

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

Monday, May 11, 2020

1

1 The Special Meeting of the Parks, Recreation & Library Board of the City of Onalaska was
2 called to order at 5:16 p.m. on Monday, May 11, 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, Brian
6 Udermann, Connor Nagy, Jon Klock, Ohbe Johnson, Patric McGuane

7

8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick,
9 Parks Supervisor Mark Hanson, Recreation Supervisor Kraig Koelbl, Buildings Manager Brian
10 Babiash, Omni Center Sales Manager Tony Meyers, Event Coordinator Justin Swartling

11

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

13

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

16

17 On voice vote, motion carried.

18

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

20

21 **Item 4 – Election of Officers**

22

23 A. Chairperson

24

25 Motion by Brian Udermann, second by Ald. Nott, to nominate and elect Andrea Benco as
26 Chairperson of the Parks, Recreation & Library Board.

27

28 On voice vote, motion carried.

29

30 B. Vice Chairperson

31

32 Motion by Brian Udermann, second by Patric, to nominate and elect Connor Nagy as Vice
33 Chairperson of the Parks, Recreation & Library Board.

34

35 On voice vote, motion carried.

36

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

38

39 Andrea called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of
40 the meeting.

41

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2

42 **Item 5 – Approve the Omni Center Arena #2 Chiller repairs to Trane at a cost not to**
43 **exceed \$5,584.00**

44

45 Dan told board members the chiller in Arena No. 2 began consistently deactivating in early
46 March, and he noted the unit has done this in the past. Dan said the building maintenance staff
47 has always been able to repair and reactivate the unit, and he told board members the unit would
48 deactivate at odd hours, including overnight when there was no staff in the Omni Center. It was
49 not possible to finish the ice season in Arena No. 2 due to the chiller malfunctioning. Trane
50 Company engineers assisted staff in troubleshooting the chiller’s issues. Dan noted board
51 members’ packets include a copy of a proposal from Trane to repair the chiller at a cost of
52 \$5,584.

53

54 Brian Babiash told board members that Trane had sent engineers to the Omni Center on a day
55 when three staff members were not working, and they spent approximately three hours at the
56 facility. The engineers examined the chiller’s programming, and Brian told board members he
57 believes programming was the source of some of the unit’s issues. Brian noted there also were
58 issues with the fan that the engineers discovered via the programming. Brian told board
59 members he is not certain that St. Cloud Refrigeration, the Rochester, Minnesota-based company
60 that services the new chiller in Arena No. 1, is that familiar with the chiller in Arena No. 2.
61 Brian said, “Until we started having issues and they started really having to come through with it,
62 they kind of wanted to back away from it. We were really lucky that a couple of the guys were
63 willing to come and spend some time with us and share their knowledge. One gentleman
64 actually was there when they installed the chiller. I think that that was a help for us.”

65

66 Andrea inquired about the funding source to repair the chiller.

67

68 Dan told Andrea the chiller must be repaired so that there may be ice in Arena No. 2, and he
69 said, “It’s a cost we are going to have to bear. We’ll have to find it within our budget and
70 probably push off some other projects. If we want to have ice and we want to get this building
71 open as soon as we can to get some activities going on, we need to make it happen.”

72

73 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by Jon, to approve Omni Center Arena #2 Chiller repairs to Trane
74 at a cost not to exceed \$5,584.00.

75

76 Andrea told board members she will be abstaining from voting.

77

78 On voice vote, motion carried, 6-0, with one abstention (Andrea).

79

80 **Item 6 – Update on the COVID-19 and plans moving forward**

81

82 a. Aquatics

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83
84 Dan told board members that he and his staff are the biggest advocates for trying to open the
85 Aquatic Center for the 2020 season, and he stated, “We believe the pool is a tremendous
86 community asset for families, friends, and community members within Onalaska.” Dan said he
87 and his staff must take many factors under consideration due to the pandemic as the 2020 season
88 approaches. Dan noted he had participated in a telephone call on April 28 with a representative
89 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and also that he has been obtaining
90 information from the CDC’s website. Dan said staff needs to consider the following guidelines
91 given out by the CDC:

- 92
- 93 • Social distancing must be maintained in the pool, on deck, and between the public and
 - 94 staff.
 - 95 • Encourage the use of cloth face coverings, as feasible (not in the water).
 - 96 • Frequent disinfecting/cleaning of common touch points required.
 - 97 • Lifeguard duties, who are professional rescuers, will not change. Lifeguards will not be
 - 98 responsible for monitoring social distancing, handwashing, etc.
 - 99 • The CDC highly recommends hiring additional staff to monitor and enforce social
 - 100 distancing.

101
102 Dan told board members the Wisconsin Economic Development Commission had provided staff
103 with the following guidelines for the “Wisconsin Guidance on Preparing Workplace for COVID-
104 19 – Entertainment & Amusement:”

- 105
- 106 • Rides or amusement that cannot be sanitized between uses (for example, play equipment
 - 107 in common places) should be closed. Dan said this is a key component for the sand play
 - 108 area at the Aquatic Center, which would need to be kept closed based on this
 - 109 recommendation.
 - 110 • High-contact areas such as doorknobs, buttons, counters, armrests, bleachers and stair
 - 111 rails should be cleaned frequently, or after each use, if feasible.
 - 112 • At swimming pools and waterparks, staff must monitor table and chair usage and sanitize
 - 113 chair and tables surfaces between patrons.
 - 114 • Lifeguards must not be assigned to additional duties.
 - 115 • When exchanging paper and coin money, do not touch your face afterward. Ask
 - 116 customers to place cash on the counter rather than directly into your hand. Place money
 - 117 on the counter (not in hand) when providing change back to customer. Clean counter
 - 118 between each customer at checkout.
 - 119 • Programmed events should be limited to 10 persons at a time in any given space;
 - 120 expanding to 50 people in Phase 2; and unlimited in Phase 3 of the Badger Bounce Back
 - 121 Plan.
 - 122 • There must be an adequate number of attendants on hand to ensure proper distancing and

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123 limit sizes to 10 people or families.

124

125 Dan next addressed swimming lessons, stating the American Red Cross recommends either not
126 doing or having parents or other families members enter the pool with levels up to Level 3 of
127 swimming lessons. Dan noted the department offers parent/tot swimming lessons (6 months to 3
128 or 4 years old), and he said there is one instructor to every six to eight children in the pool. Dan
129 said the American Red Cross recommends having a parent or another family member be in the
130 pool with participants while staff members remain on deck until they attain a level where it is not
131 necessary to have an instructor in the water with them.

132

133 Dan next addressed the following concerns expressed by staff:

134

- 135 • Safety of all staff and public
- 136 • Ability to monitor and enforce social distancing
- 137 • Limited number of attendance – Phase 1 and 2 of Badger Bounce Back. The Aquatic
138 Center could not open under Phase 1. Fifteen staff members would be needed, and staff
139 could not consider opening until Phase 2. Only 35 individuals could be allowed into the
140 pool at a given time.
- 141 • Limit waterpark attractions, meaning the sand play area would be closed (social
142 distancing); slides and diving board may not open due to proper disinfecting necessary;
143 and the concessions stand would be closed
- 144 • Ability to secure PPE necessary for staff
- 145 • Financial risk of low attendance mixed with additional cleaning and disinfecting logistics

146

147 Dan next addressed the budget forecast and told board members staff had utilized the 2020
148 budget as a proposal in an attempt to determine a cost per day to operate. Dan highlighted the
149 following financial figures and information for aquatics:

150

151 A \$543.64 cost per day for lifeguards (head lifeguard, lifeguard, aquatics specialist).

152 A \$1,121.40 cost per swimming lessons session. Lesson revenue is \$1,344, with an average of
153 eight participants per class (\$672 for being at 50 percent participation).

154 A \$364.25 average per day for concessions.

155 75 percent of the Aquatic Center staff would be required to maintain social distancing, work the
156 front desk, and clean and sanitize.

157

158 Dan noted the current “Safer At Home” order issued by Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers runs
159 through Tuesday, May 26 and said Wednesday, June 10 is the earliest the Aquatic Center could
160 open as two weeks would be needed to fill and treat the pool, and also to train staff. Dan told
161 board members Wednesday, June 24 and Monday, July 6 are alternative opening days if
162 Governor Evers does not lift the “Safer At Home” order or Phase 1 is still in effect. Dan
163 reminded board members the concessions stand and the slides would be closed as part of the

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164 presentation he has brought forward.

165

166 Dan addressed budget revenue, telling board members staff had anticipated \$78,190 in revenue
167 due to pool passes and daily admissions based on an 89-day operating season. The Aquatic
168 Center would operate for 81 days if it opens June 10; 68 days if it opens June 24; and 56 days if
169 it opens July 6. Dan said staff had utilized a 25-percent attendance rate based on social
170 distancing to calculate the following expected revenues:

171

- 172 • \$17,790.42 for 81 days of operation
- 173 • \$14,935.17 for 68 days of operation
- 174 • \$12,299.55 for 56 days of operation

175

176 Dan next showed board members a copy of the overall budget and said he projects a \$130,329.47
177 loss for 2020 if the Aquatic Center opened June 10 based on expenses, which would be the same;
178 a reduced cost for seasonal staff; reduced revenue; swimming lessons revenue; and no
179 concessions revenue. There would be a loss of \$122,565.99 if the Aquatic Center opened June
180 24; and a \$115,399.70 loss if the Aquatic Center opened July 6. There would be an anticipated
181 loss of \$65,702 if the Aquatic Center were to remain closed in 2020. Dan said that figure could
182 decrease as the gas, water and electric bills will be unknown at that time. Dan told board
183 members the Common Council meets Tuesday and said he believes they need to recommend
184 which direction to take.

185

186 Andrea noted she is working for an essential business and is out in the public, and she told board
187 members that while she and her fellow employees are attempting to follow the recommendations
188 the state has brought forth in terms of social distancing, wearing a mask and cleaning, at this
189 time they have not seen everyone in the general public following all those guidelines. Andrea
190 said the individuals who are not following the guidelines have proven to be challenging when
191 asked to, for example, adhere to social distancing guidelines. Andrea said, “My concern is if we
192 are expecting our seasonal pool staff to do that, we need to provide them with some additional
193 incentive, perhaps in the way of hazard pay. These are young people who may not be able to
194 stand up to some of the bullies who are out there.”

195

196 Patric told board members the campground at Fort McCoy will be reopened and said he believes
197 society needs to start migrating back to normalcy at some point, but with different precautions.
198 Patric said he believes individuals “are going to vote with their feet and their wallets if they’re
199 not willing to accept the risk of going swimming ... because you have a lot of people essentially
200 sharing a big bathtub. That’s obviously not something anybody is too excited about at this point
201 in time, but the dates you’re projecting are a little bit out there, and I don’t know how people are
202 going to feel about that. There are a lot of variables to factor in. I think it’s a great idea to have
203 a plan and say, ‘Here is what we’re proposing to do.’ ... That said, all bets could be off
204 depending on an outbreak next week or something of that nature. All you can do is prepare to be

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205 successful, and I think you've laid that out pretty well. ... At some point people are going to
206 want to get back out and start recreating." Patric told board members Fort McCoy is anticipating
207 a 30- to 40-percent decrease in business at its campground because people might be
208 uncomfortable with not having masks or personal protective equipment, or wondering if
209 someone close by has the coronavirus. Patric added, "The best you can do is plan. I think you
210 did a good job with that."

211
212 Ald. Nott said he is not certain if Dan has established a deadline as to when a decision must be
213 made whether or not the Aquatic Center will open for the season and told board members, "I
214 think we need to wait at least one more week, if that's at all possible. I base that on the
215 Wisconsin Supreme Court is going to be providing a decision on the lawsuits the state was facing
216 that specifically reference the Governor's emergency powers. I have no idea what they're going
217 to say on that, but I'd like to know before we make this decision. Two, I'm hopeful that some of
218 our leaders are going to start looking at actual data instead of continuing to use the modeling
219 they had to use by no choice early on, but are still using now. They are so flawed, and hopefully
220 they'll come up with some reasonable solutions because people are going to have get on with
221 their lives, and I think there will be people interested, including people going to the pool.

222
223 Our hands may be tied on this in the end and we have no choice. The numbers you're showing,
224 if some of the guidance doesn't change, I really don't see how we can get out of now closing the
225 pool. It makes me sick. ... I think we should wait at least a week to make a decision because I
226 would like to know what the Supreme Court comes out with. I'm expecting that decision
227 sometime very soon. I'm actually surprised they haven't announced it yet."

228
229 Andrea asked Patric if he has received inquiries from individuals who want to utilize the Fort
230 McCoy campgrounds this summer, stating it is her view that at this time the public is not excited
231 about reengaging. Andrea noted there are downtown businesses that have been attempting to
232 open for the last week to 10 days, and she said individuals are not coming out for whatever
233 reason.

234
235 Patric told Andrea the campgrounds were closed down in April not for business-related reasons,
236 but rather because the base might have needed them for military reasons. Patric noted
237 individuals have booked reservations and paid for spots, and he said individuals will be utilizing
238 recreational vehicles and cabins as the campsites were eliminated. Patric described it as being
239 "very controllable" and said "the interest is definitely there for us." Patric noted Fort McCoy
240 had budgeted based on a 30-percent drop-off because there are individuals, including the elderly
241 and others who are in high-risk categories, who are not yet willing to take the risk.

242
243 Patric said, "The information is changing daily, and I like what Steve said. We have the end of
244 the 'Safer At Home' [order] on the 26th, and I'll bet we get a Supreme Court ruling sooner than
245 that that will kind of let you know where you stand before we march out with any plans. ... The

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246 best thing to do [is to say], ‘Here is a plan. With the information we have today, this is our best
247 plan.’ Long answer, but yeah, I think there’s going to be a faction that wants to come out and do
248 these things. They’re going to want to go swimming – maybe not to the degree you originally
249 budgeted for, but I still think the demand will be there.”

250

251 Ald. Nott noted other states either are easing or entirely removing restrictions, which he said
252 shows there is a significant portion of society that wishes to move on with their lives. Ald. Nott
253 said that while he cannot say which percentage of the public will choose to continue staying at
254 home, he believes a significant number of people will want to swim and utilize recreation areas.

255

256 Patric said, “At this point, it has to go back to true data. If there’s a spike and numbers are still
257 up, I would anticipate some kind of measures being in place. It just comes down to personal
258 choice, and that will govern whether businesses flourish or not. The pool is one of those.”

259

260 Andrea asked Dan if the city annually has a financial loss with the Aquatic Center.

261

262 Dan said yes.

263

264 Ald. Nott noted Dan’s model shows an additional loss in excess of \$100,000 due to the factors he
265 had previously mentioned.

266

267 Dan noted the Aquatic Center lost approximately \$77,000 in 2018, and \$90,000 in 2019. Dan
268 also pointed out the Aquatic Center was budgeted to lose \$79,500 as part of the 2020 Budget.
269 Dan told board members the Aquatic Center is projected to lose \$130,000 if it opens June 10,
270 which means the facility would lose an additional \$50,000 to what was budgeted through the
271 budget process. The facility is projected to lose an additional \$42,000 to what was budgeted if it
272 opens June 24. The facility is projected to lose \$35,000 to what was budgeted if it opens in July.

273

274 Andrea said that is with the assumption the Aquatic Center would be allowed to remain open at
275 whatever level it opened.

276

277 Dan said yes.

278

279 Patric asked if the price adjustments for patrons had been included in the calculations, and what
280 is being shown includes the adjusted pricing.

281

282 Dan said yes.

283

284 Ald. Nott said the losses are based on the assumption the severe restrictions Dan had mentioned
285 earlier will have to continue.

286

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287 Dan said yes, based on the guidance and recommendations staff was given.

288

289 Patric asked Dan, "You were going to lose. Now it's just we're saying, are you going to lose
290 more?"

291

292 Dan said yes.

293

294 Patric noted the pool at Fort McCoy has been closed nearly two months and said this is the time
295 to keep the pool closed if the city ever were going to do so. Patric also said he would like to see
296 how the city can minimize the losses by not opening the Aquatic Center versus opening it.

297

298 Dan told Patric the city would lose approximately \$65,000, or approximately \$15,000 less than
299 what was budgeted, by keeping the Aquatic Center closed in 2020.

300

301 Jon said he agrees with Ald. Nott about delaying a decision and waiting to see the outcome of the
302 Wisconsin Supreme Court's decision, stating he believes attempting to enforce social distancing
303 while individuals are in the pool seems like an impossible task. Jon also said he agrees with
304 Andrea in that he does not know how teenagers can be expected to enforce social distancing.

305

306 Ohbe said he would not aim for a June 10 opening and suggested seeing how events play out and
307 then potentially opening the Aquatic Center at a later date.

308

309 Andrea asked if the Aquatic Center is the only area pool that has not closed.

310

311 Dan told Andrea the City of La Crosse has closed all its pools for the 2020 season, and he also
312 told her staff participates in weekly calls with officials from both the Village of Holmen and the
313 City of Sparta. Dan said, "Everybody is in this thinking pattern, looking pattern and taking it to
314 committees over this next little bit."

315

316 Andrea asked if it would be possible to perform repairs, augmentations or enhancements that
317 might not otherwise be possible if the Aquatic Center did not open this summer.

318

319 Dan told Andrea the city has a \$250,000 pool contract for resurfacing the pool's interior, and as
320 of now the project is scheduled to begin September 7. Dan said he has spoken with the pool
321 contractor, and he told board members the contractor cannot schedule the project until he knows
322 whether or not the Aquatic Center will be open. Dan said the contractor potentially could do the
323 project either in June or July.

324

325 Brian Udermann asked Dan if the Common Council is seeking a definitive decision from the
326 board.

327

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328 Dan told Brian Udermann the city's budget is a policy document and said if the board wishes to
329 continue moving forward it will be necessary to request additional funding from the Council to
330 fund the operation of the Aquatic Center. Dan said he believes the board should pass on some
331 insight to the Council, and he told board members several communities in the state are having
332 the same discussion the board is this evening. Dan said, "They are leaving it up to their Park and
333 Rec departments and city administration to make the call to open or close. We are trying to get
334 the board's input, and [Tuesday] night get the Council's input, as we move forward." Dan told
335 board members they would have an opportunity to make a decision if the board were to meet
336 May 18, but the Common Council's next scheduled meeting following Tuesday's meeting is
337 June 9, meaning "you're pushing it late into the pool season on what our options are."

338

339 Connor said he believes it would be late in the season to open the Aquatic Center either June 24
340 or July 6 for people who might work over the summer at the pool. Connor also asked Dan if
341 staff has a recommendation as to whether or not the pool should open.

342

343 Dan told Connor, "I think the biggest process we looked at is the safety of our Aquatic Center
344 staff and Aquatic Center users, and to decrease the potential spread of COVID-19. With the
345 limited attendance that is outlined in the Badger Bounce Back being in Phase 1 10 people or less,
346 we can't even open because our lifeguards and staff maintain more of that. In Phase 2 of 50
347 people or more, we could have at most 35 people at one time in the pool. In Phase 3, where all
348 business activity and gatherings with minimal protective and measures, I really believe Phase 3
349 is the first we can open the pool and to have a lot of people into the facility. And with the
350 increased financial responsibility onto the city, it may be in the best interest that we decide not to
351 open this year because of those factors.

352

353 If we push back the opening, right now we're in a very good spot for our lifeguards and staff at
354 the pool. We're probably in the best shape we've ever been. My concern is if we don't open
355 until the 24th of June or July 6th, how many of those staff members have gone and searched for
356 other employment, if there's other employment to be had. All of a sudden we get to that point
357 and we don't have lifeguards to be able to open the doors at that time."

358

359 Brian Udermann said that while he understands the point both Ald. Nott and Patric had made
360 regarding waiting to see what the Wisconsin Supreme Court decides, the city almost gains
361 \$10,000 by not opening the Aquatic Center. Brian also said he believes a significant amount of
362 additional training would need to occur in order to follow the CDC's guidelines, and he told
363 board members, "Just taking into consideration the length of time that the pool would be open
364 with a later opening ... I agree that folks would probably be looking for different jobs if it
365 doesn't open until July because they're going to be losing money if they're not working and
366 there are other jobs available. ... I'm leaning toward potentially saying to not open the pool."

367

368 Jon asked if the CDC's incoming guidance will include information as to whether or not the

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369 virus is able to live in chlorinated water.

370

371 Dan told Jon the virus does not live in the water and said the safest place to be in an aquatic
372 facility is in the water. Dan said the pool's other locations, such as the deck, slides and play
373 area, are the areas of concern.

374

375 Jon asked if the chlorinated water that runs through the slides counts as disinfecting them.

376

377 Dan said while the chlorinated water can serve as a disinfectant in the slides, the virus can exist
378 on the touch points.

379

380 Connor asked if the city's contract with Carrico Aquatics would be affected if the Aquatic Center
381 remained closed this summer.

382

383 Dan told Connor no and said Carrico Aquatics representatives have told each community the
384 company will work with them one on one. Dan said he has told Carrico Aquatics representatives
385 he would not put any water into the pool until he knew it could be opened.

386

387 Ald. Nott said he still thinks it is premature to make a decision this evening as "everything we're
388 doing with these models for the cost is based upon the existing restrictions. I don't know that we
389 have to make that decision right now. Certainly if those restrictions stay, we need to shut this
390 pool. I believe that. But I think that we can wait for one or two weeks to make this decision –
391 certainly no later than the first of June – and a make a decision that is more informed based upon
392 the realities at that time."

393

394 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted the board is serving in an advisory role to Dan, and
395 ultimately to the Common Council if there is a budgetary change. City Administrator
396 Rindfleisch also noted the \$79,548 loss Dan has shown as part of the approved 2020 budget is a
397 loss that is subsidized by the General Fund, and he said any amount that would be an expected
398 loss as the city is projecting in excess of that financial figure would need to be a budget transfer
399 over which the Common Council would have to take authorization. The Common Council
400 would decide the source of the remainder of the funds.

401

402 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that while he agrees a decision possibly could wait so that
403 the city could see what the restrictions are that ultimately could change the costs involved, he
404 also reminded board members the policy document from the Common Council is the budget
405 document. At this point, the Council is budgeting a subsidy from the General Fund totaling
406 slightly less than \$80,000. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, "Anything under that, staff is
407 obligated to close at this point in time." City Administrator Rindfleisch told board members if
408 they vote to attempt keep the Aquatic Center open in 2020 and request an increased subsidy, Dan
409 has the ability to continue forecasting based on the changing requirements. City Administrator

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410 Rindfleisch said the board would have to request additional General Fund funding from the
411 Council to operate the Aquatic Center.

412

413 Ald. Nott said he understands the board either has to request additional funding, which he stated
414 he would be reluctant to do, or the Aquatic Center must stay closed in 2020. Ald. Nott said he
415 does not think that decision point is today.

416

417 Andrea stated that while she wants to see the Aquatic Center open so that individuals may utilize
418 it, she also noted she had gone to Menards last week and seen an armed guard wearing body
419 armor stationed at the door to ensure that everyone who entered the store was wearing a mask.
420 Andrea noted it is a mask recommendation and not a mandate, and she said she believes that
421 when the Aquatic Center opens, “as long as that mentality is out there, there’s the potential for
422 confrontation, and there’s also the potential for abuse of people who have different opinions.
423 Even if they open anything up, there is still that conflict potential. And again, I worry about the
424 fact a lot of our staffing at that facility is young. Some of them may be awesome and have some
425 good people experience, but the people I’ve been encountering lately are a little bit more
426 excitable than typically. I just worry about that in general for this particular facility.”

427

428 Dan told board members staff is looking for direction and that it is possible to wait to make a
429 decision. Dan said staff members attempt to keep the Aquatic Center staff informed, and he told
430 board members this was the perfect opportunity to obtain their input prior to Tuesday’s Council
431 meeting. Dan told board members if they wish to wait one more week, they may discuss this
432 item on May 18, or it would come back to him and staff to make a recommendation regarding
433 closing the Aquatic Center at a later time, if that is what needs to occur based on what is
434 happening. Dan noted staff also has been communicating with the La Crosse County Health
435 Department and receiving input regarding how the Badger Bounce Back process will work.

436

437 Andrea reminded board members COVID-19 still will be present “when this all gets opened up
438 by policies ... and we’re going to have to contend with it one way or another. Right now, it’s
439 there and it seems to be winning. We can be wise and we can be personally responsible and go
440 on with a lot of activities, but I don’t know that that means we’re going to have enough people to
441 make this facility financially viable for this summer. My feeling right now is given the way
442 circumstances are and the restrictions that are still looming, it would be an inappropriate use of
443 taxpayer dollars to try to open this up to serve such a small number of people. I could see us
444 having conflict because we can’t get everybody in who wants to come in. And how do we
445 manage the number of people who can enter the pool if we can only have 50 people at a time. It
446 seems like the least negative way would be to just close it and try to turn it into a positive by
447 creating something from this opportunity to maybe shuffle things around. But if we can wait, I
448 guess I don’t see enough change coming if we wait to make me comfortable risking what we
449 might be risking by opening.”

450

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451 Ald. Nott reminded board members the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling could change things
452 radically at the state level. Ald. Nott noted he had read the transcripts of the arguments and said
453 it is very clear to him the court's decision will not be status quo. Ald. Nott said he believes there
454 will be changes and told board members those changes could be very radical. Ald. Nott told
455 Andrea he agrees with her that the city's only choice will be to close the pool if there are no
456 changes. Ald. Nott reiterated he believes it is premature to make that decision until the
457 Wisconsin Supreme Court renders its decision.

458
459 Jon said the legal community expects the Wisconsin Supreme Court to strike down Governor
460 Evers' "Safer At Home" order, but "what that changes from a city operational standpoint is up to
461 the Council." Jon said Gundersen Health System's plan will remain the same regardless of
462 whether or not the "Safer At Home" order exists, and he told board members the Council should
463 be prepared to establish guidelines independent of what used to be present if the order is struck
464 down and the city wants to open the pool. Jon said that while he does not object to waiting,
465 logistics might make it illogical to wait. Jon noted the pool would not be filled until late June if
466 the Council does not meet again until June 9, and he said, "It seems like by pausing we're
467 essentially saying the only option is July 6th. That's the second-best financial picture of four."
468 Jon also said he does not believe Aquatic Center employees will wait until July for a job.

469
470 Ald. Nott asked if it would be possible to call a Special Parks, Recreation & Library Board
471 meeting.

472
473 Andrea said it is, noting that is what had happened with tonight's meeting.

474
475 Dan told Ald. Nott the board's next regularly scheduled meeting is May 18 and said, "If we want
476 to wait, we can do it at that time." Dan reminded board members this item appears on Tuesday's
477 Council agenda as a Non-Consent item, and he told Ald. Nott he will be the one to address this
478 item Tuesday night.

479
480 Jon asked if the Common Council also would have to have a special meeting.

481
482 City Administrator Rindfleisch said the Council would have to take action on a budget
483 amendment either at a special meeting in May or during the June meeting cycle.

484
485 Jon asked if the board may request funding now and make a decision whether or not to open later
486 in an attempt to streamline the process.

487
488 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Jon, "It's not standard practice the city does. We can't really
489 levy a tax for something that's not spent. I'd be more comfortable with a request of certain
490 money with the intention of spending that said money."

491

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13

492 Andrea said it is her understanding that she, Brian Udermann, Connor, and perhaps Ohbe might
493 be a little more leery about opening the Aquatic Center given what is known at this time. Andrea
494 said it appears Ald. Nott and perhaps Patric are eager to proceed if the “Safer At Home” order is
495 struck down.

496

497 Jon said he would say not to open the Aquatic Center if the board must decide tonight. However,
498 his opinion might change if the board can wait.

499

500 Patric told Andrea he feels the same way.

501

502 Andrea said if the board has to decide tonight she would vote to keep the pool closed because the
503 city cannot responsibly open it. Andrea asked board members if they wish to make a formal
504 recommendation.

505

506 Motion by Connor to recommend closing the Aquatic Center for the 2020 season.

507

508 Connor noted that in a best-case scenario the board would have to request \$60,000 if the pool
509 were to open in June and said it is a significant amount of money, especially when the city likely
510 is facing a shortage of user fees in other departments or different sources of revenue. Connor
511 also said he believes several individuals from the City of La Crosse would come to the Aquatic
512 Center if the Phase 3 stage is reached, leading to overcrowding and safety concerns for staff.
513 Connor asked Dan if his budget includes installing Plexiglas barriers at the concessions stand.

514

515 Dan told Connor the concessions stand and slides would not be open, and those staff members
516 would be reallocated to assist with social distancing. Dan said, “They could come back and say
517 we could open at no restrictions. Then we could potentially go back and open up other parts of
518 the facility.”

519

520 Motion by Connor, second by Andrea, to recommend closing the Aquatic Center for the 2020
521 season.

522

523 Ald. Nott stated that he will vote ‘no’ on the motion simply because he believes it is too early to
524 make a decision.

525

526 Jon said he believes it is difficult to project the financial aspect, noting there might not be any
527 issues pertaining to revenue if the restrictions are lifted and the Aquatic Center is the only area
528 pool that is open. Jon told board members he would prefer to have more information before
529 making a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ decision.

530

531 Andrea inquired about the city’s liability if there are no restrictions, the Aquatic Center is open
532 to an unlimited number of visitors, and there is an outbreak linked to the pool.

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14

533
534 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that at this point it would be the same recreational immunity
535 the city has on all its other cases. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “The challenge is if there
536 is a known danger that we don’t solve, the question is, is the COVID-19 virus a known danger or
537 not?”

538
539 On voice vote, motion failed, 5-2 (Ald. Nott, Patric, Jon, Brian Udermann, Ohbe voted nay;
540 Andrea and Connor voted aye).

541
542 Andrea said the board may consider this item at its May 18 meeting.

543
544 Dan asked board members what additional information they are seeking from staff.

545
546 Ald. Nott said he is waiting to hear what other entities have to say – primarily the Wisconsin
547 Supreme Court, and he noted Dan’s entire model is based upon the existing restrictions.

548
549 Jon said he is eager to hear the Common Council’s feedback.

550
551 Patric asked Dan what will happen if this decision is taken out of the board’s hands because there
552 is no funding available.

553
554 Andrea said the Common Council could vote not to provide any funding.

555
556 Patric said that is why he approves of waiting until May 18, and also that the decision will
557 become easy once board members find out how the state will proceed and if there will be any
558 funding so that the board may make a recommendation.

559
560 Jon asked if the board and/or the Common Council would need to recommend what type of
561 restrictions they want to have in place at the Aquatic Center if the “Safer At Home” order is
562 struck down, or if Dan and staff would address that.

563
564 Dan said he believes staff would bring forward a plan document to board members for their
565 review as part of that process if changes are made. Dan noted it will take staff two weeks from
566 when a decision is made to open the Aquatic Center to when it may open. Dan told board
567 members he does not plan to put any water in the pool until staff has been given the approval,
568 and he said, “At a minimum we’re in Phase 2 so that we can have at least 50 people in the pool.
569 We would then start filling the pool so we could start treating it. It would take us about two
570 weeks to fill, treat and get the chemicals all balanced out, and for us to do a day or two’s worth
571 of staff training in the pool for us to open. Two weeks, 10 days, is what we have said is needed
572 for us to open the pool once we are given the green light either by the state or by the parameters
573 we establish that we are going to open.”

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Andrea asked Dan if he currently has the staff to do that.

Dan told Andrea right now “we are in very good shape” from a lifeguard and an attendant standpoint. Dan also said individuals are getting nervous and seeking other employment opportunities as more facilities decide not to open, noting he had received calls from individuals when the City of La Crosse decided not to open its pools for the 2020 season.

Andrea asked when the Aquatic Center was closed in 2019.

Dan said it closed the third Sunday in August last year and noted several employees either leave for their respective colleges or begin practicing for the high school fall sports season in August.

Jon asked Dan if he will have sufficient time to prepare what the board’s recommendation would be for restrictions at the pool and how it will impact the budget by May 18 should the “Safer At Home” order be struck down. Jon said the board needs to know what it is approving as of May 18 if the order is gone.

Dan told Jon it is his understanding that La Crosse County will interpret and enforce the rules the city may go by if the order is struck down. Dan said staff understands what La Crosse County Health Department officials want to see, noting the health department is the body that either approves or denies permission to open the pool as part of the city’s health department license.

Andrea asked Dan if he gets the feeling the La Crosse County Health Department would allow the city to “go full throttle” and open the pool.

Dan said, “Based on our conversations, no. They are looking at different models. In our conversation with them, they can see us potentially opening and moving to Phase 1 or any phase on the Badger Bounce Back. But they also say we have to be prepared that we also can go backwards. For example, if we would go into Phase 1 of the Badger Bounce Back and they see a spike in cases, we could revert back to ‘Safer At Home.’ Or if we’re in Phase 1 and we go to Phase 2, we could bounce back to Phase 1. We would have to be prepared from a facility standpoint to say today we’re open, but tomorrow we may not be and kind of bounce back and forth that way.”

Andrea asked if La Crosse County still would be following the Badger Bounce Back Plan regardless of the case before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Dan told Andrea there is a lot of speculation and said that is the direction the La Crosse County Health Department will take based on his conversations with its employees.

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16

615 b. Recreation

616

617 Kraig told board members the spring programs, including soccer and youth volleyball, have been
618 cancelled, noting that between 250 and 270 kids were involved in the two aforementioned
619 programs. Kraig said the soccer and volleyball programs had started and the department had
620 collected funds for both, but those funds have since been refunded. The department also
621 cancelled one-day programs that were schedule for April and May.

622

623 Kraig said registration is still going for the summer traveling baseball and softball programs,
624 noting the programs attract more than 200 kids. Kraig noted the Onalaska Parks and Recreation
625 Department is part of the Coulee Region Sports League, which is still determining how it will
626 proceed (delaying league play, adding rules on how to structure games). Kraig noted that only
627 10 people may be in a group as part of Phase 1, and he said there are questions as to how
628 practices are conducted. Kraig said playing games may be considered as part of Phase 2 (up to
629 50 people), and he also said factors such as player and fan seating, ball handling, and location of
630 players and umpires must be determined. Kraig said organizations from both Wisconsin and
631 Minnesota have developed rules that are being sent to their respective state governors, and he
632 told board members Parks and Recreation Department staff are examining the rules. Kraig said
633 all the local organizations currently are waiting to see how the guidelines might impact how
634 games are played. Kraig also noted staff has provided updates on the department's Facebook
635 page and its website, and he said the league is looking at delaying the starting date for games
636 until June.

637

638 Kraig told board members there has not yet been any registration for the department's in-house
639 programs such as T-ball, tennis, golf, and track and field. The track and field program cannot
640 begin until July as schools are not allowed to open up their respective tracks until after June 30.
641 Kraig said he has sent an email to the Coulee Golf Bowl asking if the department still may hold
642 its golf program there. Kraig said he and Recreation Coordinator Tyler Kettenhagen have
643 contacted some of the coaches and program leaders and asked if they still want to be involved if
644 programs cannot begin until July. Most have said they still wish to participate, and Kraig told
645 board members coaches of some of the contracted programs such as football, basketball and
646 lacrosse camps have stated they do not object to starting in July. Kraig said it is possible to delay
647 programs for younger children until August, if necessary, and he told board members the
648 logistics related to social distancing must be determined for programs such as golf, tennis, and
649 track and field.

650

651 Kraig said, "We're optimistic and hoping we can try to get some [programs] going. We may
652 need to look at maybe running different forms of baseball and softball – maybe it's more of a
653 camp style program or it's more of an instructional thing and we keep it in-house and don't
654 travel anywhere if we don't need to."

655

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17

656 Andrea asked if the recreation community has access to items such as sanitizer and sanitizer
657 wipes, or if the chains are broken.

658

659 Dan told Andrea that he and staff are essential workers as they are City of Onalaska employees
660 and said they have been able to obtain most of the equipment they have needed and supply it to
661 the staff.

662

663 Andrea asked Dan if he believes those resources would be available if the city is able to open up
664 its programs.

665

666 Dan said, "We have things at this time. I can't tell you what it's going to be next week or when
667 we need to get it, but at this time for our parks staff and for our buildings staff ... To be honest,
668 we've been ordering many of the products for the entire City Hall, including [the] Police and
669 Fire [departments], so we have been able to get our access to a lot of that stuff at this point in
670 time."

671

672 Ald. Nott said he understands that both Dan and Kraig have no choice but to be in a reactive
673 mode and enforce what they are being told, noting that they do not decide what the restrictions
674 are. Ald. Nott said he believes this illustrates the "one size fits all" approach that bureaucrats are
675 pushing on society, stating that baseball, tennis and golf are social distancing sports played
676 outdoors, where the CDC says the population is the safest. Ald. Nott said, "It's very frustrating
677 to me that they even have to do this."

678

679 Kraig addressed social distancing as it pertains to tennis, noting it is acceptable for two people
680 playing against each other. However, Kraig said it is difficult for a coach to keep first and
681 second graders at their distances when he/she is coaching several children and attempting to keep
682 them organized. Kraig next used baseball as an example and said coaches huddle up players
683 between innings. Kraig said the actual coaching and instructing aspect might prove to be more
684 difficult.

685

686 Dan told board members this item will appear on the May 18 meeting agenda and said staff
687 hopes to have more clarity going forward.

688

689 Connor asked if the starting date for open skating will need to be moved back due to the repairs
690 to the chiller in Arena No. 2.

691

692 Brian Babiash told Connor the starting date should not need to be moved back and said his goal
693 is to have skateable ice in Arena No. 2 on June 8. Brian acknowledged that could change based
694 on decisions made by Governor Evers or the Wisconsin Supreme Court, and he told board
695 members staff also is developing a "Back To Open" plan.

696

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18

697 **Item 7 – Report from Blufflands Coalition**

698

699 Dan told board members the last Blufflands Coalition meeting was cancelled, and the next
700 meeting has not been scheduled.

701

702 **Item 8 – Report from Onalaska Enhancement Foundation**

703

704 No meeting.

705

706 **Item 9 – Director’s Report**

707

708 **a. Parks Update**

709

710 Mark reported the following:

711

- 712 • Staff is mowing, painting, and tending to the baseball and softball fields.
- 713 • Staff will begin a “better use of space” project in the shop after the picnic tables and trash
714 holders have been repaired.
- 715 • Mark thanked the board for its continued support and promised board members staff
716 members will work in a very safe manner and attempt to utilize the taxpayers’ money the
717 best they can.

718

719 **b. Recreation Update**

720

721 Kraig reported the following:

722

- 723 • He and Tyler have begun planning what they will do in the fall with the fall programs,
724 brochures.
- 725 • Tyler has worked on some in-house baseball, softball, and flag football coaches training
726 PowerPoints.
- 727 • Kraig has worked on travelling PowerPoint presentations for coaches
- 728 • Baseball and softball equipment and uniforms have been cleaned out.
- 729 • Kraig and Tyler have been working on online training courses.

730

731 Andrea told Kraig she assumes he and Tyler are looking into alternative recreation opportunities
732 such as strategy games.

733

734 Kraig told Andrea there has been a Legos masters competition on Facebook, and he said Tyler
735 has been working with the yoga instructor on attempting to have online yoga classes. Kraig said
736 he also has been looking into having a scavenger hunt, and he told Andrea he and Tyler will
737 continue to look for additional online programs for kids and their parents.

Reviewed 05/13/2020 by Dan Wick

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738

739 Kraig addressed the adult softball program, telling board members he has been in contact with
740 the men’s teams, which have indicated they still want to play this summer even it means the
741 season will start later. Kraig told board members Onalaska may co-op with La Crosse so that the
742 teams may play more games.

743

744 **c. Aquatic Center Update**

745

746 No additional report.

747

748 **d. Omni Center Update**

749

750 Tony and Justin reported the following:

751

- 752 • He is attempting to reschedule the events that were cancelled. However, this is proving
753 to be difficult as a date is currently unknown. Tony said he is attempting to move some
754 of the cancelled groups to 2021 and further out. Tony told board members he told event
755 organizers that while he would give them a refund, he also wanted to obtain a concrete
756 date for the next time the event is to be held. Five different groups have agreed to look at
757 alternative dates in 2020. Three groups have rebooked dates in 2021. Two groups have
758 rebooked both for 2021 and 2022. Four groups have rebooked, and they will be in line
759 for the next three years.
- 760 • Staff is going through training classes with CVMIC.
- 761 • Tony is working on updating the Omni Sponsorship Guide to reflect what he learned at
762 the WPRA meetings this past fall. The WPRA stated it does not want prices to appear in
763 the sponsorship guide, as more people will sign up for that and it is a negotiable deal.
- 764 • Tony is looking at different groups in an attempt to fill the gaps at the Omni Center. The
765 facility has lost all its graduation parties originally scheduled for late May. Tony said he
766 has spoken to the parents about possibly holding an end of the summer or a “going to
767 college” party. A couple of those parties have been rebooked for the fall.
- 768 • Staff is working with a graphic designer on creating a rack card that describes the Omni
769 Center. Staff would take that card to shows and praise both the City of Onalaska and the
770 Omni Center.
- 771 • Justin told board members he had obtained a layout software and measured the entire
772 facility so he could create layouts for the incoming different events. The software allows
773 the user to create mock layouts that can be shown to potential customers. Maintenance
774 staff also will be more efficient when setting up layouts.
- 775 • While the Spring Craft Show was cancelled, Justin said staff had worked closely with all
776 the vendors to ensure that they would want to return. Most of the payments that were
777 received were transferred to spring 2021. Some vendors requested refunds, and some
778 asked that their deposits be transferred to fall. The application for the Spring 2021 Craft

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20

- 779 Show will be sent out shortly to all the individuals who are on the list.
780 • Justin referred back to the layout software, noting everything is to scale. All of the rooms
781 are done individually, and Justin said staff has the ability to lay out anything, any way.
782 • Justin has been working on a template to help plan events so that all the stakeholders
783 have all the details needed to make every event successful.
784

785 Brian Babiash reiterated he hopes Arena No. 2 will be ready for open skating on June 8 once the
786 chiller has been repaired. Brian also noted that all the stakeholders who have rented ice are
787 aware that that date could be pushed back. Brian told board members that ice is a “hot
788 commodity” because no one else has it, and he said his goal was to make up for all the cancelled
789 spring events with a summer of hockey. Brian told board members the summer ice currently
790 looks like the facility’s winter ice, noting the ice is rented most days from 4 p.m. until 10 p.m.
791 Brian said, “We’re kind of geared to having a nice summer, provided we get to skate.”
792

793 Brian told board members visitors to the Omni Center will have to enter the facility in the rear so
794 there is less area for staff to have to sanitize on a daily basis. Staff will limit some of the spaces
795 where people can go. Brian also said all the steel doors will be repainted, and staff has done
796 some work in the west side shelter area, which now has turf, a batting cage, and smaller cages.
797

798 **e. Library Update**

799 Brian Babiash reported the following:
800

- 801
802 • All the carpets have been cleaned.
803 • Books have been moved to different areas, and the shelves have been rearranged.
804 • The LED lighting has been completed. Staff will be able to gauge the electric use from
805 2019 to 2020 when the building is back to full use.
806 • Staff is awaiting a new computer for the building automation system.
807 • Brian said there might be turnover with the cleaning position.
808 • The new furniture is in place in the adult and teen sections.
809

810 **Adjournment**

811
812 Motion by Ald. Nott to adjourn.
813

814 Andrea noted the meeting is being adjourned at 6:56 p.m.
815

816
817 Recorded by:

818
819 Kirk Bey

Reviewed 05/13/2020 by Dan Wick