

City of Groveport

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Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 2, 2021

4:30 PM

"Special Meeting"

Council Chambers

City Council

Mayor Lance Westcamp

Council Members - Jean Ann Hilbert, Ed Dildine, Shawn Cleary, Becky Hutson, Scott Lockett & John Houglan

I. Call to Order

by Mayor Lance Westcamp at 4:30 p.m.

Staff Present: BJ King - Administrator, Kevin Shannon - Law Director, Jason Carr - Director of Finance, Casey Adams - Chief of Police Lieutenant Josh Short, Detective Josh Gilbert, Officer Ernie Bell and Officer Sam Yockey

Guests Present: The Guest Book is on file with the Clerk of Council.

II. Roll Call

Absent: 1 - Edward Dildine

Present: 5 - Shawn M. Cleary, Jean Ann Hilbert, John Hougland, Becky Hutson, and Scott Lockett

III. Topic to be Discussed.**A. Incident at Outdoor Aquatic Center and Potential Action.**

Law Director Kevin Shannon commented that as Council is aware the City has had some very unfortunate incidents at the City's beloved Recreational Center, specifically at the Outdoor Aquatic Park, in the last month. There was an incident again last Wednesday evening (June 30, 2021) and as such, after consultation with the Administrator and the Mayor, they felt the need to have this meeting this evening. Mr. Shannon reported that present at this meeting is Detective Josh Gilbert. The four suspects have been identified with respect to the incident on Wednesday afternoon. The City does expect juvenile charges to be filed out of the incident. There are a few more things that need wrapped up in the investigation, and as such, further details can't be given at this point. Once the investigation is concluded and charges are in fact filed, further information can be released. He gave accolades to Detective Gilbert, who for the last 16 hours, has been non-stop since this incident occurred. The City Administration appreciates his and the Groveport Police Department's efforts in bringing this to a resolution. However, the City has an issue at the Aquatic Center. About three and a half weeks ago, the Aquatic Center had an incident with a gentleman who was intoxicated, who was subsequently charged with criminal trespassing and menacing and may be facing an assault charge as well. For these reasons the Administrator and the Chief of Police requested that Council consider making a motion as to the current operations at the Outdoor Aquatic

Center.

Jodi Hoel - 297 Walnut Street

Jodi Hoel addressed the recent attack on the female lifeguard at the Groveport Outdoor Aquatic Center. The incident was a tragedy for not only the young lady who was so viciously attacked, but for all of the good citizens and members of our established community. The incident was shocking to say the least, but given the recent influx of out of town patrons to the Groveport Outdoor Aquatic Center, it shouldn't be all that surprising. With the current social climate of early prison and jail releases on the rise, no bonds being set or placed on violent criminals, a general lack of respect toward police and authority figures, incidents like this are bound to happen with increased frequency. Mrs. Hoel and her husband moved to Groveport about a year and a half ago falling in love with the quaintness and the hometown feel. They immediately joined the Groveport Recreation Center and after the COVID restrictions lifted, the Aquatic Center as well. After waiting for over a year to be able to enjoy the beautiful facility they were excited to finally relax and enjoy new friends and neighbors at the outdoor pool. Their first visit there, they spent their time observing the overwhelmed lifeguards, most all of whom you know are young teenagers. The lifeguards were blowing their whistles nonstop and were being completely ignored by parents who obviously had no intention of following the posted and repeated rules announced over the PA system. Mrs. Hoel had spoken to many other residents who feel that City Council needs to not only take immediate action, but needs to return the Groveport pool to its former status of Groveport residents only pool. She is quite certain that for revenue purposes the Council would veto such a request. She asked Council to consider to at least make day passes a thing of the past and to require all patrons to purchase annual passes being a member or a non-member but to increase the non-member's rate. She and her husband would be willing to pay a higher rate if it would keep the community safe. She has observed that many of the vehicles in the parking lot have out of county, such as Cleveland, Pickaway and Medina counties, and some out-of-state license plates. She stated that something is bringing them to the Groveport Outdoor Aquatic Center and it's driving Groveport residents to leave the pool. She humbly asked that City Council consider her request for she asks not only for herself but on behalf of many of her neighbors and other guests. She thanked the Mayor and City Council for their time.

Wayne White - 475 Elm Street

Wayne White addressed Council on the recent incidents noting that Jodi Hoel pretty much hit all the highlights of his concerns. He had hoped to speak after Council had made a decision. He hopes Council really listens to the residents, this is their community. Maybe the day passes need to go away as Mrs. Hoel suggested. His wife has gone to the pool only to wait for an hour to get in the Aquatic Center. He has spoken to other people about coolers being brought into the pool, and some have witnessed alcohol like wine and beer being drank. He doesn't know if Council listens to Facebook but many are tired of the situation and say they are done. Mr. White hopes Council listens and decides to make the pool a little safer. He doesn't know if residents only is possible but just remember, he was told a long time ago by his Director when he worked in recreation, that recreation isn't profit, recreation is for the residents after they worked all week and all day to enjoy themselves. They paid for it. We are not trying to make money off of recreation or we shouldn't be.

Guy Mace - Groveport Outdoor Aquatic Center Lifeguard

Guy Mace came to speak to the citizens and those Council Members who were unable to attend the meeting with Administrator BJ King, Mayor Westcamp, Chief Adams and Law Director Kevin Shannon. They talked with the lifeguards and the lifeguards gave them some suggestions. He reiterated those suggestions for those who were not at that meeting and addressed a few points mentioned by others tonight.

- More cameras in the breezeway of the Outdoor Aquatic Center
- Possibly assign a special duty officer to be there at all times or at the most problematic times at the pool. Most problems at the pool are between 4 pm to 7 pm
- The last two incidents occurred within the last thirty minutes of the pool being open.
- Alcohol is down this year, staff as not seen nearly as much as in prior years.
- Cameras in the parking lots

As a lifeguard he feels fairly safe but having two incidents in the last couple of weeks is pretty crazy. It is not an every person thing, it is out of the norm. The lifeguards love seeing the people at the pool. He would advise against restricting admission to just residents or members. They love seeing all the people at the pool and they can handle that. There have even been members and residents thrown out of the outdoor pool, so it is not just an outside person thing. Guy thanked everyone and the Mayor thanked him for coming to the meeting and for the record stated that Guy Mace does not live in the City of Groveport.

Mr. Shannon commented that the input from the lifeguards was very helpful.

Mr. Shannon stated that Administration has had multiple discussions and they did go out to the Outdoor Aquatic Center today and met with the lifeguards, the Aquatic Center's managers and Kyle Lund the Recreation Director, to try to take some pretty proactive measures to implement immediately.

Mr. Shannon read the motion text for Council's consideration:

After careful consideration, and a review of the events that occurred at the Outdoor Aquatic Center in the last month, the Mayor, City Council, City Administrator, and Chief of Police have deemed it necessary to take the following actions to better assure the safety of the City's lifeguards and other aquatic staff at the facility:

1. Effective immediately, admission to the Outdoor Aquatic Center shall be limited to those individuals and/or families that possess a resident or non-resident seasonal pass.
2. The minimum age of individuals that are permitted to be at the facility without a parent or legal guardian also present shall be 14.
3. As soon as practicable, security cameras shall be installed in the breezeway of the facility.
4. An officer shall be assigned immediately to the Outdoor Aquatic Park during specific timeframes as mandated by the Chief of Police after consultation with the Mayor.

This action is subject to review and possible change after the City has implemented the aforementioned safety measures and policies with respect to the pool's operation and reviewed the successfulness of such measures in reducing the abhorrent behavior that has taken place at the City's beloved recreational facility.

So with that, there would be a motion to put those four items into place. Mayor Westcamp opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. King wanted to emphasize how much he got out of the meeting with the lifeguards. It was very beneficial and he appreciated Guy Mace for speaking on behalf of the lifeguards. He went into the meeting pretty upset but on hearing the lifeguards' professionalism and the group of employees the City has at the Recreation Center, he was really impressed. Speaking for the other Administrative staff present, he thinks they all feel the same way. That being said, hearing their perspective was important because Administration needed to identify areas where steps need to be taken to increase safety at the Outdoor Aquatic Center. Some have already been addressed. Jason Carr is working next week to get the cameras installed in the breezeway so staff knows who is coming into the Aquatic Center. Right now with the daily passes the City doesn't know. It is also a safety issue from the point of transaction with people coming in and out. Lifeguards shared that

patrons show up without parents or guardians and recommended to avoid the whole babysitting aspect, the City could take the age limit for entry without a parent/adult to 14 years of age. It was talked about having a police presence at the pool during the 4 pm to 7 pm time when much of the problems take place. The manager on duty will be at the Aquatic Center at all times between the hours of 4 and 7 pm. Another topic that came up was the need for training staff on how to handle such situations. There were concerns about what an employee can do and what they couldn't do. Mr. King feels the City has a good plan in place to improve the safety of the Aquatic Center. But implementing these safety protocols will take some time. This is a good time to take a time out. As read in the motion let's keep it to season pass holders, whether they are a resident or non-resident. That allows the City to know who is coming into the pool. It will create other problems with the day pass patrons and the 10-pack day passes already purchased. Administration will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of these safety protocols. The City may eventually go back to the daily passes. The City can't put a price tag on giving its employees and patrons a safe environment to work in. Mr. Shannon commented the key aspect in limiting admission to season pass holders, is that the City already has all the pertinent identification information and a photograph which would eliminate a 16 hour investigation trying to find out who was there and who did what.

Council Member Lockett stated that number one, the City is responsible for the mental and physical health and safety of its employees and residents. That should be the number one priority. Secondly, the City takes a zero tolerance for any kind of nonsense or violation of the rules. Mr. Lockett agrees with the City having a police officer at the outdoor pool immediately and he agrees with the cameras. One concern he has is with the season pass holders. He has a neighbor that he is sure is not a pass holder at the Recreation Center or the Aquatic Center. This neighbor has his grandkids coming in tomorrow, he is a resident, he has paid taxes, he has supported that pool with those taxes and now he will be excluded from attending the Aquatic Center. Mr. Lockett would like to see the residents be able to attend the pool even though they are not season pass holders. Mr. Lockett feels the residents are entitled to have access to the pool; they pay taxes, live here, buy here. Mr. Lockett suggested an ID system that shows they are a resident. Pass holders only are Mr. Lockett's only objection to the motion. Like Guy Mace had said, just because they are a resident doesn't mean they will be best behaved. If a season pass holder brings in a guest and that guest misbehaves and action is taken against that guest, then the pass holder is equally responsible. Mayor Westcamp

noted that his wife, Julie, is a season pass holder and they have three grandsons who live in Hocking County. Mrs. Westcamp has 9 or 10 daily passes. The Mayor agrees with what Council needs to do tonight but the City needs to come up with a solution so his wife can take their grandchildren to the pool. Mr. Lockett asked about adding grandchildren to a family season pass. Mr. King advised that the City can craft the policy in many different ways. It can specify the resident pass holder as a grandparent or grandparents, can specify that the season pass holder must accompany everyone to the pool or even if they are not a pass holder and they have three people who want to come with them, they would be able to buy day passes. Council Member Cleary proposed daily passes to be given to residents only. He agrees with Mr. Lockett, the City can't just lock the residents without seasonal passes out of the Aquatic Center. Council Member Houglund wanted to know if it was generally considered that having a full-time police officer present would solve the problem. He suggested off duty officers could be hired; Groveport officers, Madison Township officers, Sheriff Deputies and Columbus PD. Chief Casey Adams couldn't guarantee it would totally solve the problem. He noted that at the last two incidents, officers were basically on the scene, the lifeguards mentioned officers were there when it happened. The incidents happened before an officer could intervene. Chief Adams cannot mandate special duty, if an officer doesn't want to work it, he can't order them to work it. That can be a problem. The news has reported that the Columbus Recreational Department is having trouble finding officers to work special duty; they have had to call in private security. Mr. Cleary is all in favor of the lifeguards' suggestion of the minimum age of individuals without a parent or guardian being 14 years of age.

Mr. Shannon advised Council that there is a motion on the table and they could take a roll call vote on that motion and see what happens. If it does not pass, Mr. Shannon can make an amendment to the motion and read through that text. Or someone could withdraw the original motion. This a temporary measure that can be reviewed once the measures are implemented. He understands that doesn't do any good for the person wanting to go to the pool tomorrow or on the 4th of July, but it is necessary given what has been going on at the outdoor pool.

Mr. Shannon reiterated the four safety measures in the motion.

1. Effective immediately, admission to the Outdoor Aquatic Center shall be limited to those individuals and/or families that possess a resident or non-resident seasonal pass.
2. The minimum age of individuals that are permitted to be at the facility without a parent or legal guardian also present shall be 14.
3. As soon as practicable, security cameras shall be installed in the

breezeway of the facility.

4. An officer shall be assigned immediately to the Outdoor Aquatic Park during specific timeframes as mandated by the Chief of Police after consultation with the Mayor.

This oral motion suspends the Ordinance that is in effect now as it relates to the Aquatic Center rates. This is an action that City Council can take as the City Charter states by motion, ordinance or resolution.

Other points discussed were residents are still eligible to purchase seasonal passes at a prorated cost. Jodi Hoel suggested changing the minimum age in measure 2 from 14 to 16 years of age. That way someone old enough to drive would have identification that could be shown. She and her neighbors don't want to see a lot of day passes. She thinks if a resident really wants to go to the pool, they should have to buy a seasonal pass. That way they can bring their grandchildren. Mayor Westcamp commented that in his situation, for his wife to change her seasonal pass from individual to family would not be worth the cost because their grandchildren would only be visiting the pool 3 or 4 times a year. Mrs. Hoel noted that Groveport has folks that live within the area moving into tons of apartments and she is not sure she wants everyone just piling in at the pool. She knows the City is looking at revenue, but as someone else pointed out, is revenue worth the safety and security of the people who work at the pool and of the people that go to the pool that live in the City. Guy White agreed with Mr. Lockett's suggestion of implementing an ID system for residents. He thinks you could change the minimum age to 16 or even 15 years of age because an individual can get a temporary learning permit at 15. He did like the day passes being available to residents only because out of town or state grandkids are not going to be full-time visitors to the pool. Mr. Shannon advised that this matter will be looked over for the next several days and will probably be on the agenda of every City Council meeting as far as what the City will do. Again, this is a temporary measure, it's up to Council and any member of Council, at any given time. At this point this is what Council has on the floor. Mrs. Hilbert thinks this drastic measure will show people and the residents that the City means business and will not tolerate these types of actions any more. She thinks Council should take this motion and run with it tonight and show the residents that Council hears them. Mayor Westcamp thanked the speakers for coming, their input is much appreciated and he hopes to see them back when this topic is addressed again.

A motion was made by Council Member Hilbert, seconded by Council Member Hutson, to put into place the following four measures:

1. Effective immediately, admission to the Outdoor Aquatic Center shall be limited to those individuals and/or families that possess a resident or

non-resident seasonal pass.

2. The minimum age of individuals that are permitted to be at the facility without a parent or legal guardian also present shall be 14.

3. As soon as practicable, security cameras shall be installed in the breezeway of the facility.

4. An officer shall be assigned immediately to the Outdoor Aquatic Park during specific timeframes as mandated by the Chief of Police after consultation with the Mayor.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Cleary, Hilbert, Hougland, Hutson and Lockett

IV. Adjournment

A motion was made by Council Member Hougland, seconded by Council Member Lockett, to adjourn at 5:09 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Cleary, Hilbert, Hougland, Hutson and Lockett

Lance Westcamp, Mayor

Ruthanne Sargus Ross, CMC
Clerk of Council

PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM. A RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS.