

**Parks and Recreation Board  
of the City of Onalaska**

Monday, March 28, 2016

1

1 The Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Board of the City of Onalaska was called to order at 5:15  
2 p.m. on Monday, March 28, 2016. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a  
3 notice posted at City Hall.

4

5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ald. Jim Binash, Gretchen Newhouse,  
6 Andrea Benco, Brian Udermann, Victor Hill, Andrea Vogler

7

8 Also Present: Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, Human Resource Specialist Hope  
9 Burchell, Parks Maintenance Supervisor Mark Hanson

10

11 Absent: Ohbe Johnson

12

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

14

15 Motion by Ald. Binash, second by Brian, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as  
16 printed 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 Benco called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

23

24 Dan read into the record the following email from Mike Hayes, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Onalaska:  
25 “Good morning, Dan. I’m hoping you can drop this idea in front of the board tonight as I am  
26 unfortunately unable to attend. With the removal of so many trees and the barren landscape left  
27 behind, I wonder if there’s room for an alternative. Instead of removing and digging up all the  
28 ash trees, maybe some could be made into art. Imagine the space over there in the park that  
29 once had 15 ash trees and now has a grove of mushrooms or forest creatures or something fun  
30 carved from the stumps left behind by the emerald ash borer. It’s a wonderful, unique way of  
31 adding some personality to the park without spending lots of cash. They’re relatively permanent  
32 because the stumps are still in the ground and biodegradable. No muss, no fuss – just cool.  
33 There are a number of tree carvers in our area who could be contracted to carve, or as some  
34 communities have done, make it a part of a gathering already planned. It’s Frisbee golf,  
35 skateboarding, tree carving contest, city picnic. Rather than spend ‘x’ amount hiring one or two  
36 people to carve, maybe we can offer a prize and allow any juried carvers to compete for a prize.  
37 Fundraising for the project is also an option, as MWFB [MidWest Family Broadcasting] would  
38 be interested in helping promote such an event or goal. I know there’s a plan to replace the  
39 missing trees. [But] in the meantime the park can still be beautiful and offer something fun,  
40 unique, and once in a lifetime. It could become a destination park. Once the trunks are gone,  
41 we’ll have to wait for my grandson’s grandson to suggest the same thing to that Park Board.

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42 *Let's do it now while it's still an option. Thanks for your consideration."*

43

44 Andrea Benco called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that  
45 portion of the meeting.

46

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

48

49 **Item 4 – Approve new Van Riper Park Playground**

50

51 Dan noted the proposals that have been brought forward are in front of the board this evening.  
52 Miller & Associates has submitted two designs; Minnesota Playground has submitted two  
53 designs; Lee Recreation has submitted one design; Northland Recreation has submitted one  
54 design; and Boland Recreation has submitted one design. Each vendor was given a \$75,000  
55 budget, and staff informed each vendor the playground was to be a ramped structure. Staff also  
56 went to Northern Hills Elementary School and surveyed students as to what type of equipment  
57 they preferred. Staff asked for a design to be done in wood chips, and also a design to be done in  
58 rubber mulch. Dan said while wood chips are more cost-efficient up front, they also require a  
59 significant amount of maintenance. Dan noted he had recently attended the Wisconsin Park and  
60 Recreation Workshop in the City of Oshkosh, which has begun utilizing "Pour and Place" (a  
61 rubberized surface) on all of its playgrounds, and said this is a costly option. Dan said he had  
62 spoken with City of Waunakee officials, who told him they now utilize rubber mulch in place of  
63 wood chips because over time the rubber mulch does not disintegrate like the wood chips do, and  
64 it also is more cost-efficient over time. Dan said staff has identified a test location where rubber  
65 mulch would be placed. Dan noted there have been instances where rubber has ended up on the  
66 lawn and kills the grass. However, Van Riper Park's 6-foot sidewalk provides an adequate  
67 barrier to contain the rubber.

68

69 Gretchen said it is difficult to navigate strollers on rubber surfaces and asked if individuals in  
70 wheelchairs will be able to navigate on the surface.

71

72 Dan noted the Americans with Disabilities Act approves the usage of engineered wood fiber,  
73 rubber mulch and "Pour and Place." Dan also noted he has spoken with citizens who support  
74 utilizing rubber mulch and citizens who have expressed concern that an individual on crutches  
75 would have difficulty navigating on the rubber. Dan said the project budget would have needed  
76 to increase by \$100,000 and "Pour and Place" would be necessary to make Van Riper Park a true  
77 handicap-accessible playground. Dan said it would be possible to add "Pour and Place" at any of  
78 the city's playgrounds in the future.

79

80 Andrea Benco asked which designs the Northern Hills students preferred.

81

82 Dan said staff had not taken the designs to any of the city's schools. However, Dan said the

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83 UW-La Crosse students from his Recreation class preferred Northland Recreation's design based  
84 on the ramp structure. Dan said staff has asked for a ramp surface in anticipation of individuals  
85 in wheelchairs and noted that the inclines range from 8 inches to 16 inches to 4 feet. Dan said he  
86 began examining panels and noted that Miller & Associates' design has the most panels. Dan  
87 said the UW-L students did not like Lee Recreation's design as it is not ramped.

88  
89 Andrea Vogler suggested speaking with students in wheelchairs before a decision is made.  
90 Andrea also suggested examining the entry points for children who are not in wheelchairs.

91  
92 Ald. Binash said he approves of utilizing rubber mulch as it provides more of a cushion for  
93 children who fall.

94  
95 Gretchen asked rubber mulch must be purchased regularly.

96  
97 Dan said no because it is not biodegradable.

98  
99 Mark said that while wood chips are more cost-efficient, rubber mulch would be the best long-  
100 term solution.

101  
102 Dan noted that \$10,000 has been budgeted for the playground at Oak Park and said the vendor  
103 that is selected for the Van Riper Park project will be given the Oak Park project.

104  
105 Ald. Binash asked if there is any reason why the Van Riper Park project will exceed its \$75,000  
106 budget.

107  
108 Dan said no, noting that the bid states staff will remove the old equipment from the site. Dan  
109 noted that four of the five companies met with staff at Van Riper Park, and he also noted that  
110 Miller & Associates had added a swing set. Dan said parents have told him they want to see  
111 swings at Van Riper Park as there currently are not any there. Dan told the board he wants to  
112 keep the project moving forward, with the goal of having the playground completed prior to  
113 Celebrate Onalaska in June. The deadline to complete the project is Friday, June 17.

114  
115 Dan said, "I've built a number of different playgrounds with a number of different companies in  
116 my career. I think that the companies that we have before us are all very reputable, and any one  
117 of them could give us a design. I like the component of the swings that were added [by Miller &  
118 Associates]. When I started looking at this true panels and things that could be done, I think that  
119 playground catches my eye because of the red rubber mulch there. But I'm not 100 percent  
120 saying that we have to go. If I would have to make my call and my decision, that's the  
121 playground I would go with."

122  
123 Andrea Vogler suggested that it might be possible to purchase a swing with a harness.

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124  
125 Andrea Benco said the panels concept could allow for change over time without having to  
126 reconstruct an entire structure if equipment was damaged or needed to be retired.  
127  
128 Gretchen said it appears that some of the city’s playgrounds are similar and asked if the Van  
129 Riper Park Project offers diversity in terms of playgrounds.  
130  
131 Dan noted that between 14 and 16 playgrounds had been replaced in 1996 and said the company  
132 selected to perform the work installed same equipment at every location. Dan said, “We’ve  
133 attempted to try to add new things that you don’t seen anywhere.”  
134

135 Andrea Benco asked board members if they want to vote on Item 4 and Item 5 as a package or  
136 first address Item 4 and then Item 5.  
137

138 Dan explained that this is a “cooperative deal.” Dan said a family residing in the Oak Park  
139 subdivision had approached staff asking if it would be possible to make improvements to the  
140 park. Dan said \$10,000 for Oak Park had been added to the Park Fund late in the 2016 budget  
141 process, and staff thought the best option would be to bid out the Oak Park Project with the Van  
142 Riper Park Project and inform the vendor to include options for Oak Park if it is selected for the  
143 Van Riper Park Project.  
144

145 Motion by Ald. Binash, second by Brian, to approve Miller & Associates for the Van Riper Park  
146 Playground Replacement Project (Proposal #30-91720-2) in an amount not to exceed \$74,967,  
147 and also the Oak Park Playground Equipment Project (Proposal #30-91768-1) in an amount not  
148 to exceed \$9,972.  
149

150 Gretchen noted that the Swift glider does not have railings on the side and expressed concern for  
151 the safety of children who might utilize it.  
152

153 Dan noted that the Oak Park #4 playground targets 2- to 5-year-olds and has a slide. Dan said  
154 this project will be an addition to the existing playground.  
155

156 On voice vote, motion carried, 5-1 (Gretchen Newhouse).  
157

158 **Item 5 – Approve new Playground Equipment at Oak Park #4**

159  
160 This item was addressed under Item 4.  
161

162 **Item 6 – Approve Oak Park Pickleball Reconstruction. Bid date is March 28<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.**

163  
164 Dan said the Oak Park tennis courts need to be resurfaced, and he noted that pickleball is

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165 becoming more popular and the courts see little tennis use. The tennis nets would be removed  
166 and four pickleball courts would be installed. Two companies returned bids: Upper Midwest  
167 Athletic Construction (\$24,870) and Fahrner Asphalt (\$20,525). Dan said Fahrner Asphalt  
168 representatives informed staff they had omitted a pickleball post, nets, and installation time from  
169 the bid. Dan said he recommends proceeding with Upper Midwest Athletic Construction. Dan  
170 noted that \$20,000 has been budgeted for the project, which is coming out of the Park Fund.  
171 Dan said \$55,000 has been allocated in the 2016 budget – \$20,000 for the tennis courts, and  
172 \$35,000 for Nathan Hill. Dan said it is unlikely that there will be any type of development in  
173 terms of a playground at Nathan Hill, and he recommended that the board support directing an  
174 additional \$4,870 for the Oak Park Pickleball Reconstruction Project.

175

176 Motion by Victor, second by Ald. Binash, to approve Upper Midwest Athletic Construction for  
177 the Oak Park Pickleball Reconstruction Project in an amount not to exceed \$24,870, and also to  
178 transfer \$4,870 from the Nathan Hill Project to the Oak Park Pickleball Reconstruction Project.

179

180 Gretchen, who resides near Oak Park, said she had asked her neighbors if they are familiar with  
181 the game of pickleball. Gretchen noted that there is pickleball league at the YMCA, and its  
182 participants are seniors. Gretchen said her neighbors asked where pickleball equipment can be  
183 purchased and asked if Parks and Recreation would supply the equipment. Gretchen also  
184 pointed out that many residents in the neighborhood own tennis rackets and tennis balls.  
185 Gretchen asked if there still will be a basketball court at the park, and she also asked if the rims,  
186 which are next to each other, could be moved to allow for a full-court game. Gretchen also  
187 questioned the longevity of pickleball and asked if the board will have to consider installing a  
188 tennis court if the senior population that plays pickleball has passed on in a decade.

189

190 Dan noted that there are 15 tennis courts in the city, and also that pickleball courts were installed  
191 at Parkridge. Dan said 35 to 40 individuals on the Parks and Recreation Department's mailing  
192 list get together to play pickleball at Parkridge, and he noted that there were conflicts because  
193 pickleball players and tennis players were attempting to utilize the courts simultaneously. Dan  
194 said staff plans to keep the basketball hoops at Oak Park in their current location. Dan noted that  
195 space was reserved for pickleball players last spring at the Omni Center, and he also noted that  
196 pickleball is part of the physical education curriculum in the Onalaska School District. Dan said  
197 the Parks and Recreation Department utilizes the school district's equipment, and also that the  
198 department has portable nets available. Dan pointed out that individuals have gone to Rochester,  
199 Minnesota to play pickleball because there are not any courts in the area. Dan said, "We're  
200 trying to use an underutilized area to try to give us a different need."

201

202 Andrea Benco noted that a facility for seniors will be constructed on Sand Lake Road and said  
203 she believes a pickleball court would be "a good fit."

204

205 On voice vote, motion carried, 5-0, with one abstention (Gretchen Newhouse).

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206

207 **Item 7 – Approve revised Grazing Land Lease with Clearwater Farms**

208

209 Andrea Benco noted that this item had gone before the Plan Commission on March 22 and said  
210 the 10-foot buffer setback had been reduced to 3 feet. Andrea also said the fence is the property  
211 of Clearwater Farm.

212

213 Dan said he believes Clearwater Farm representative Shari Collas is satisfied with what came out  
214 of the Plan Commission meeting.

215

216 Motion by Andrea Vogler, second by Gretchen, to approve revised Grazing Land Lease with  
217 Clearwater Farms.

218

219 Ald. Binash said there had been a discussion at the Plan Commission meeting regarding who  
220 would maintain the 3-foot buffer. Ald. Binash said Clearwater Farm stated its representatives  
221 would maintain the buffer. However, another individual stated they believe the City of Onalaska  
222 should be responsible for maintaining the buffer.

223

224 Dan said he has told Shari that while city employees might be able to maintain certain locations  
225 with lawn mowers, they will not remove the weeds around the fence posts. Dan said he believes  
226 Shari understands and is agreeable to this condition. Dan also said both parties reserve the right  
227 to terminate the agreement.

228

229 Ald. Binash referred to Item No. 7 (“Alterations and Improvements”) in the lease and read letter  
230 ‘b:’ *“All alterations, additions and improvements and fixtures ... shall be the property of the*  
231 *lessor (City of Onalaska). ... Lessee may remove all personal property.”*

232

233 Andrea Benco said she believes the agreement states that Clearwater Farm must remove all  
234 fencing before the lease expires.

235

236 Dan told Ald. Binash he has consulted with the city’s legal counsel (City Attorney Sean  
237 O’Flaherty and Amanda Jackson) several times, and they have said the fence belongs to  
238 Clearwater Farm.

239

240 On voice vote, motion carried.

241

242 **Item 8 – Approve Park and Recreation Department Reorganization**

243

244 Dan noted that board members’ packets include a bubble diagram of the department  
245 reorganization and said both he and Hope have examined it. Dan said the reorganization is due  
246 to minimum wage changes occurring at the federal level. Dan said Hope told him during the

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247 2016 budget process it was likely that employees earning less than \$50,440 per year would need  
248 to be paid as hourly employees. Four Parks and Recreation Department employees are affected  
249 by the change. Dan said he did not make changes as part of the 2016 budget process. Dan noted  
250 he had attended a park and recreation roundtable discussion at CVMIC and said he had examined  
251 several different topics affecting park and recreation agencies in the State of Wisconsin. Dan  
252 said a CVMIC representative told those in attendance the changes will take effect after the  
253 conclusion of the 2016 presidential election. Dan said Recreation Supervisor Marcus Aumann's  
254 resignation gave him the opportunity to address the situation. Dan said what is before the board  
255 this evening addresses the programming side. The city's two Building Supervisors fall under the  
256 \$50,440 threshold, and Dan said the board will have to examine these positions in the near  
257 future, or when the federal minimum wage changes. Dan said he wants to add administrative  
258 support at the Omni Center, noting calls are transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department  
259 if no one is available at the Omni Center. Dan said the reorganization meets the requirements of  
260 the federal minimum wage act, and it creates a better organizational chart at the Omni Center.  
261 The organizational chart also addresses concessions, and it also addresses the Aquatic Center  
262 with an Aquatic Specialist (three-month position). Dan said the Recreation Supervisor, Park  
263 Supervisor and Building Manager are all above the threshold designated by the federal  
264 government. The Recreation Coordinator would work with the Recreation Supervisor on  
265 programs and activities, and he/she would be responsible for events such as the Rugged Run and  
266 the Fleis Nightfall Frolic. The administrative assistant would work approximately 22½ hours a  
267 week. The Building Coordinator would schedule activities, market the Omni Center, attempt to  
268 attract events via cold calls, and would assume control of events such as the Craft Fair and the  
269 Wedding Expo. Dan said the Recreation Coordinator and the Building Coordinators would be  
270 hourly positions, once approved, adding he wants these positions to remain as salaried until the  
271 federal minimum wage law is enacted.

272

273 Gretchen inquired about the negative aspects of having to pay an hourly wage to employees who  
274 earn less than \$50,440.

275

276 Hope said overtime would be a negative aspect. Hope said the federal government's intention is  
277 to allow employees to earn more money; however, she added there are businesses and  
278 government agencies that cannot afford to pay overtime. Hope said overtime will not be allowed  
279 as a result, and it is possible less work will be completed. Hope said the goal is to not eliminate  
280 staff, but rather utilize the strengths of existing staff and hire part-time employees who are not  
281 eligible for benefits. The part-time employees (fewer than 1,200 hours) will be able to assist  
282 with minute tasks so the full-time employees may focus on larger tasks.

283

284 Ald. Binash said it is his understanding that salaried employees would not necessarily take a pay  
285 cut if they went to hourly wage.

286

287 Hope said employees can compute the average number of additional hours over 40, multiplied by

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288 1.5, to determine the wage. Hope said another option is to tell employees that all overtime must  
289 be preapproved. Hope said the reorganization will affect two positions at this time.

290

291 Ald. Binash asked why the other two positions are not being addressed at this time.

292

293 Dan said a Recreation Coordinator must be hired.

294

295 Motion by Ald. Binash, second by Gretchen, to approve Park and Recreation Department  
296 Reorganization Chart.

297

298 On voice vote, motion carried.

299

300 **Item 9 – Report from La Crosse County Bluffland Steering Committee**

301

302 Dan said the next meeting is scheduled for April.

303

304 **Item 10 – Report from Onalaska Enhancement Foundation**

305

306 Dan said the Fleis Nightfall Frolic is scheduled for Friday, April 22.

307

308 **Item 11 – Report from Great River Landing Committee**

309

310 Ald. Binash said the Common Council will be reviewing bids at its April 12 meeting, and also  
311 that the project is slated to begin in May.

312

313 **Item 12 – Director’s Report**

314

315 **a. Parks Update**

316

317 Mark reported the following:

318

319 • The Jimmy Olson shelter is open. Staff likely will begin opening the remaining shelters  
320 the week of April 3-9.

321 • Staff is grinding stumps, performing repairs and picking up refuse and branches.

322 • Staff also is pruning, cleaning the trails and repairing the skate park.

323

324 **b. Recreation Update**

325

326 Dan reported the following:

327

328 • Staff has completed a 110-team soccer schedule.

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- 329           • Soccer practice is being held at the Omni Center.

330

331           **c. Aquatic Center Update**

332

333 Dan said the department is in the process of hiring and working with staff.

334

335           **d. Omni Center Update**

336

337 Dan reported the following:

338

- 339           • The SEP (Services Equipment Product) show was held March 23. There were 33  
340 vendors, and 117 individuals preregistered. However, approximately 32 individuals who  
341 had preregistered did not attend the meeting due to inclement weather.
- 342           • Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who is seeking to become the Democratic nominee for  
343 President of the United States, will hold a rally Wednesday evening at the Omni Center.  
344 Dan said Sanders' political team was quoted a one-day fee of \$1,500 and noted that the  
345 city will charge extra because Sanders' team wants to come in on Tuesday.

346

347 Ald. Binash, who sits on the La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau board, noted that  
348 the website did not have a location where visitors can look up events being held in Onalaska.

349 Ald. Binash said the website ([explorelacrosse.com](http://explorelacrosse.com)) now has a link to Onalaska's Parks and  
350 Recreation Department via the Parks site.

351

352           **Adjournment**

353

354 Motion by Gretchen, second by Brian, to adjourn at 6:41 p.m.

355

356 On voice vote, motion carried.

357

358

359 Recorded by:

360

361 Kirk Bey