

CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES

January 2, 2024

The City Council met this date in a regular session, in the City Council Chambers, which was available to the public in person, and virtually, at 7:37 p.m.

Present at Roll Call: Mayor Laura Arnold
Councilmember Pam Bliss
Councilmember David Franklin
Councilmember Emerson Smith
Councilmember Karen D. Alexander
Councilmember Sarah Richardson
Councilmember Emily Hixson Shepherd

A quorum was present.

Also present: Dr. Marie Peoples, City Manager
Neil Bruntrager, City Attorney
Ms. Katie Nakazono, City Clerk

REMARKS FROM THE COMMUNITY AND VISITORS

- Dave Buck, 124 S. Elm. (See Exhibit A)
- Julie LeFevre Nakatani, 24 Algonquin, addressed support for an indoor pool.

**NEW BUSINESS - MAYOR, COUNCILMEMBERS, CITY ATTORNEY,
CITY MANAGER**

No New Business.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
BILL #9241 – Third Reading

On motion of Councilmember Hixson Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Richardson, **BILL #9241 - ENTITLED AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE QUALIFIED VOTERS OF THE CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY, ALL OF WHICH SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE ELECTORS AT THE GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION ON APRIL 2, 2024, AND PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE PREAMBLE, AND SECTIONS 2.12, 5.6, 5.18(2), 7.6, 7.12, 9.2, 10.3, 13.4 AND 14.9**, having been introduced and read twice on December 19, 2023, was taken up its title read a third time and placed upon its passage to become Ordinance 9241.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote on Bill #9241.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON
SHEPHERD, ARNOLD

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that Bill #9241 was approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilmember Alexander, seconded by Councilmember Bliss, to approve the Consent Agenda.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote on the Consent Agenda.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: FRANKLIN, SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Consent Agenda was approved.

The following Consent Agenda was approved:

- **Approval of Minutes** – December 19, 2023
- **Resolution #2024-01** – A Resolution Providing for the Holding of a Regular Biennial Election on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, for Three Members of the Council (For 4-Year Terms), in Accordance with Rules Promulgated and Adopted as Provided by State Statute, and by the Board of Election Commissioners of St. Louis County
- **Resolution #2024-02** – Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Contract for the Sealing of the Deck of the Old Webster Parking Garage
- **Resolution #2024-03** – Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Contract for the Construction of a Service Center Vestibule

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- Jeanne Kloeckner was appointed to the Green Space Advisory Commission.
- Angela Thompson was appointed to the Architectural Review Board (Alternate Member).

EXECUTIVE (CLOSED) SESSION

Councilmember Bliss made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Richardson to go into Executive Closed Session per Attorney-Client Privileged Communications with [MO. Statute 610.021([17])].

Mayor Arnold called for the vote to go into Executive (Closed) Session.

AYES: SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN


NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Council would go into Executive (Closed) Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m. on motion of the Mayor, duly seconded.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 16th day of January 2024.



Mayor



City Clerk

Nakazono, Katie

From: Dave Buck <dave@buckstl.com>
Sent: Monday, January 1, 2024 9:15 PM
To: citycouncil; Laura W. Arnold; Pam Bliss; Alexander, Karen; Richardson, Sarah; Emily Hixson Shepherd; David Franklin; Emerson Smith; Peoples, Marie; Peterson, Eric; njbatty@aol.com; Nakazono, Katie; Starkey, Jenny
Cc: Davis, Scott; Ben E; tracydowning4@gmail.com; davidgaddison@gmail.com; spencer.evyn@wgmail.org; broshears.dan@wgmail.org; Jerry Collins; Matt Irvin; John Simpson; Jason Adams; Pam Frazier; Jo Doll; Christine Keller; Kita Quinn; scheer.tara@wgmail.org; Grace Lee; Alexander Kahn; Allen Todd; Jaime Mowers; Kevin Murphy; Randy Drilingas; Don Corrigan; Melissa Wilkinson; wgecho@wgmail.org; websterjournal@gmail.com; Arnold Stricker; Mark Langston; Ree Hamlin; rebeccanow@sbcglobal.net; Sarah Riss; joel@greenstreetstl.com; aimeemuldrow@yahoo.com; Tricia Nieman; Becky Hauser; Maren Mellem; Julie LeFevre; Gerry Welch; Kathy Hart; Toni Hunt; Sebastian Bellomo; Jeanne Kirkton; Bill Newhouse; Karen Beck; preservewebster@gmail.com; John Greaves; joannavdt@gmail.com; gkrautmann; ocho@sbcglobal.net; tesswass@aol.com; Steve Wasserman; dkimball@umsl.edu; Miki McKee Koelsch
Subject: Our Final, Serious & Urgent Community Request That City Council PLEASE Reconsider & Include the Indoor Pool Option as Part of Prop W on the April Ballot

Caution: This is an External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments

To WG City Council, City Manager, Asst. City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk & Director of Public Affairs & Community Engagement,

I did not wish to interrupt your holiday break, so I apologize for sending it so close to your City Council meeting tomorrow. But if you are the responsive government I think you are, you will read and take it seriously before Tuesday's meeting.

I am just coming out of COVID despite receiving all four boosters, and if I am still testing positive Tuesday afternoon, I will not be attending and sharing remarks publicly at tomorrow's meeting. **What follows is longer than a 3-minute remark which is why I please urge you to read my email in its entirety to get the full story.**

I did some homework over the holidays and, thus, **I urge you more than ever to reconsider your previous decision and, instead, please include**

the indoor pool option as part of Prop W (from the Destination WG initiative) on the April ballot.

Here's what we all know:

- 1. Aquatic Centers & indoor pools are not moneymakers but provide an invaluable service**, a myriad of aquatic activities, and its associated benefits of happiness, health, recreation, fitness and fun to a community, including a home pool advantage to its local school swim teams and swim clubs, etc.
2. Of the 27 Destination WG potential projects included in your community engagement survey, **the Aquatic Center is by far the #1 vote getter**. Unfortunately, **the indoor pool option WAS NOT on this list of 27 projects so, to date, the community has NOT had the opportunity to quantifiably and officially weigh in on the indoor pool option**. However, qualitatively and as you shared, “many members and community voices have given support to an indoor pool option.”
- 3. City Council's mental stumbling block is in how to fund the projected additional \$250,000 in annual operating expenses for an indoor pool**. However, **over 70%** of resident respondents state that they **would support a small tax increase and/or a increase in membership fees** to fund the Aquatic Center. For Webster's 9,500 tax paying households, this amount equals an estimated and very affordable \$30 per year - or \$2.50 per month - increase.
4. Additionally, there are other proven creative ways to fund these annual operating expenses, such as **ad sponsorships, naming rights, brick pavers, etc**. Just consider the success the Webster Groves School District Foundation is having with its \$2 million capital

campaign ON TOP of the Prop S \$45 million no tax bond issue overwhelmingly passed by our community in August, 2022, that included the highly analogous Moss Field renovation.

5. Parks & Recreation's own estimate is that the indoor pool would draw at attendance of **53,200 over the 9 months it was open**, representing an average DAILY attendance of almost 200, making it one of the most highly attended of all Parks & Recreation activities.
6. **What you may not know is the sustainability, financial viability, and longevity of several municipal indoor pools given the year they were opened, many in cities smaller than Webster Groves**, such as Center of Clayton in 2002; Lodge Des Peres in 2004; The Pointe in Ballwin Commons in 1996; The Heights in Richmond Heights in 2004; St. Peter's Rec Plex in 1994; Maryland Heights Centre in 2017; Mid-County YMCA serving Brentwood in 1931; and the Kirkwood YMCA in 1957. These cities are not stupid or reckless with their finances. They have made their indoor pools work for the good of their communities. **So can Webster Groves.**
7. **The community NEED and DEMAND for this indoor pool option is significant and growing.** Webster University has the ONLY indoor pool in our city and rumors of its future closing are increasing. Correspondingly, the demand for indoor swim pools and swim lessons by families with young kids is increasing. Witness the number of indoor swim private businesses opening nearby.

Given the above supporting evidence, here is what your community is now firmly requesting: that you please reconsider and include the indoor pool option on Prop W for the April ballot as follows:

- The final deadline for ballot language to the St. Louis County Board of Elections is **Tuesday, January 23, at 5 pm**. This is exactly **three weeks** from your meeting tomorrow on January 2.
- City Council can take two weeks to think about it, make the decision to include the indoor pool option in their January 16 work session, which then leaves one full week to draft new language for the City's final ballot by January 23.
- But instead of bundling all of the Prop W projects together in one \$22.1 million no tax increase bond issue package, **we strongly request separating the different projects out and let the community vote YES or NO on each of them individually, just as voters get to vote on individual candidates and each individual City Charter proposed amendment. The Prop W projects should be handled just the same.**

Two final points:

- The community has not yet been given the chance to officially weigh in on the indoor pool option. **Please put this matter in the hands of our residents. Let them decide.** Again, it was NOT on the list of the 27 projects in the community survey. Plus, there were only 603 surveys returned. In a municipal election, you will receive the benefit of thousands of votes up or down.
- Destination WG urged residents to **"DREAM BIG" as a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.** Thirty years ago, our City leaders DREAMED BIG when they approved the construction of the first-ever aquatic center / water park in the St. Louis Region. Now, 30 years later, we have the once in a lifetime opportunity to DREAM BIG once again to create a **YEAR-ROUND AQUATIC CENTER** for the health and

happiness of our community, now in a full-service Rec Center that offers a year-round fitness center, fitness classes, ice hockey and multi-purpose gym, and now swimming!!! If Council decides to kick this can down the road, it will never get done, in my opinion, based on the 23-year history of our city over the years I have lived here.

Bottom-Line: Let the Residents – who you report to - decide the fate of the indoor pool. Please put this decision in their able and trusted hands as the people who will benefit most from the indoor pool.

Thank YOU.

PEACE.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Webster's residents, by resident,
Dave Buck
124 S. Elm Ave.
314-952-0910
dave@buckstl.com