

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: May 18, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall

Members Present: Tom Kilian, Lou Larson, Tom Neal, Pat Peckham (c), Sarah Watson

Others Present: Jamie Polley-Park Director, Marcus Aumann-Asst. Director, Karyn Powers-Recreation Superintendent, Katie Rosenberg-Mayor, Dale Grosskurth-Health Department Environmental Health and Safety Director

1. In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. It was noted that a quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Peckham at 4:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment – none brought forward

3. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Opening of the Wausau Pools at Phase III of the Badger Bounce Back Plan
Polley explained that the agenda had been released last week before the State Supreme Court decision overturning the Governor's orders. Department staff had been working very closely with regional pool directors in the area to have a similar message of opening the pools when Phase III of the Badger Bounce Back Plan was reached. That would have meant opening safely with no limits on the number of people that could come to the pool. If they open sooner they need to know from the Health Department what is required to have the pools properly up and running so that they can open no later than July 1st. Even without a Badger Bounce Back Plan the virus isn't gone and there are still concerns with it. Polley also wanted to note that pools and playgrounds are what this Department is all about and what it strives to give to the community but it also has to follow the guidance of the professionals who are following what this pandemic means to Wisconsin and to Marathon County as to how its programs can be run safely.

Dale Grosskurth discussed the recommendations regarding pools. He said keeping employees and customers safe is the number one priority. Employee wellness checks are important to try and prevent further spread of the virus. When considering cleaning and disinfecting at pools, there are play features which children are all over and probably wouldn't be a good idea to open because they get so much contact. Also shared equipment such as using the slide handrails, concession counters, and tables and lounge chairs are other constant contact features that will need constant monitoring, cleaning and sanitation. Capacity at the pools will have to be reduced to maintain the six foot spacing and a plan for how to deal with customers coming to the pool. This is challenging everywhere particularly at pools. The Park Department would need to provide sanitizing stations. Any pool equipment provided to customers or staff would also need to be sanitized. It is recommended that each facility have a designated person that ensures the guidelines are followed and it cannot be a lifeguard. Mayor Rosenberg questioned if Grosskurth could say where they were at in the Badger Bounce Back phases. Grosskurth said it would be premature to say that they were anywhere near Phase III of that plan.

Kilian said if they had to make a decision of opening today the recommendation would be to not open. Grosskurth agreed and said the pools are supposed to be a free for all funfest. It's hard to imagine managing a lot of children that are exerting energy, breathing in each others faces, spurring water and he just doesn't see it as a good choice. Kilian questioned Grosskurth about the number of people the virus transmits to and also had a concern about the Kawaski-like syndrome in children that is being correlated to the virus. Grosskurth did not have exact transmission numbers but thought that for every positive case that there are about twenty contacts being monitored and also agreed that the Kawaski-like syndrome was a concern when dealing with children. Watson asked if physical distancing would have to be more than six feet. Grosskurth said when someone is breathing harder even being a little further away is probably better. He also mentioned that the virus isn't strong enough to withstand the sun. Chlorine will kill the virus but it will not kill the virus within a person. The bigger concern other than surface contact is the fact that it can be transmitted when people are too close together.

Polley said for the pools to be open they would need additional staffing to control patrons on the deck and for additional sanitation measures. Water features and slides will be closed. One guideline if there is limited attendance at the pool is that they have to try to make it equitable for everybody and it's hard to do that in this community. The Department was asked to put together its general anticipated revenues losses and cost savings for this year. If the pools do not open it would be significant amount of cost saving to the City. Revenues will be lower as Polley did not believe they would be able to safely offer swim lessons this summer. Revenues will also be lower because they will have to limit the numbers of people at the pool and because there will still be people that will not come to the pools even if they are open. The water and chemical expenses will remain the same. There will be a slight savings from labor costs by not opening until July 1st but those expenses could go up if they

have to add staff for additional cleaning. There will be an additional burden on staff, who are mostly college students, to monitor the actions of people who may not want to adhere to physical distancing requirements. She finds it very difficult to offer a safe swimming environment for families and staff this summer. Polley noted she had nineteen different public comment emails. The vast majority were very encouraging to open the pools. Polley said staff understands the pools are a wonderful and safe place for children to be and people can make their own choices but from where they are at as an organization they have staff that they are obligated to keep safe as well as the community. Larson thought that they owed it to the taxpayers and the people that have given public comment to figure out a way to have a safe pool environment for the summer.

Powers raised a concern about the contact tracing aspect if there were a case at the pool as they don't track everyone that enters the pool. Grosskurth said follow up would occur and lists of who was there would be helpful for outreach. Larson wondered if people could sign some sort of waiver before entering the pool. Grosskurth thought something like that would have to be run through legal.

Neal felt with the projected ongoing spread and potential for vectoring in a pool situation and that children can spread the disease to anyone they come into contact with he would lean toward not having the pools. Otherwise the only compromise he could think of is to have one pool open for the summer. Polley said staff had discussed that option and the question would be which one. None of them are very large so there would be capacity issues. Polley mentioned the communities that have already made the decision to close their pools and said after this week they will know more about what other communities are doing. They need to give the pool staff an answer about whether or not they have a job or they are going to lose people. She did not believe the conversation would change in two weeks from where it's at right now. Peckham questioned Grosskurth if he thought there was a reasonable chance they would be to Phase III by mid-June. Grosskurth did not believe they would be. Kilian asked that a statement from Supervisor Harris and another citizen concerns be added to the ones Polley had. Rosenberg wanted to rely on science for guidance and hoped they could wait until the next meeting when there should be more data. There will be a testing event in Wausau next week. Larson felt no matter what their decision is that half of the people will be against it. **Motion** by Larson to table the decision about pools until the June 1st meeting, second by Neal. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 4-1 with Kilian as the dissenting vote.

9. Future Agenda Items – Pools

10. Next Meeting Date – June 1, 2020 at 4:30 pm in Council Chambers at City Hall.

11. Adjourn – **Motion** by Peckham, second by Neal to adjourn at 5:15 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.