

Letter To The Editor: Until All Issues Are Addressed, City Of Wood River Should Stop Thinking About New Rec Center

by Bill Dettmers

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In a recent newspaper article Mayor Maguire commented on the Roundhouse and suspension of spending on the proposed rec center. The article states “The mayor said there were never any plans to demolish the Roundhouse.”

Mayor Maguire continues to deny that the City of Wood River: 1) met on December 10, 2019 and was presented a plan to construct a new rec center which included demolition of the Roundhouse. This was the only plan, there was no “Plan B”. 2) On December 16, 2019, the City Council approved, by a 3-1 vote, to submit the plan of December 10, 2019 to apply for a \$2,500,000 PARC Grant with the IL Dept of Natural Resources to construct the proposed rec center. Councilwoman Gail Ufert cast the only “No” vote as she had already expressed her disapproval of the plan on December 10th because it included the demolition of the Roundhouse. 3) On January 21, 2020, the City of Wood River submitted the PARC Grant application which was signed by Mayor Maguire under oath where she agreed that any false statements could subject her to civil and criminal penalties. This \$2,500,000 PARC Grant application is still pending with the IL Dept of Natural Resources and has never been amended to remove the plan to demolish the Roundhouse.

In the newspaper article, it is reported that the council suspended spending on the proposed rec center, but, according to Mayor Maguire, “the idea is not dead yet.”

The recent referendum to Save the Roundhouse and Stop “Rec” less Spending meant the council should save the Roundhouse, but also stop spending on the proposed rec center for two reasons. 1) The 1% Sales Tax passed in April 2019 was intended to first take care of the city infrastructure needs. The city has taken steps to address some of these needs such as flooding and a sewer separation plant. However, other problems remain to be solved such as old water and sewer lines, streets and roads, and sidewalks. Until these issues are addressed, the city council should not consider any spending on a new rec center. 2) The rec center was proposed because the city demolished the Aquatic Center. In several Town Hall meetings, the residents told the city council any proposed rec center should include a swimming pool. Someone decided to eliminate the swimming pool from consideration and just build an \$8,000,000 rec center. Most of the public was not aware of these changes nor costs. There never has been any studies to determine what the needs of the community are, what the cost to operate nor maintain the proposed rec center.

Until all of these issues are properly addressed, the city would be wise to stop thinking about a new rec center. If they persist with this rec center, there will be a price to pay for anyone that supports it in the election of April 2021.

Bill Dettmers

Wood River

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