

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

Monday, April 27, 2015

1

1 The Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Board of the City of Onalaska was called to order at 5:20  
2 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2015. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice  
3 posted at City Hall.

4

5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ald. Jim Binash, Andrea Benco, Victor  
6 Hill, Andrea Vogler. Sue Peterson participated via telephone. Gretchen Newhouse arrived with  
7 the meeting already in progress.

8

9 Also Present: Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, Ald. Harvey Bertrand, Parks  
10 Maintenance Supervisor Mark Hanson, Parks and Recreation Intern Cameron Bathe, Clearwater  
11 Farms representative Shari Collas, Beau Rath, Intern to Mayor Joe Chilsen

12

13 Excused Absence: Brian Udermann

14

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

16

17 Motion by Andrea Vogler, second by Sue, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as  
18 printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

19

20 On voice vote, motion carried.

21

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

23

24 Andrea Benco called for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of the  
25 meeting.

26

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

28

29 **Item 4 – Election of Chairperson**

30

31 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Andrea Vogler, to nominate and elect Sue Peterson as  
32 Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Board.

33

34 On voice vote, motion carried.

35

36 **Item 5 – Election of Vice-Chairperson**

37

38 Motion by Andrea Vogler, second by Andrea Benco, to nominate and elect Victor Hill as Vice-  
39 Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Board.

40

41 On voice vote, motion carried.

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42

43 **Item 6 – Appointment to Onalaska Enhancement Foundation**

44

45 Dan noted that there is no City of Onalaska representative on the OEF, and also noted that he  
46 both compiles the meeting agendas and attends all OEF meetings. Dan said he had spoken to  
47 City Attorney Sean O’Flaherty about serving as a representative on the OEF, and Sean said this  
48 would be acceptable provided that no member of the Parks and Recreation Board wants to be  
49 appointed. Dan noted that as of late Sue has been very active in the OEF’s meetings and  
50 expressed a desire on behalf of the OEF to keep her involved. However, Dan said he could be  
51 appointed to the OEF as he already attends its meetings.

52

53 Sue told Dan she is more than willing to stay involved with the OEF, but also said she would be  
54 agreeable to seeing Dan appointed to the OEF as he would be a voting member.

55

56 In response to a question, Dan explained that the OEF is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit  
57 organization with which the City of Onalaska works. Dan noted that the OEF carries the liquor  
58 license at the Omni Center, works with the John Fleis Scholarship Fund, and also plays an  
59 integral role in the Thanksgiving Day Dinner.

60

61 Motion by Sue, second by Andrea Vogler, to appoint Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick as  
62 the Parks and Recreation Board’s representative on the Onalaska Enhancement Foundation.

63

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

65

66 **Item 7 – Appointment to Great River Landing Committee**

67

68 Dan explained that this is a position previously held by former Alderperson Erik Sjolander, who  
69 did not seek reelection this spring. Dan noted that a member of the Parks and Recreation Board  
70 also serves as a member of the Great River Landing Committee. Dan also noted that he  
71 anticipates the Great River Landing Committee will meet at the very least monthly as plans come  
72 forward for the Great River Landing.

73

74 Andrea Benco asked if action on this item can be delayed until the May Parks and Recreation  
75 Board meeting.

76

77 Dan said this could be done if the board so chooses.

78

79 Ald. Bertrand, who serves on the Great River Landing Committee, stressed the importance of the  
80 Parks and Recreation Board having a presence on the Great River Landing Committee. Ald.  
81 Bertrand said the committee is struggling to make progress and expressed disappointment that  
82 the project is not further along. Ald. Bertrand stated he believes the Parks and Recreation Board

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83 will play a critical role in what happens with the Great River Landing Project and asked that the  
84 board appoint a representative as quickly as possible so he or she can attend the next Great River  
85 Landing Committee meeting and provide input.

86

87 Andrea Benco said it is not a matter of not wanting a Parks and Recreation Board representative  
88 on the Great River Landing Committee, but rather the board must send representatives to other  
89 committee meetings.

90

91 Victor suggested establishing a rotation of board members to attend the Great River Landing  
92 Committee meetings once a schedule is established.

93

94 Andrea said she does not believe this would be a viable option as it is ideal to have one member  
95 consistently attend the meetings.

96

97 Victor said that while he has tentative interest in serving on the Great River Landing Committee,  
98 he also expressed concern about overextending himself.

99

100 Dan said he can assist Victor with contacting Land Use and Development Director Brea Grace,  
101 who will be able to provide him with more information about the Great River Landing  
102 Committee. Dan said Victor can serve as the board's representative after he speaks with her and  
103 if the board approves of his appointment. However, Dan said this item will have to be placed on  
104 the May Parks and Recreation Board meeting agenda if Victor speaks to Brea and determines  
105 that serving on the Great River Landing Committee will be too much of a time commitment for  
106 him.

107

108 Andrea Benco suggested that the board nominate Victor to the Great River Landing Committee  
109 and that he may resign from the committee if he is unable to devote the time necessary to serve.

110

111 Ald. Bertrand said that the Parks and Recreation Board representative does not need to spend a  
112 significant amount of time preparing for the Great River Landing Committee's meetings.  
113 Instead, Ald. Bertrand said the board's representative may share the board's philosophy of caring  
114 for the City of Onalaska as well as providing input.

115

116 Victor asked that the board table this item until its May meeting, at which time it may make a  
117 decision.

118

119 Andrea Benco pointed out that Victor may not vote at a Great River Landing Committee  
120 meeting, provided there is one between now and the next Parks and Recreation Board meeting, is  
121 if he is not appointed.

122

123 Dan suggested that Victor be appointed to the Great River Landing Committee and said he may

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124 resign from the committee if he discovers he cannot commit to it.

125

126 Victor said he is agreeable to serving.

127

128 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Gretchen, to nominate Victor Hill as the Parks and  
129 Recreation Board's representative to the Great River Landing Committee.

130

131 On voice vote, motion carried.

132

133 Gretchen said that while she agrees with Andrea Benco that one board member should  
134 consistently attend the Great River Landing Committee's meetings, either she or another board  
135 member would be willing to attend a meeting if Victor is unable to.

136

137 Dan noted that while a substitute board member would not be allowed to vote, he or she could  
138 provide input.

139

140 **Item 8 – Authorize Clearwater Farms to use adjacent City property as pasture area for**  
141 **their animals**

142

143 Dan noted that this item had been tabled at the March 23 Parks and Recreation Board meeting  
144 and referred to a photograph of the area in question on display for the board. Dan then invited  
145 Shari to speak.

146

147 Shari noted that Clearwater Farms has existed for 15 years, and also noted that the area in  
148 question is an open field that has until last year been baled by a farmer residing in the vicinity.  
149 Shari said the city mows the field on occasion and noted that she has told several individuals that  
150 Clearwater Farms does not own the property in question. Shari said Clearwater Farms has the  
151 financial means to construct a fence around the property if the city gives its permission for  
152 Clearwater Farms to utilize the land as pasture area for horses and donkeys during the day. Shari  
153 said Clearwater Farms cares about its image, and also stated that it has a cordial relationship with  
154 the neighboring subdivision. Shari said she does not believe this area is suited to serve as  
155 parking for the Jaycees' annual haunted house, pointing out that both automobiles and lights  
156 have become immobilized. Shari said she had spoken with the President of the Onalaska  
157 Jaycees, who told her the road has proved to be sufficient for all of the organization's events in  
158 the area. Shari noted that 'no parking' signs had been placed at the area where the road narrows  
159 by Clearwater Farms, and also noted that there has been sufficient parking for events such as  
160 graduation parties and wine and beer tastings. Shari noted that individuals either park past  
161 Clearwater Farms on Green Coulee Road or before the facility. Shari also noted that the  
162 property in question is not meant for parking, pointing out that the road leading to Clearwater  
163 Farms has been widened and that there is room for parking on both sides. Shari said Clearwater  
164 Farms has not utilized the field for parking since at least 2010, adding the field is heavily

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165 saturated in March and April. Shari said Clearwater Farms would be willing to place a gate at  
166 the end if the Jaycees still utilized the field for parking. Shari said the field would be cleaned  
167 consistently, noting that Clearwater Farms' fields are cleaned twice daily.

168

169 A question was raised regarding potential issues with the fencing.

170

171 Dan said he is certain there would need to be a transfer of liabilities and stated he thought the  
172 proper course of action would be to bring this item before the board for discussion and direction.

173

174 In response to a question, Dan said no one living in the area has expressed concern to him over  
175 Clearwater Farms' proposal.

176

177 Sue noted that she had spoken to a few residents in the vicinity of Clearwater Farms last  
178 weekend and said they had told her that they either want to be surveyed or informed before any  
179 action occurs. Sue also expressed her own concerns about individuals parking on both sides of  
180 Green Coulee Road, pointing out that there are no streetlights present in this area and stating,  
181 "I'm going to maintain my opinion that I think it's dangerous." Sue also said she believes the  
182 city should explore allowing parking on only one side of Green Coulee Road and adding a  
183 streetlight. Sue, who resides in the area in question, said she recommends that a survey of the  
184 neighborhood's residents be conducted, noting that the Clearwater neighborhood has an email  
185 group and stating, "I just truly feel that ... we have not had enough conversation yet with the  
186 residents who are back-to-back with that property, or within that near vicinity."

187

188 In response to a question by Andrea Benco, Dan said he does not know how the property in  
189 question is zoned.

190

191 Shari said that while she does not oppose conducting a survey of the area's residents, she asked  
192 that such a survey accurately represent what Clearwater Farms wishes to do. Shari said she had  
193 told Sue that one horse and two donkeys would intermittently graze in the field. Shari also  
194 pointed out that the neighbors she had spoken to, one of which she identified as Sue's father-in-  
195 law, had expressed their approval of Clearwater Farms' proposal.

196

197 Dan noted that there is no written proposal and said the process began with he and Shari  
198 exchanging emails after they had spoken with Ald. Jim Bialecki. Dan also noted that Shari had  
199 attended the March Parks and Recreation Board meeting, and the two had exchanged more  
200 emails since that time. Dan said he does not object to the board requesting a formal, detailed  
201 proposal from Clearwater Farms and noted that there are communities exploring the possibility  
202 of utilizing animals for grazing on park lands as it saves labor costs. Dan said he and Mark do  
203 not object to allowing Clearwater Farms to utilize this area for grazing as it would save labor  
204 costs for the city and also possibly could lead to expanding into the wetlands area.

205

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206 Andrea Vogler said she likes the idea of future expansion and that Clearwater Farms' proposal  
207 could be a starting point. Andrea Vogler then inquired about the safety aspect of parking along  
208 Green Coulee Road.

209

210 Dan noted he had spoken with City Engineer Jarrod Holter, who told him the roads are  
211 constructed with 37½-foot right of ways. This allows for parking on one side of the road, a lane  
212 of travel, a lane of travel on the other side, and parking on the other side of the road. Dan said  
213 Jarrod admitted this is "tight," but the 37½-foot right of way is the standard utilized throughout  
214 the community. Dan said he understands Sue's concerns over the fact there are no streetlights in  
215 the area, but also said the Public Works Department will not alter its standard 37½ feet of right  
216 of way for city streets.

217

218 Shari noted that the Onalaska Jaycees rent lights for the field during their haunted house and said  
219 they could position them differently. Shari also said Clearwater Farms could maintain the field  
220 the way it is and allow parking on the field, but noted several individuals had elected to park on  
221 Green Coulee Road last year.

222

223 Andrea Vogler asked Shari to ask that Clearwater Farms prepare a written proposal and asked  
224 Sue if she would be comfortable if this information was included in the survey for the residents.

225

226 Sue said yes, stating she considers herself a representative of the residents in the Clearwater  
227 Farm area.

228

229 Andrea Benco said she wants to know how the area is zoned as well as its zoning restrictions,  
230 noting that it might not be possible for animals to graze on the field "without hiring them for a  
231 purpose" if the area is zoned as parkland.

232

233 Victor asked where individuals park.

234

235 Shari said they park on both ends of the road. Shari also noted that individuals who park on the  
236 field for the Jaycees haunted house access it via a handicap-accessible ramp and path.

237

238 Sue noted she must excuse herself to attend another meeting.

239

240 Shari noted that the animals would not graze near any houses, and that there is a significant  
241 amount of distance between the field and three houses in the area. Shari said Clearwater Farms  
242 is seeking roughly a 1½-acre area to allow its animals to graze.

243

244 Andrea Benco said it would be helpful to include this information in a diagram and a formal  
245 presentation.

246

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247 Mark said the trail was not designed for vehicular traffic, noting there are cracks on it. Mark also  
248 pointed out that the field is being rutted and stated he would rather see horses grazing in this area  
249 than vehicles parking on it.

250

251 Victor said that while he believes Clearwater Farms' proposal could benefit the city, it will  
252 depend on how the property is zoned. Victor said he does not oppose Clearwater Farms' request  
253 and that he believes seeing a formal proposal will be beneficial.

254

255 Andrea Benco reiterated her wish to see a formal proposal as it can be utilized as a point of  
256 reference if issues arise in the future.

257

258 Dan told Shari a formal presentation may include the photographs she has supplied this evening  
259 and said a presentation will help the board clearly see Clearwater Farms' intentions when it  
260 meets in May.

261

262 Shari asked board members if they want her to approach the neighbors.

263

264 Andrea Benco said the neighbors will have to receive a notice about the presentation, but also  
265 said she does not believe there has to be a formal public hearing because there will be a public  
266 input session at the next Parks and Recreation Board meeting.

267

268 **Item 9 – Update on Omni Center Chiller Replacement project**

269

270 Dan said he would like to discuss this item under Item 11.

271

272 **Item 10 – Presentation of 2014 Omni Center Youth Hockey Tournaments economic impact**  
273 **study**

274

275 Cameron, a senior Economics major at UW-La Crosse, said he had conducted a study examining  
276 the overall economic impact that the Omni Center has on the Onalaska community. Cameron  
277 said his initial goal had been to “put a number on the building itself,” but he was unable to  
278 because he had not collected enough data. Cameron said he had gathered the data for 12 youth  
279 hockey tournaments that were held in 2014 at the Omni Center. This was the focus of the  
280 economic impact on the facility. Cameron noted he had run his data through a software program  
281 called IMPLAN input-output and said this had given him direct effects, indirect effects and  
282 induced effects.

283

284 Cameron said he had obtained the IMPLAN program through the UW-L Economics Department  
285 and expressed his gratitude. Cameron described IMPLAN as a, “sophisticated input-output  
286 economic software” that estimates the change on regional economies. The multipliers that were  
287 utilized are specific to La Crosse County. Cameron explained that the direct effect is a measure

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288 of the total amount of additional expenditure that will be brought to the community by a specific  
289 event. Specifically, this refers to the expenditure going into local businesses from tournaments  
290 held at the Omni Center. The indirect effect is the amount that is re-circulated into the economy  
291 by the local businesses who received direct effect expenditure. The induced effect is the amount  
292 of employee spending of all employees of the directly affected industries, along with all the  
293 employees of the indirectly effected industries who live within La Crosse County. Specifically,  
294 this refers to the money the businesses are paying their employees and how they reinvest their  
295 money. The total impact is derived by adding direct effects, indirect effects and induced effects.  
296 Cameron noted he had created a survey and queried individuals who were attending tournaments  
297 at the Omni Center. Four or five copies of the survey also had been included in coaches'  
298 packets, and the coaches were asked to distribute the survey to parents. Individuals who took the  
299 survey were asked to provide their zip code; how many days the visitor and their immediate  
300 group would be spending in the Onalaska community; how many days the visitor would be  
301 staying overnight in the City of Onalaska or surrounding area, and if so, how many nights and  
302 which hotel at which they would be staying; how many individuals were in the immediate group;  
303 and an estimated amount of money the visitor and their immediate group would be spending in  
304 the Onalaska area. The expenditures were broken down into restaurants, bars and/or  
305 concessions; groceries; retail shopping; lodging; gasoline/diesel; and any other expenditure not  
306 covered.

307  
308 Cameron referred to Appendix B, which shows the amount of expenditure by groups staying  
309 overnight in the Onalaska and La Crosse areas, and said the total weekend expenditure in the  
310 community for a group of four averaged \$452.48. The average for a one-night stay was \$263.47.  
311 Cameron referred to Appendix C, which shows the amount of expenditure by groups that were  
312 day-tripping to the Omni Center. Day-trippers were classified as any team traveling more than  
313 25 miles to the Omni Center and not staying overnight. The average amount spent for one day  
314 was \$47.31. Cameron referred to Appendix D, which shows the 12 youth hockey tournaments  
315 held at the Omni Center in 2014 and noted both the WEHL Tournament and the Kohlman Cup –  
316 both large tournaments – had brought in \$124,723.87 and \$114,024.52, respectively. Cameron  
317 noted the average expenditure for each youth hockey tournament was \$49,248.92, and the total  
318 expenditure for the 12 tournaments was \$590,987. Cameron noted there was no section for other  
319 expenditure in the IMPLAN software and said this had been removed from the total expenditure  
320 year. This reduced the total expenditure to \$586,271.23. Cameron referred to Table 2, which  
321 shows the economic impact of the total expenditure broken down by jobs created, total labor  
322 income, and the total amount of economic output added to La Crosse County. Cameron reported  
323 that the total expenditure is responsible for the creation of 10 jobs, providing these employees  
324 with \$244,826.30 in labor income, and infusing the La Crosse County economy with  
325 \$728,886.50 in economic output.

326  
327 In response to a question by Ald. Bertrand, Cameron said the IMPLAN software is event-based.  
328

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329 Andrea Benco asked if there is an equivalent type of software that is site-based.

330

331 Dan said the purpose of examining the economic impact at the Omni Center was to show that an  
332 effort is being made to attract more events. Dan also said closing down the Omni Center would  
333 have a negative effect on the region and stated he believes Cameron's study, which has a narrow  
334 focus, shows the impact the facility has on the region.

335

336 In response to a question, Cameron estimated that six or seven of the approximately 30 surveys  
337 that had been given to the coaches had been returned.

338

339 It was noted that based on the data that was received, the financial figures Cameron presented  
340 might be conservative.

341

342 Motion by Gretchen, second by Andrea Vogler, to approve the 2014 Omni Center Youth Hockey  
343 Tournaments Economic Impact Study.

344

345 Andrea Benco asked that this study be presented to the Common Council.

346

347 On voice vote, motion carried.

348

349 **Item 11 – Discussion on time for special Parks and Recreation Board meeting on May 12<sup>th</sup>,**  
350 **2015**

351

352 Dan referred back to Item 9 and said there had been some difficulties compiling all the contract  
353 documents; however, these issues have been resolved. Dan reported that the chiller system had  
354 been bid out and appeared in the Onalaska-Holmen Courier Life on April 24. It will appear in  
355 the Onalaska-Holmen Courier Life again on Friday. Dan said that based on State of Wisconsin  
356 Statutes the bids may not be opened less than 10 days after the last day the bid was published.  
357 Therefore, the bids for the chiller project will be opened on May 12, which also is the day the  
358 Common Council will meet. Dan noted the estimated cost of the project is \$600,000 and said it  
359 will be necessary to hold a special meeting prior to the Council meeting so the project may be  
360 approved and allowed to proceed. Dan said it will take approximately 12 weeks to construct and  
361 deliver the chiller system and stated that time is of the utmost importance if there is to be ice in  
362 the Omni Center by mid-October. Dan noted there will be two prime contractors – one to  
363 perform all the building modifications, and one to perform the refrigeration work. Dan said the  
364 estimates have come in either at or below budget and expressed his eagerness to proceed.

365

366 Motion by Victor, second by Gretchen, to hold a special Parks and Recreation Board meeting at  
367 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12.

368

369 On voice vote, motion carried.

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370

371 **Item 12 – Report from Onalaska Enhancement Foundation**

372

373 No report.

374

375 **Item 13 – Report from Great River Landing Committee**

376

377 No report.

378

379 **Item 14 – Director’s Report**

380

381 **a. Parks Update**

382

383 Mark reported that mowing operations started one week ago and staff is utilizing the new, larger  
384 mower. Scott Bahr of Park Maintenance is preparing the Aquatic Center for the season; park  
385 shelter use began earlier in April; repairs are being done at the skate park; and staff has  
386 performed tree work at Bluff Park and the Waterfront, and will be performing tree work at Pierce  
387 Park.

388

389 Dan reported that he and Mark have been working with four groups from UW-L’s Recreation  
390 program. Two groups examined Holiday Heights, and two examined Nathan Hill as part of a  
391 project to design a new park layout. Dan said he and Mark will go to UW-L the first week in  
392 May to observe the presentations.

393

394 **b. Recreation Update**

395

396 Dan noted that baseball and softball tryouts have been completed, and teams have been posted  
397 online. Dan also said program registration seems to be going well, as are the pool passes. Dan  
398 said approximately 20 families have purchased Gold Card passes.

399

400 **c. Aquatic Center Update**

401

402 Dan reported that seasonal staff has been hired, and lifeguard certification classes will be held in  
403 late May and early June.

404

405 **d. Omni Center Update**

406

407 Dan noted several events have been held, including the Craft Fair, Kicking Bear, and the Family  
408 Fun Expo. Ice will be removed from Arena No. 2 for two weeks in late May so the arena may be  
409 cleaned.

410

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411 **Adjournment**

412

413 Motion by Gretchen, second by Andrea Vogler, to adjourn at 6:22 p.m.

414

415 On voice vote, motion carried.

416

417

418 Recorded By:

419

420 Kirk Bey