

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

Monday, August 24, 2015

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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, August 24, 2015. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a  
3 notice posted at City Hall.

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5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Ald. Jim Binash, Andrea Benco, Sue  
6 Peterson, Andrea Vogler, Victor Hill

7

8 Also Present: Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, Planner/Zoning Inspector Katie Meyer,  
9 Parks Maintenance Supervisor Mark Hanson, Recreation Supervisor Marcus Aumann

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11 Excused Absences: Gretchen Newhouse, Brian Udermann

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

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

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18 On voice vote, motion carried.

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

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22 Sue called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

23

24 **Katie Meyer**

25 **City of Onalaska Planner/Zoning Inspector**

26

27 Katie noted she had distributed to board members a memo announcing the Comprehensive Plan  
28 Update public open house that will be held from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday,  
29 September 30 at City Hall. Katie invited board members to attend the open house and noted that  
30 a brief presentation will be held at 5:15 p.m. This presentation will include an overview of the  
31 plan as well as the major changes that are being made to it. Katie noted land use maps will be  
32 available for viewing, and there will be highlights from Chapters 1 through 10.

33

34 Andrea Benco asked if the presentation could instead begin at 5:30 p.m.

35

36 Katie said she could discuss this with Land Use and Development Director Brea Grace.

37

38 Sue called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of  
39 the meeting.

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41

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

Reviewed 8/26/15 by Dan Wick

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43 **Item 4 – Review and possible action on Public Works Ordinance Section 6 Chapter 4**  
44 **relating to trees and shrubs**

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46 Dan noted that he, Katie, Brea and City Engineer Jarrod Holter have authored this ordinance,  
47 which is being updated to better reflect what is being done around the city and includes additions  
48 related to trees and shrubs. Dan said the board will not be voting on Item 5 at this evening’s  
49 meeting, noting that the ordinance will go before the Board of Public Works in addition to the  
50 Parks and Recreation Board. It also will go before the Administrative and Judiciary Committee  
51 at its October 7 meeting, and it will be given its first and second reading at the October 13  
52 Common Council meeting. The third and final reading, and approval, will occur in November.  
53 Dan said City Attorney Sean O’Flaherty has informed city staff that Resolution 37-2015 cannot  
54 be approved until the ordinance has been changed. However, Dan said the board may discuss  
55 Resolution 37-2015 this evening and that it will be approved at the November 23 Parks and  
56 Recreation Board meeting.

57

58 Katie summarized the following changes to the ordinance:

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- 60 • References to specific tree diseases were removed, and the ordinance was broadened to  
61 general public nuisances and diseases.
- 62 • There used to be a tree permit for planting, removal and maintenance. However, the city  
63 has not had an urban forester on staff. Therefore, staff did not want to include a permit  
64 that the city was not utilizing.
- 65 • There are updated standards on tree planting and tree maintenance, including trimming  
66 and stump grinding standards.
- 67 • The city might have the opportunity to receive cost back if a tree is damaged or killed by  
68 an entity during a road construction or utility project.
- 69 • The process to abate a public nuisance was updated. If a property owner has a tree with a  
70 dangerous limb and does not want to remove it himself/herself, the City of Onalaska may  
71 remove it on the property owner’s behalf and assess the cost. There is no assessment of  
72 cost if it is a boulevard tree because the city will perform the work.

73

74 Andrea Benco said she interprets this to mean homeowners no longer may trim their boulevard  
75 trees.

76

77 Katie said it is her understanding that the Engineering Department will send postcards to  
78 homeowners informing them when its employees will be in a certain neighborhood to trim  
79 boulevard trees. Homeowners who wish to trim the trees themselves may do so, and this is  
80 alluded to in the ordinance.

81

82 Andrea Benco reiterated that she interprets what is written in the ordinance to mean homeowners

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83 may not trim their boulevard trees. Andrea also said she believes the city must follow through  
84 with a regular schedule of maintaining boulevard trees if the ordinance is being updated.

85

86 Katie said she believes there are five to seven zones in the city and that staff needs to be going to  
87 a different one every year.

88

89 Andrea Benco noted that some of the trees that have been planted on boulevard in the past have  
90 not been “good boulevard trees.” Andrea also noted that while homeowners are not responsible  
91 for trimming the trees if they choose not to, he/she must replace the sidewalk if a tree pushes it  
92 up. Andrea asked if the cost could be mediated to the homeowner.

93

94 Katie said existing policy states that the tree will remain if it is healthy.

95

96 Andrea Benco said homeowners should have the opportunity to replace a tree or cover the cost if  
97 the sidewalk will have to be replaced every three years.

98

99 Katie said she will discuss this matter with Jarrod. Katie also noted that several of the trees  
100 damaging sidewalks are ash trees and said the city potentially might remove an ash tree if it is  
101 consistently causing damage.

102

103 Ald. Binash asked Dan if there is a registered arborist on staff.

104

105 Dan said there is one in the Parks and Recreation Department. Dan said Mark would evaluate  
106 situations and determine which staff member would perform the work. Dan also noted that  
107 Public Works staff had undergone tree-trimming training. Dan said according to the resolution,  
108 he and Jarrod would be the designees.

109

110 Katie noted that the urban forest is managed through three different departments. The Parks  
111 Department performs inspections, the Street Department removes boulevard and park trees and  
112 grinds stumps, and Katie works with potential tree replacements.

113

114 Dan reminded Katie to research Section 6-4-9(d), which states no public person may trim public  
115 trees in public right-of-ways. Dan noted there have been discussions regarding possibly holding  
116 educational sessions for homeowners who want to trim a boulevard tree.

117

118 Andrea Benco asked if the board needs to wait to approve this item.

119

120 Dan said the board may approve it, pending changes. Dan reiterated that the ordinance also will  
121 go before the Board of Public Works and the Administrative and Judiciary Committee.

122

123 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Victor, to postpone action on Public Works Ordinance

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124 Section 6 Chapter 4 relating to trees and shrubs.

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126 Ald. Binash noted he sits on the Administrative and Judiciary Committee and suggested that the  
127 board make any recommendations it wants to at this time.

128

129 Dan noted that Katie is taking this item through the various committees and said that if board  
130 does not provide the answers being sought the process will be delayed and the Administrative  
131 and Judiciary Committee will not be able to address this item at its October 7 meeting.

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133 Ald. Binash suggested that anything the Administrative and Judiciary Committee should pay  
134 particular attention should be brought up this evening.

135

136 Andrea Benco said homeowners either should be required to trim boulevard trees in a timely  
137 fashion to preserve their integrity or the city must commit to trimming the trees in a timely  
138 manner.

139

140 Dan told Andrea that Jarrod likely would tell her city staff is in her neighborhood every four  
141 years. Dan told the board that there have been multiple attempts to hire a city forester through  
142 the budget process, but these requests have been denied.

143

144 Andrea Benco asked if the city would commit to maintain boulevard trees on a regular schedule.

145

146 Dan reiterated that Jarrod would tell Andrea city staff has been through her neighborhood every  
147 four years. Dan noted that staff might not trim a single tree because the Public Works  
148 Department looks for a 10-foot clearance on sidewalks and a 14-foot clearance on streets. Dan  
149 said that according to the ordinance, homeowners must call the Parks Department, Street  
150 Department or Planning Department if they want to hire an arborist to trim a tree.

151

152 Ald. Binash pointed out that the ordinance states a homeowner may contact either a designated  
153 agent of the city or an arborist. Ald. Binash said he believes homeowners who have a  
154 troublesome tree have recourse.

155

156 Katie referred to sidewalks that are damaged by boulevard trees and said she believes this needs  
157 to be a policy decision and is not directly related to this particular ordinance. Katie returned to  
158 the question of trimming and said the Parks and Recreation Board could decide to table this item  
159 and resume discussion at its September 28 meeting. Katie said the ordinance's language could  
160 be modified if an explanation is provided as to why it will not change.

161

162 Dan said he is certain there is similar language in all city ordinances telling citizens what they  
163 can and cannot do. Dan also expressed concern that if this item returns before the Parks and  
164 Recreation Board at its September 28 meeting and staff informs the board there will not be any

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165 changes to the ordinance, it runs the risk of not being approved when it needs to go before the  
166 Administrative and Judiciary Committee.

167

168 Andrea Benco said her concern is that the board will approve the ordinance without knowing the  
169 language contained in it.

170

171 Katie reminded the board the ordinance also will be going before the Board of Public Works for  
172 feedback at its September 1 meeting.

173

174 Dan asked the board to rely on him and Katie to take the ordinance to the Board of Public Works  
175 with the recommendation made by the Parks and Recreation Board this evening. Dan said the  
176 Board of Public Works could either agree or disagree with the recommendation.

177

178 Katie said it would be possible to provide the Parks and Recreation Board with a memo stating if  
179 the Board of Public Works decided to either keep the language the same or alter it.

180

181 Motion and second withdrawn.

182

183 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Victor, to approve Public Works Ordinance Section 6  
184 Chapter 4 relating to trees and shrubs as written and request that considerations be taken given  
185 the concerns raised by the Parks and Recreation Board regarding boulevard tree trimming.

186

187 On voice vote, motion carried.

188

189 **Item 5 – Approve Resolution 37-2015 – Resolution to Appoint Staff Foresters and Park**  
190 **Board Designee For City Forestry Needs Under Wisconsin Statutes 27.09**

191

192 No action was taken on this item.

193

194 **Item 6 – Review and possible action on Natural Land Protection Agreement with**  
195 **Mississippi Valley Conservancy**

196

197 Dan asked the board that this item be tabled, noting that his department has been working with  
198 MVC. Dan said discussions resumed when the 30-acre parcel near the La Crosse Country Club  
199 was acquired and referred to the revised document distributed to board members. Dan said he  
200 will be seeking approval of this item at the September 28 Parks and Recreation Board meeting.

201

202 Motion by Andrea Vogler, second by Ald. Binash, to table both Item 5 and Item 6 until the  
203 September 28 Board of Public Works meeting.

204

205 On voice vote, motion carried, 4-0, with one abstention (Andrea Benco).

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**Item 7 – 2016 to 2020 Capital Improvement Projects**

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a. Parks

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Dan said board members will prioritize the Capital Improvement Projects before them this evening, and these priorities will be submitted to Jarrod and go before the Board of Public Works. Dan noted that all of the Parks and Recreation Board's projects were eliminated from the 2015 Capital Improvements Budget. Dan said each of the following items are on the list of 2016 Capital Improvement Projects:

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- **Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Rewrite (\$15,000):** The Comprehensive Plan, last addressed in 2010, must be updated and rewritten every five years. Dan noted the plan has been utilized yearly and said he believes it would be prudent to hire a consultant to assist with an update. Dan said this project must be done in 2016 to ensure that the city qualifies for stewardship funding.
- **Nathan Hills Area Playground (\$25,000):** This playground has been discussed with Nathan Hills residents. Dan said there is funding available, including in a park development account.
- **Van Riper Park – playground replacement (\$75,000):** Dan said the playground next to the Omni Center would be replaced. Dan said he believes this should be a priority.
- **Van Riper Park – outfield fencing (west field) (\$13,000):** This would be a permanent fence.
- **New cameras at the Aquatic Center (\$15,000) and skate park (\$4,000):** Dan said the cameras at the Aquatic Center are outdated and the system needs an upgrade. Dan noted that the hard drive for the cameras at the skate park ceased functioning in 2014 and nothing is being recorded.
- **Pierce Park shade structure (\$30,000):** Dan noted this item has appeared on the Capital Improvement Project list for several years.
- **Hilltopper Heights Park basketball court overlay (\$18,500)**

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Dan noted he has had a request for new playground equipment at Oak Park No. 4. Dan said he has spoken with Sean and asked the board to allocate between \$10,000 and \$15,000 for this equipment. It may be placed in the Capital Improvements Budget and then transferred to the Park Fund. Dan said new equipment may be added at Oak Park No. 4 to meet the needs of the families moving into this area.

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Sue asked why \$75,000 is being suggested to replace the playground equipment at Van Riper Park.

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246

Dan said it will be necessary to remove the entire playground and install handicap-accessible

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247 equipment. Dan noted that he has seen several families park their automobiles in the Omni  
248 Center parking lot and take their children to the Van Riper Park playground.

249

250 Andrea Benco said she believes the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Rewrite should  
251 receive the highest priority as the city will lose opportunities for additional funding if it is not  
252 completed.

253

254 Andrea Vogler said she would prioritize the Van Riper Park playground replacement.

255

256 Andrea Benco asked how much the Hilltopper Heights Park basketball court is utilized and how  
257 much wear it has sustained.

258

259 Mark said it has begun to deteriorate and noted the playground is utilized frequently.

260

261 Andrea Benco suggested prioritizing the Pierce Park shade structure.

262

263 Board members prioritized the Parks items in the following order:

264

- 265 1. Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Rewrite
- 266 2. Van Riper Park playground replacement
- 267 3. New cameras at the Aquatic Center and skate park
- 268 4. Pierce Park shade structure
- 269 5. Van Riper Park outfield fencing
- 270 6. Hilltopper Heights Park basketball court overlay
- 271 7. Nathan Hills Area Playground

272

273 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Andrea Vogler, to approve the order of Parks items to be  
274 prioritized in the 2016 Capital Improvement Projects.

275

276 On voice vote, motion carried.

277

278 b. Omni Center

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280 Dan said the following items are on the list of 2016 Capital Improvement Projects:

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282 • **Water heater for Zamboni room in Arena No. 2 (\$7,000):** The commercial hot water  
283 heater would be replaced.

284 • **LED signboard for Omni Center (\$15,000)**

285 • **Overhaul of chiller in Arena No. 2 (\$20,000):** This is ongoing maintenance

286 • **Arena No. 1 bleacher work – Perma-Cap bleacher seat & riser cover (\$30,750) and  
287 end & front bleacher rails (\$19,500):** Dan said the Omni Center's bleachers are not

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288 code compliant, and the bleacher rails would address this. The Perma-Cap bleachers  
289 would be placed over the existing wooden bleachers.

290 • **Omni Center roof (\$96,375):** This would be only for the lower section of the roof,  
291 where leaking has occurred.

292 • **Arena No. 1 sound system (\$45,000)**

293 • **Security cameras (\$25,000)**

294

295 Dan expressed hope that perhaps one of the aforementioned projects could be completed prior to  
296 the end of 2015 based on bids for projects (e.g., chiller, flooring) completed this year.

297

298 Andrea Benco suggested giving top priority to the security cameras and the LED signboard.

299

300 Ald. Binash said he believes the roof is the biggest priority.

301

302 Dan said he believes the bleacher work should be prioritized as it will further enhance the Omni  
303 Center.

304

305 Board members prioritized the Omni Center items in the following order:

306

307 1. Omni Center roof

308 2. Arena No. 1 bleacher work

309 3. Overhaul of chiller in Arena No. 2

310 4. Security cameras

311 5. LED signboard

312 6. Arena No. 1 sound system

313 7. Water heater for Zamboni room in Arena No. 2

314

315 Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Victor, to approve the order of Omni Center items to be  
316 prioritized in the 2016 Capital Improvement Projects.

317

318 On voice vote, motion carried.

319

320 **Item 8 – Update on Omni Center Chiller Replacement project**

321

322 a. Minnesota Ice Timeline

323

324 Dan said Minnesota Ice is working with Olympic Builders and noted the new chiller system will  
325 be set up on a concrete pad. Dan said it appears the chiller will arrive at the Omni Center on  
326 Wednesday, September 9, and there will be a 30-day window to install it. Dan expects ice to be  
327 ready by Friday, October 23.

328

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329 Victor inquired about a financial discrepancy with a subcontractor.

330

331 Dan said the Board of Public Works will discuss this at its September 1 meeting. Dan noted the  
332 contractor had omitted \$21,000 worth of hot water heaters and said the contractor has asked to  
333 purchase a different model. The contractor is requesting approximately \$14,000 more.

334

335 b. Olympic Builders Timeline

336

337 Dan said the new wall for the Zamboni room is “all in line.”

338

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

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341 Dan said the OEF will meet again on Wednesday, October 14.

342

343 **Item 10 – Report from Great River Landing Committee**

344

345 Victor noted an informational meeting regarding the Great River Landing Project will be held at  
346 6 p.m. Wednesday at Irving Pertzsch Elementary School.

347

348 Ald. Binash said there are three bond issues from which to choose. One of the issues relates to a  
349 change in Wisconsin Statutes regarding tourism dollars. Ald. Binash noted this was going to be  
350 utilized to help pay for the bond and said the Tourism Commission must approve allowing a  
351 portion of the funds to come forward. Ald. Binash said a decision must be made on what to do  
352 east of the railroad tracks.

353

354 Andrea Benco noted the city is obligated to construct a trailhead facility east of the railroad  
355 tracks.

356

357 Ald. Binash said the city could discover this week if it will receive a \$350,000 grant from the  
358 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The city must match this grant. Ald. Binash  
359 reiterated that a decision must be made on what to do east of the railroad tracks, and also if the  
360 city wants to bond for it.

361

362 **Item 11 – Director’s Report**

363

364 **a. Parks Update**

365

366 Mark reported the following:

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- 368
- At least 20 dead pine trees have been cut down at Glen Fox Park.
  - The Aquatic Center closed for the season on August 23.
  - Tree work will take place in October at Van Riper No. 2.
- 369
- 370

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**b. Recreation Update**

Dan reported that tackle football has begun. Fifty-five children are registered, and games have been scheduled with neighboring communities.

Marcus noted that he had distributed copies of the 2015 Fall/Winter Activity Guide to board members.

Dan said the Parks and Recreation Department will utilize the gymnasiums at Irving Pertzsch and Northern Hills Elementary School once construction at both schools is complete because the city has contributed funds toward both projects.

Marcus said there are plans to hold music classes in conjunction with Life in Harmony Music Therapy of West Salem.

**c. Aquatic Center Update**

Marcus reported the following:

- The Aquatic Center was voted as La Crosse County’s best pool.
- The Diggity Dog Dip will be held Saturday, September 5.

**d. Omni Center Update**

Dan reported the following:

- The Onalaska High School boys’ hockey team lost its storage space, but new storage space was found.
- The Max Galaxy software is functional.
- Gold Pass will end on Monday, August 31.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Andrea Benco, second by Andrea Vogler, to adjourn.

On voice vote, motion carried.

Recorded By:

Kirk Bey

Reviewed 8/26/15 by Dan Wick