

CITY OF OCONTO
MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AND PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
City Hall – Council Chambers
1210 Main St, Oconto, WI 54153
TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2023 - 6:00 PM

Draft for Approval

Minutes of the Public Hearing before the Committee of the Whole and Parks & Recreation Committee Held on March 7, 2023, Pursuant to Notice Duly Given:

Public Hearing called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor John Panetti

Roll Call: see below.

1. City of Oconto Pool

Public Input –

- Courtney Sowle, Town of Oconto resident, read a letter that was sent out to Goodhue residents and their City Council and an email from the City of Goodhue, MN. She stated grants and donations could raise enough money to build the pool.
- Garrett Sowle, 712 McDonald St, spoke against raising taxes, but in favor of grants and community donations to build the pool. To operate the pool, give pool to Holtwood Campground to maintain and operate. Campground rates would need to be raised.
- Mayor Panetti stated he and John Wittkopf attended a meeting with the Bond Center, the Bond Center received a \$35,000 Bond Foundation grant and are deciding if they want to keep the waiting pool or cement it over and put in a tennis and pickleball court and a splash pad. The options estimate between \$80,000-\$485,000 for the splash pad alone. The Bond Centre has zero interest in an outside pool as it is not feasible. Splash pad only.
- John Wittkopf stated the Bond Center is proposing adding play equipment for the kids, a splash pad, a walking trail, possibly tennis court and pickleball, an entire activity center open to the public.
- Mayor Panetti stated the Bond Center asked Would the City help with funding of the water for the splash pad?
- Sue Jacquart, 134 Lindsey Ave, stated the splash pad sounds nice, but she has been to the Goodhue pool and it is more for families, not just kids.
- Ross Knotke, 318 Jefferson St, stated he is from Goodhue. The City of Oconto pool was part of the reason he moved here.
- Jane Gondeck, 2006 Park Ave, loved the pool and has great memories. Spoke in favor of a new pool.
- Sue Anderson questioned if the \$35,000 grant the Bond Center received is the same grant that we were trying to obtain from the Bond Foundation for the City Park playground equipment. - We are unsure of the answer.
- Jean Feldt stated she fought to keep the pool, but we did not have the money to keep it going and now we need to figure out how to build a new one. Everyone wants a pool, but what we need to decide is how to pay for it. Grants and fundraisers are a great idea.
- Mayor Panetti stated the Director Casey Ermis told him finding lifeguards is an issue and the reason the Bond Center backed away from an outdoor pool is because of the high cost of chemicals and to maintain the pool.

- Casey Sowle, 616 Washington St, spoke in favor of the pool and in opposition of raising taxes.
- Ashley Carey, 616 Washington St, worked at the Bond Center. They would have swimming lessons and lifeguard classes to bring in income.
- Shannon Osmon, 818 Park Ave, spoke against raising taxes and stated Green Bay’s pool is often closed because they can’t find lifeguards. Grants to build are great, but how will the City operate it.
- Jaime Younger, 518 Fourth St, spoke in opposition of the pool if it will raise taxes and stated as a person who likes to camp often, Holtwood Campground prices are already higher than she would pay. If we raise them more, we will lose campers.
- Rachel Demerath, 455 Monroe St, stated if we do build a pool she would like to see it ADA compliant and more handicap accessible.
- John Bostedt, Parks & Recreation Director, stated our old pool did have a handicap chair lift and agrees of the importance.
- Sue Jacquart, 134 Lindsey Ave, stated that the Goodhue pool is ADA compliant.
- Garrett Sowle, 712 McDonald St, Holtwood seasonal campsites are booked up and we could raise the prices.
- Dianne Motiff stated for grants we would need more details on the pool plans.
- Jaime Younger, 518 Fourth St, gave Courtney Sowle her remaining time to speak.
- Courtney Sowle, Town of Oconto resident, stated she will provide the committee with the pool builder contact information that she reached out to.

Mayor Panetti called three times for additional public input, hearing none.

MOTION: Stenstrup / Motiff *Motion to close the public hearing at 6:44 pm.*

Voice Vote: 8 ayes - **MOTION CARRIED**

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Committee of the Whole and Parks & Recreation Committee Held on March 7, 2023, Pursuant to Notice Duly Given:

Meeting called to order at 6:44 pm by Mayor John Panetti

Roll Call –

Present: Mayor John Panetti, City Attorney Frank Calvert, Voting Members: Butch Mehlberg, John Wittkopf, Patsy Bake, Jean Feldt, Bob LeBreck, Diane Motiff, Sue Anderson, and Lori Stenstrup

Also present: Parks & Recreation Director John Bostedt, City Administrator Brittney Bickel and as recording secretary, and other interested parties

Excused: Steve Stock

Approval of Agenda –

MOTION: Wittkopf / Feldt

Motion to approve the agenda for the Joint Meeting on March 7, 2023.

Voice Vote: 8 ayes - **MOTION CARRIED**

Discussion/Recommendation on –

- a. City of Oconto Pool

Wittkopf asked what the Parks & Recreation Director thought. John Bostedt stated he thinks a pool is a great city asset. It comes down to the money and the staff to run the pool each year. We can only charge so much admission, need to keep it affordable for everyone to use. We tried open swim, pool parties, and swimming lessons but we couldn't staff them. Mehlberg asked Bostedt how many lifeguards it takes to run the pool, Bostedt replied 7. Stenstrup handed out packets of information with old pool and potential new pool facts. It covered old pool: actual revenues and expenses, # of swimmers, # of lifeguards, # of passes sold, etc.; new pool: actual cost to build Goodhue pool, actual revenues and expenses, etc. A referendum would be the best indicator of what the City of Oconto citizens want, if they want their taxes raised to operate a pool. Wittkopf commended Stenstrup on her research and stated there is a lot to think about and more work that needs to be done. LeBreck stated we need details on the complete project; cement, fencing, chemicals, etc. The interest in fundraising will be high in the start and then will die down. We need a plan for what happens then. Stenstrup asked Bostedt about the current availability at Holtwood Campground during the upcoming holiday weekends as they are usually filled up right away in the year. Bostedt said there are sites still available. We have projects at Holtwood Campground that need to be completed, such as new roads. The campground is currently self-funding, but in the past it was not, if it stops making enough revenues to cover the expenses, the General Fund, taxpayer dollars, will start again funding it. The Mayor stated it is important to wait until the end of the year to evaluate the effects of the rate increase before talking about another increase. Anderson stated if there is money in the Campground's fund balance, the Parks & Rec Committee wants to use it to improve sites and other improvements that need to be done. Wittkopf asked if we do a referendum question, are we then required to build a pool if the majority vote is yes. No, it would only help us make a decision, money is still a deciding factor. How long does a referendum take? Calvert stated 70 days prior to the Election. LeBreck stated we had a referendum before building Ageson Lake and Ageson Pool. The Mayor stated we need to have a cost associated with the referendum question.

MOTION: Feldt / Bake

Motion to create a referendum question for the next General Election ballot.

Voice Vote: 8 ayes - MOTION CARRIED

The Mayor stated we now need to come up with a cost. Wittkopf stated Stenstrup included the actual cost of the proposed pool in Goodhue, that's a close start. Motiff stated we would need to have a consultant come in and have contractors bid on it. Stenstrup mentioned Goodhue had a feasibility study done to help guide them. Anderson mentioned using the plans from Goodhue to save us money. Calvert stated municipal projects must go out for bid. Bickel stated what she understands the consensus among the committees and Courtney Sowle is that the referendum will be for the cost to operate the pool, not to build the pool. The pool is to be built with grants, donations, and fundraising. We would need to get a good estimate put together on what the pool will cost to operate - what taxes would need to be raised each year to maintain and operate the pool.

Adjournment –

MOTION: Wittkopf / Motiff

Motion to adjourn at 7:43 pm. Voice Vote: 8 ayes - MOTION CARRIED

Minutes submitted by City Administrator Brittney M. Bickel