



# Letter To The Editor: Follow Commentary To Feb. 7 Wood River City Council Meeting

February 9 2022 2:30 PM



In an interview recorded following the February 7<sup>th</sup> Wood River City Council Meeting, Councilmember Sonya Hagaman disputed that the rec center would cost \$12,000,000. She did not state what the estimated cost of the building would be, because she does not know how much it will cost. On January 18<sup>th</sup>, she, Leroy Duncan and Scott Tweedy voted to put the rec center out for bid before the architectural plans or estimates of cost were available to the council. This was done with the intent to stifle public discussion or allow changes to the building design.

I made a FOIA request in an effort to learn more about what was to be included in the rec center, but was denied on the grounds that it would violate the confidentiality of the bidding process.

Second, she disagreed with a comment made during the meeting that in 1980 the voters of Wood River didn't want the Aquatic Center built. Her statement is patently false. In 1980, the residents of Wood River voted down a bond referendum to build the Aquatic Center.

The city council then went around the residents and in 1984 built the aquatic center, in direct opposition of the public wishes. I know she is wrong because I have all the documents provided by a FOIA request with all the records going back to the 1980's. This council is doing the same thing today, using financing to build the rec center that cannot be stopped by the voters, just like the council did in the 1980's to build the Aquatic Center. On December 6, 2021, Councilmembers Hagaman, Duncan and Tweedy voted against a motion to allow voters the opportunity to approve or deny financing for the rec center.

Third, she claims the Aquatic Center was torn down because it had exceeded its life expectancy. In 1980 I was a member of the Wood River Township Chamber of Commerce. The city made a presentation asking for our support to help pass the bond referendum. We were told that the Aquatic Center would last 40-50 years. In January 2020, I had a meeting with the City Manager and Finance Director. I was told that the cost of \$105,000 for repairs was more than the city could afford when the decision was made to close in 2017.

Finally, she mentions her kids participate in sports and would use the rec center. Most youth sports are tied to their school programs.

It should be noted that her kids attend a private school in Bethalto, not Wood River public schools, so I'm uncertain what programs her kids would use. On January 27<sup>th</sup>, the use of the rec center was discussed at a Town Hall meeting sponsored by Councilman Jeremy Plank. She couldn't attend this meeting because, if she had, it would have violated the Open Meetings Act since Mayor Stalcup was also there. She could have attended and join in the discussion, except on October 18, 2021, she, Duncan and Tweedy voted against holding a city-sponsored Town Hall meeting to discuss the rec center, which would allow all council members to attend and not violate the Open Meetings Act.

**Bill Dettmers**

**Wood River**