landing building (39.7 percent)

80

81 Discussion will occur at the October 26 Parks, Recreation & Library Board meeting.

Reviewed 09/30/2020 by Dan Wick

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82

83 **Item 7 – Approve Omni Center reopening plans**

84

85 a. Ice related activities

86

87 Per Dan’s PowerPoint presentation, the Omni Center received approval on July 6 to rent out ice
88 under the following conditions:

89

90 **Red**

- 91 • Twenty skaters and two staff members or coaches
- 92 • Discourage any drills that would allow for contact
- 93 • Skill building that does not involve contact

94 **Orange**

- 95 • Twenty-five skaters and five staff members or coaches
- 96 • All items above
- 97 • No matches allowed
- 98 • Follow WIAA summer sports guidance

99

100 Ald. Nott said, “I can’t support telling everyone to wear a mask at all times, no matter what
101 you’re doing. That to me makes no sense. It makes about as much sense to me as a restriction of
102 50 regardless of how big your facility is. These are just arbitrary, and I think the folks who are
103 coming up with them need to be thinking a little bit harder about, instead of taking easy routes
104 like this, I just have a real hard time with our [county] health department in La Crosse with a lot
105 of their requirements they’re putting down our neck. I don’t know that we have to follow every
106 single one of them to a ‘T.’ There is wiggle room. And Amanda just mentioned with the mask
107 that there is wiggle room.”

108

109 Brian stated that he believes the Omni Center should follow the local guidelines.

110

111 Greg told the board that he has been to the Omni Center a bunch over the last few months
112 because his son is a hockey player. He also stated that he thinks we need to provide some
113 activities locally, because if we don’t people will go other places. Greg feels if we give groups
114 opportunities they will be happy to have them, even if it is not the ideal situation.

115

116 Andrea asked Ald. Nott if he is interested in making a motion that the board direct both Dan and
117 Amanda to include exemption verbiage that would be in line with State of Wisconsin Governor
118 Tony Evers’ mandate.

119

120 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by Patric, to direct City Attorney Amanda Jackson and Parks and
121 Recreation Director Dan Wick to include mask exemption verbiage that is in line with State of
122 Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers’ mandate.

Reviewed 09/30/2020 by Dan Wick

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123

124 On voice vote, motion carried.

125

126 Andrea asked Dan if he is seeking a motion from the board to approve the guidelines and
127 forward them to the Common Council, or if the board needs to state that it supports the
128 guidelines before forwarding them to the Council.

129

130 Dan told Andrea it is a recommendation from the board and said, “With Amanda and I working
131 on trying to come up with exceptions, it’s going to come back to, does the Park Board want to
132 review this before it goes to Council? Do you say you’re good with what we come up with and
133 we’re OK so we can take it to Council for the next meeting? I think those are bigger questions
134 for the board on how they would like to do it. Right now we’re talking about the ice and the dry
135 floor.”

136

137 Andrea asked for board members’ input as to how they wish to proceed.

138

139 Brian said he does not need to see this item again.

140

141 Ohbe noted that ice activities will begin shortly and said, “The sooner we can have something in
142 place, the better.”

143

144 Patric said he trusts whatever Amanda and Dan come up with between them.

145

146 Jon asked, “Could you route it to the group and we can just give feedback if we have it rather
147 than bringing it back for a vote?”

148

149 Dan told Jon it would be possible to do so, but he also said that board members must exercise
150 caution that no one replies to all as then a walking quorum would be created.

151

152 Motion by Brian, second by Patric, to approve and forward to the Common Council the amended
153 recommendations for the Omni Center reopening plans for ice-related events upon completion of
154 verbiage of exemptions for mask wearing by City Attorney Amanda Jackson and Parks and
155 Recreation Director Dan Wick.

156

157 On voice vote, motion carried.

158

159 b. Dry floor activities

160

161 Per Dan’s PowerPoint presentation, it was noted the dry floor season at the Omni Center is
162 ending and only a few events remain. Staff is proposing the following capacities:

163

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- 164 • **Red:** 25 percent
- 165 • **Orange:** 50 percent
- 166 • **Yellow:** 75 percent
- 167 • **Green:** 100 percent

168

169 Another La Crosse County facility was told September 22 that it could open at 25-percent
170 capacity. The City of Onalaska received the following recommendation via email from the La
171 Crosse County Health Department on September 23: *“Minimize mass gatherings in businesses,
172 public buildings, and venues. Capacity should be limited to 25 percent of total capacity, or 50
173 people indoors (100 outdoors), whichever is less. Masks and physical distancing should be
174 required. Venues should consider cancelling or rescheduling any large gatherings planned in
175 the next two weeks.”*

176

177 Dan told board members 43 dry floor events, many of which were multiday events, have been
178 cancelled since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dan told board members a dry floor event
179 that was scheduled for this weekend has been cancelled, and he said there are a couple of private
180 rentals on the event calendar, as well as an event scheduled for late October. Dan read to board
181 members the information he had received from the La Crosse County Health Department and
182 said, “Unfortunately timing wasn’t the best of this. I’ll be honest: I had to get our Park Board
183 agenda out on Wednesday [September 23]. Our information, what you have in front of you, was
184 out. The information that came from the county came out after that. Amanda has done research
185 and worked on the process of that.”

186

187 Amanda told board members the other La Crosse County facility was given the information one
188 week prior, and she noted she had learned about it the day before, which was when city staff
189 reached out to La Crosse County.

190

191 Andrea said, “It seems to me we should all be subject to the same limitations in terms of
192 facilities and activities that are similar. Is it possible that they told us ‘no’ and they also told this
193 other facility ‘no’ because numbers had risen so dramatically? Do we know what the status of it
194 is now that numbers are maybe starting to come down again?”

195

196 Amanda told Andrea she believes she is correct that one facility had asked when La Crosse
197 County was barely at the Red level, and the City of Onalaska had asked on the day that perhaps
198 the largest number of COVID-19 cases had been reported in La Crosse County. Amanda said
199 perhaps both she and Dan should have a follow-up conversation with La Crosse County
200 regarding the consistency of guidelines for the Red level and if there will be more flexibility as
201 the number of COVID-19 cases decrease.

202

203 Dan told board members this has been a difficult topic for both Tony and Justin as they have
204 attempted to secure events for the Omni Center, and he said, “Trying to get some guidance that

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205 we're going to work with is what we're trying to look for and trying to do with this process.”

206

207 Andrea told Ald. Nott she assumes he has no issues regarding masks at dry floor events provided
208 whatever exemption that is allowed per Governor Evers' mandate is allowed.

209

210 Ald. Nott said he assumes it would be the same both for ice and dry floor events.

211

212 Andrea noted there would not be exertion issues at dry floor events.

213

214 Ald. Nott said it depends on the event, noting that volleyball tournaments are held at the Omni
215 Center.

216

217 Dan noted both volleyball and basketball tournaments are held at the facility.

218

219 Ald. Nott also noted there possibly could be medical exemptions and said there are individuals
220 whose physicians have told them they should not be wearing masks due to existing
221 cardiovascular issues.

222

223 Andrea asked board members if they wish to change the wording so that it matches the wording
224 for ice events.

225

226 Patric and Brian both said they would choose to be consistent.

227

228 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by Greg, to approve the Omni Center reopening plans for dry floor
229 activities and make the policies consistent with the policies for ice related activities.

230

231 On voice vote, motion carried.

232

233 **Item 8 – Report from Blufflands Steering Coalition**

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235 Dan told board members he had been unable to attend the September 16 Blufflands Coalition
236 meeting as he had to attend another meeting that had been scheduled for the same time.

237

238 Mayor K. Smith reported the following:

239

240 • The coalition's goal is to reach out to property owners who reside in areas where it would
241 be advantageous to expand the bluffland hiking trails. Coalition members hope to recruit
242 interested parties either to sell or donate land to the Blufflands Coalition.

243

244 • The Blufflands Coalition is a public/private coalition of individuals, which sometimes
245 makes it difficult to determine the best way to function. La Crosse County currently pays
a part-time employee who pursues property expansion that can improve the trail system.

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246 The goal is to expand support of this so that other municipalities may support the
247 individual's part-time position. There was no resolution at the meeting, and discussions
248 will continue.
249

250 **Item 9 – Report from Onalaska Enhancement Foundation**

251
252 No report.

253
254 **Item 10 – Director's Report**

255
256 a. COVID-19
257

258 Dan told board members the State of Wisconsin Department of Tourism had a grant application
259 for stimulus reimbursement for COVID-19 related items. Buildings Manager Brian Babiash,
260 Tony, and Justin compiled all the necessary information, and the application was submitted
261 earlier Monday. Dan expressed hope that the city possibly could be reimbursed for lost revenue
262 or expenses that have been incurred due to the pandemic.
263

264 b. Parks Update
265

266 Mark reported the following:
267

- 268
- 269 • Staff still is mowing, and also has started the winterization process at the Aquatic Center
270 and park shelters.
 - 271 • There is a new trail being installed in Green Coulee. There is a gravel road leading to the
272 new reservoir, and there is a trail beyond that point that has been graded. Staff cut in
273 water breaks and also is reseeding.

274 c. Recreation Update
275

276 Kraig reported the following:
277

- 278
- 279 • The fall recreation programs have begun, and the number of participants is satisfactory
280 despite the pandemic. Flag football is held two days a week instead of three. A 7-on-7
281 passing league has taken the place of tackle-bar. Youth volleyball (third through sixth
282 grades) is being held at the Omni Center, and there are more than 60 participants. A
283 soccer academy for kindergartners through fourth graders is held three days a week, and
284 there are 70 participants.
 - 285 • There is a girls basketball program at the Omni Center, and Onalaska High School boys
286 basketball coach Craig Kowal will be conducting a boys basketball camp at the facility.
 - The softball program, which consisted of five teams, ended its season September 24.

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- 287
- The adult kickball program has begun, and it will run through October. Three teams are participating, compared to eight in 2019.
- 288
- A virtual yoga class began in August and will run through late October. The instructor wants to hold another virtual class in November and December.
- 289
- The status of the adult volleyball leagues and the youth basketball programs is uncertain at this time based on the availability of gymnasiums at the city schools as well as how the schools will approach the winter season. The youth basketball programs might not be held until January and February, and there might be a reduction in the number of days per week the programs are held as well as a reduction in the amount of court time.
- 291
- The department is registering participants for the girls Suns basketball program (fourth through eighth grades).
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299 Dan told board members the Omni Center is the host site of a scheduled 12-team basketball
300 tournament on Halloween.

301

302 d. Aquatic Center Update

303

304 Dan told board members Badger Swim pools has completed the majority of its work on the
305 resurfacing project. A pool contractor worked on the facility's slides a week ago, and Dan said
306 he believes the contractor will return this week to complete the project.

307

308 e. Omni Center Update

309

310 Tony and Justin reported the following:

311

- There are volleyball and basketball programs occurring at the facility, and camps also were held at the Omni Center. Viterbo University also is utilizing the facility for some of its volleyball camps. The Tri-State Toe Picks are utilizing the facility, as are the hockey programs with 25 or fewer individuals.
 - Two large events that would have brought a significant amount of revenue to the Omni Center were cancelled. However, Tony said safety is more important than revenue at this time.
 - One large event is scheduled for March 2021, and another is scheduled for May 2021. Tony said people are asking questions, and also that groups are seeking consistency. Tony also said that while parties want Omni Center staff to follow the rules, it also seems as though changes are being made frequently. Tony added, "We want things to go in the right direction, but it's concerning and frustrating on our end, but we'll follow any rules and regulations that need to be done. The phone never stops ringing, and emails keep happening. People want to do things, and obviously we want to do things too to get them in our building. But we need this to get over as soon as possible."
 - The third "Market in the Park" of 2020 was held September 26. There were
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Reviewed 09/30/2020 by Dan Wick

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328 approximately 65 vendors at the event, compared to between 30 to 35 vendors for the
329 other two events. A decision was made not to have entertainment at the event as it would
330 have created areas in which individuals would congregate. The vendors and individuals
331 who attended the market provided positive feedback. Justin estimated that 95 percent of
332 the attendees had worn masks and practiced social distancing. Approximately five or six
333 purple recycling bins were filled with food donations for the food shelf, and
334 approximately \$50 in cash donations also was collected.

335

336 Andrea said she believes the board should readdress can collection sites that might not be
337 maintained as they should as they are attracting wasps. Andrea asked Dan to include that item
338 on the October 26 Parks, Recreation & Library Board meeting agenda.

339

340 Dan promised Andrea he would and noted a member of the community had expressed concerns
341 about the can collection site at the Omni Center.

342

343 Andrea asked if there still is a can collection site at Community Park.

344

345 Dan said no.

346

347 f. Library

348

349 Dan told board members it has been difficult to find an individual to clean the facility, adding he
350 believes a potential candidate had been interviewed earlier Monday. Omni Center staff has been
351 utilized to clean the facility.

352

353 Dan informed board members he had inadvertently neglected to start recording the meeting until
354 approximately 35 minutes ago and apologized for his mistake.

355

356 **Adjournment**

357

358 Motion by Jon to adjourn at 6:47 p.m.

359

360 Andrea adjourned the meeting.

361

362

363 Recorded by:

364

365 Kirk Bey