

Community for Us, By Us

Meeting 3 - August 9, 2016

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Meeting Summary

On Tuesday, August 9, residents met from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at East Junior High School to explore aquatics, one of the top community priorities surfaced in the [June 28 WIPPS meeting](#), the second meeting in the series. This meeting was an opportunity to explore the aquatics issue in more depth and to offer an open and civil space to consider all the factors and their impact on the community.

The goals for the evening included:

- Discussion on the value of aquatics in our community;
- Explore the value and broad impact of aquatics to our region; and
- Talk with other residents about how to get engaged on this high community priority.

Forty-four residents attended the meeting to become further informed on aquatics and engage in dialogue on this issue. Most in attendance had attended or viewed the City's [July 26 aquatics presentation](#). To begin the discussion, a brief history of aquatics in our community was shared. History shows that there has always been a strong presence of aquatics in our region dating back to 1913, with both indoor and outdoor options.

Value

Residents shared the value of aquatics to themselves and their families. Through table discussions, many different perspectives on values emerged but they all had one thing in common – the need for safe recreation that meets the needs of our entire community - kids, families, and seniors. Many also expressed the need for both an indoor and outdoor option.

Information

The group vetted information and asked questions about what was known and unknown about the aquatics issue. Through this discussion, it became clear that there were a number of items still in question about this important community issue. Questions emerged around these common themes:

- Can having both an indoor and outdoor facility be considered?
- Accessibility – location, cost, physical, hours of operation
- Sources of funds and financing structure

- Long-term impact and sustainability – economic benefit
- Regional partnership opportunities

Impact

Residents participated in a discussion that focused on the aquatics decision from a long-term, community impact and economic growth perspective. Residents considered the potential of aquatics as a regional draw, helping to bring in new residents, visitors, and businesses. They also saw the opportunity for more money to be spent locally.

Opportunities to Engage

Once information was shared and numerous questions were surfaced, residents determined there is a need to seek further clarity. Residents discussed how they could take action individually and collectively. Many shared that they would like to contact their Alderperson to seek clarity on the questions presented. Others also considered emailing aquatics@wirapids.org email address to share their opinions, concerns, and questions on aquatics. Most residents believe that further discussion around the questions presented will take place at the special meeting of the Common Council on August 18, and they plan to attend the meeting. Residents also volunteered to share the WIPPS meeting summary with the Mayor, Common Council members, and the Wood County Board of Supervisors (due to the municipal/regional opportunities for collaboration). Others indicated that they would share this information and discuss with their family, friends, coworkers and neighbors.

Conclusion

Throughout the entire evening, residents were consistently interested in ensuring that whatever opportunities occur in the future, they must be inclusive, accessible, and sustainable.

Table Discussion Themes and Questions

What is the value of aquatics to you and your family?

Theme	Number of Tables Mentioning (out of 7 tables)
Health/Fitness/Exercise	7
Leisure/Fun/Recreation	7
Access to Swim Lessons/Water Safety	7
Family/Kid Friendly	6
Intergenerational	6
Economic Development/Impact/Economic Driver	5
Inexpensive/Cost	3
Swim Meets/Teams/Training Opportunities	3

Social Networking Opportunities	3
Zero Entry/Physically Accessible for All	2
Accessibility/Inclusive for All (Daily Access, Operational Considerations)	2
Attraction for those visiting for other purposes (baseball/soccer teams)	2
Keeping \$ Local (stay here and spend here)	2
Demonstrated Historical Value	2
Regional Asset	2

What are the most important factors to consider as a community to make the best decision on aquatics – Community Considerations?

Theme	Number of Tables Mentioning (out of 7 tables)
Equitable/Inclusive/Access for all - Programming & Location	4
Cost - Initial investment & cost/visit	4
Long-term economic impact	4
Public/resident engagement/decision-making and transparency	3
Location	3
Long-term sustainability - Financial & Environmental	3
Both indoor and outdoor	3
Regional/Municipal participation - Access & Cost	3
Wide variety of amenities and opportunities	3
Size/capacity	2
External partnerships	2
Essential community hub	2
Competitive swim meet opportunities	2
Expansion opportunities	1
Potential collaboration with school system	1
Safety	1
Potential YMCA usage restrictions	1
Outdoor benefits	1

What are the most important factors to consider as a community to make the best decision on aquatics – Long Term Impact, Future Generations?

Theme	Number of Tables Mentioning (out of 7 tables)
Long-term sustainability	4
Access for all	2
Jobs for young people	2
Draw for new businesses and employees	2
Draw for new/returning residents and visitors	2
Investment in recreation	2
Money spent locally	1
Increased community health	1
Positive family fun	1
Host swim meets	1

What do we need to know?

Option Selection and Considerations

- Can we have more than one of the options presented (outdoor, indoor, and splash pad)?
- What are the comparable benefits of outdoor vs. indoor options?
- What was the process to determine the two options presented?
- How were residents involved in the development of the two options?
- What was the data result of the market studies?
- How are other communities with outdoor aquatic centers benefiting financially? What is the evaluation of their investments?
- If one option is selected today, does that mean that another option could not be added in the future?

Municipality Participation and Other Partnership Potential

- What is the City’s progress on seeking collaboration with other municipalities/communities on funding, access, etc.? Have other municipalities been approached? How can residents get engaged in the conversations to help support the effort?
- Why is there no municipal indoor option?
- Could the City and municipals consider supporting both an indoor and outdoor option?
- Who is part of the financial plan (foundations, corporate, school board, city)?
- Does LHS have funding to support the YMCA option to help meet their needs?
- Do residents outside the city know that admission costs to their families could be higher than expectations for city residents based on lack of initial collaborative investment?
- What’s going to happen to the LHS pool?
- Will investment in a new aquatics center result in programming changes and/or closing of other aquatics assets (Port Edwards YMCA, LHS, Sera Park)?
- Can we collaborate with LHS for diving access?
- Could EJHS use the pool for swim classes?

- What are the schools' positions and what is the potential for collaboration/involvement?

Economic/Financial

- How will a new aquatics center be leveraged to drive broader community and economic growth?
- How could we leverage the money brought in to the community (visitor spending/tourism) from the outdoor option?
- What is the full cost breakdown - true construction and operational costs? And how will options be paid for?
- Who is able to use the YMCA option for \$2.00? Only City residents? Regional Residents?
- Would the per visit cost for the outdoor municipal option be the same for city residents and regional residents?
- What is the cost for participants for all indoor and outdoor options now; long term? Will people in outlying areas also experience a tax increase?
- What does the price and access look like after 10 years for indoor YMCA/City partnership option?
- What costs will be associated with programming (e.g. swimming lessons)?

Location

- How does location affect inclusiveness and access?
- What locations are being considered?
- Has transportation to and from the variety of options and locations been considered?
- Has parking at all locations been considered?

General Operating Questions

- What unique features can we have to attract others – especially teens and millennials?
- How do construction timelines vary between the different options?
- What are the plans for maintenance (cost and otherwise) for each of the options?
- How will the facilities be supervised?
- Will ice skating opportunities be impacted by the Witter Field location option?
- What would a schedule of use look like?
- How will we ensure the facilities can accommodate guests of all ages?
- How will we ensure the facilities will be safe?

Special Common Council Meeting on Thursday, August 18

- Will special meeting on aquatics be closed or will public input be recognized and how?
- What decisions will be made?
- How do residents of outlying communities (non-city residents) offer input?
- Are Common Council members informed enough to make a decision at this meeting?