

DAN KNODL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 24TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 895

Public Testimony

Assembly Committee on State Affairs

February 13, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen and members of the committee for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 895.

AB 895 would create a grant program at the Building Commission for non-state projects related to indoor, athletic or aquatic athletic facilities. The total amount of bonding available under the bill is \$5 million. Any eligible project is required to have matching funds raised from other sources and the total award for a specific project is capped at \$1 million.

As many of you know a proposal similar to this was included in the budget passed by the legislature, but Governor Evers vetoed out the authority to operate this program for non-state projects.

There are projects across the state that could qualify for this grant program. These facilities often provide a significant economic impact to the surrounding communities. In the 24th Assembly District we have one of these facilities. The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is located in Brown Deer and is one of only two Olympic size indoor pools in the state. I will not go into detail on the facility as we have a representative from the aquatic center here to testify.

Currently, the legislation is supported by the following groups:

- Association for WI Tourism Attractions
- Greater Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau
- League of WI Municipalities
- VJS Construction Services
- WI Association of Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Wisconsin Swimming, Inc.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer questions at this time.



Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center



Organizational Overview:

The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center (WSAC) is Wisconsin's most storied competitive swimming and diving facility. WSAC dates back to the mid-1970s, when the Wisconsin competitive swimming community recognized the need for a world class competition pool and presented the idea to the Walter Schroeder Foundation. The foundation approved a \$4.5 million grant to build the state's first indoor 50-meter pool with platform diving facilities – which was at the time the largest single donation to a YMCA in the world.

Because of the pool's depth and engineering, the WSAC quickly earned a reputation in the world swimming community as a "fast pool." World and American records have been set at the facility, and the Schroeder Swim & Dive Team has sent more than 30 athletes to the US Olympic Trials over the years.

But in 2007-08, after years of deferred maintenance had accumulated, the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee revealed plans to demolish the facility. The swimming and diving community rallied to save the pool, raising \$2.2 million in a matter of months. The YMCA sold the pool to WSAC, Ltd., a newly formed 501c3 nonprofit organization with the mission to preserve the WSAC for Future Generations, and \$700,000 was spent on urgently needed capital repairs and took over day-to-day operations.

For the past 41 years, the Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center has served thousands of Wisconsin children and adults with a wide variety of swimming and diving lessons and competitive programs. Thousands of swimmers and divers have gone on to compete at the collegiate level.

But Olympic medals and college scholarships are not what ultimately drives the organization. Competitive swimming and diving is the vehicle for character development. By emphasizing skills like listening, strong character, resilience, and embracing change, the Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is preparing Wisconsin youth for success in college and beyond.

The **mission** of the programs at Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is **to promote excellence and prepare youth for college and success in life.**





Community Asset:

The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is one of two indoor Olympic-sized or 50 M pools in the state. The UW is currently constructing a new similar facility.

- The WSAC hosts over 25 major competitions annually. Visit MKE estimates that \$6,000,000 is attributable from these competitions to the local economy each year.
- 25% of the competitive swims done in the state of Wisconsin are performed at the WSAC each year.
- WSAC is a pillar of the competitive aquatic community. Leadership and cooperative programming at the local, state and national levels is provided by the WSAC and its staff.
- UW-Milwaukee, Northwestern University and UW-Madison use the WSAC to train their student-athletes because they do not have 10 Meter Platforms at their schools.
- This weekend the WIAC Conference Championship is again being held at the WSAC. UW university's '60s and '70s vintage pools are not good enough for our state university student-athletes to compete with other NCAA DIII schools for NCAA Championship qualifying times.

Remaining Relevant:

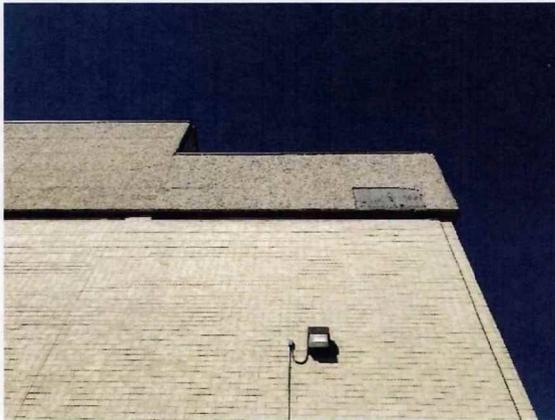
The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is a stand alone non-profit. Since its separation from the YMCA of Metro Milwaukee in 2008, the WSAC must cover all of its annual \$1.5M expense through programming, major

events and fundraising. There are very few examples of major indoor aquatic centers in the USA that are stand alone facilities. Most are supported by universities or municipalities. The short story is that not enough revenue can be made to cover capital expense to keep the WSAC open and relevant as it ages.

The Need:

The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center is in the midst of a \$1.3 million fundraising campaign. Since August of 2019, \$260,000 has been raised, primarily from families that participate in WSAC programs. Components of the campaign include:

- **Emergency repairs to the WSAC exterior wall:** Repairs commenced in August 2019 and finished in December. Cost: \$292,000.



- **Replace the roof of the WSAC** - The roof of the WSAC is now 40 years old. The cost for replacement is \$680,000
- **Update kitchen / Food Service Area** - the kitchen / food service area - is in need of new refrigeration, stainless countertops & sinks and updated storage shelving. The cost of updates is \$185,000.
- **Locker Room Renovations** - both the men's and women's locker rooms, bathrooms and showers need updates to flooring, lockers, and plumbing. The cost of both is \$300,000.

Programs:

Schroeder YMCA Swim Team: The WSAC's centerpiece program and the springboard for all of the organization's efforts, is USA Swimming certified programs that provide instruction and training to 400 children and youth, aged 5 to 18 years of age annually. 9 full-time and 14 part-time professional coaches ensure a low coach-to-swimmer ratio. WSAC coaches are well connected to collegiate swimming programs across the country and actively work with each athlete to help them find the right schools to continue their swimming careers.

Schroeder YMCA Dive Team: The Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center has the only ten-meter diving platform in the Illinois-Wisconsin region, and college teams from UW Milwaukee, UW Madison, Northwestern University train here. WSAC runs a 50-member competitive diving team that has sent athletes to the Olympic trials and NCAA diving programs. Like the swim team, the diving program prepares youth for college and beyond by developing confidence and resilience.

Schroeder Masters Swim Team – 91 swimmers aged 22 to 80 years compete in area masters-level competitions and prove that swimming does not end after college.

Partners:

Augustine Preparatory Academy: “Aug Prep” is a newer K4-12 school located in Milwaukee’s south side that serves over 1,350 students in the Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grades. 91% of the students are Hispanic and 93% qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program. In 2017 the WSAC staff assisted in the design and construction of the school’s aquatic center, a state-of-the-art competition and teaching pool. WSAC has continued its partnership by providing learn to swim & water safety instruction to all students. The pool is also used by the Little Lions swim team – a novice swim team that will eventually be a feeder program to the main Schroeder YMCA swim team.

Bruce Guadalupe Middle School: 60 students from this middle school received WSAC water safety instruction in 2019, using the Aug Prep pool. This partnership is expected to grow in the coming years.

City of Milwaukee Recreation Department – Piranhas and Tidal Wave Swim Teams: WSAC has partnered with the Milwaukee Rec Department for 20 years to provide additional training and competition opportunities for Milwaukee youth, who train with the regular WSAC team two days per week. Costs are heavily underwritten by WSAC.

Nicolet Recreation Department: WSAC administers and staffs the Nicolet Rec League swim team, the Nicolet Knights. While the competition level is not as rigorous, numerous Nicolet kids have gone on to join the WSAC team.

Marquette High School Swim Team, Milwaukee Underwater Hockey League: Both teams use the WSAC facilities to train during their respective seasons.



For more information about the Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center, please contact Dave Anderson, Director of Competitive Programs, at 414-364-0275 or danderson@wsacltd.org.



February 12, 2020

Dear Member of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs,

Tomorrow on Thursday, February 13, your committee will hold a hearing on Assembly Bill 895.

I am the owner / operator of the Holiday Inn Express Milwaukee North - Brown Deer / Mequon. Each year I sell hundreds of room nights to participants of the competitions held at the Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center. Most teams / participants travel to Brown Deer from across Wisconsin and from Minnesota and Illinois to take part in both swimming and diving competitions.

I support the Walter Schroeder Aquatic Center with regular financial contributions because I know the impact of the facility to the youth who take part in these competitions.

The economic impact of these meets is vital to our local community, not only in terms of hotel rooms but also of restaurants and retail establishments.

Please join me with your support of Assembly Bill 895. Sports-related travel is an important and growing part of local economies everywhere.

Thank you,

Reena Khan

Owner / Operator
Holiday Inn Express Milwaukee North - Brown Deer / Mequon
4443 West Schroeder Dr.
Brown Deer, WI 53223



To: Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs
From: Jake Anderson, Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association
Date: February 13, 2020
RE: **Testimony for Information Only Assembly Bill 895**

Chairman Swearingen, members of the committee, my name is Jake Anderson, President of the Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association (WPR) and the Monona Parks and Recreation Director. WPR is a membership association that represents over 1,200 individuals delivering a broad spectrum of services in Wisconsin. Our members include Park, Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation professionals in local, county, state, school district, private and agency settings. WPR also represents public Park and Recreation Boards and Commissions, students, commercial firms and Emeritus (retired) members.

I am pleased to be here today to testify for information only on Assembly Bill 895. In concept, WPR supports funding for projects that promote athletic and aquatic activities in our communities. Across the state currently there are local projects occurring or in development that fit into this category. However, there are a few amendments WPR recommends the committee consider:

- 1) **Allow outdoor aquatic and athletic facilities projects to also be eligible for the grant program.** Most municipal agencies have outdoor pools and athletic facilities. Establishing a grant program just for indoor projects eliminates a large portion of potential projects without consideration of the community or economic development benefits for these projects. If a community can obtain the 50 percent nonstate revenue match for the construction or improvement of an outdoor aquatic or athletic facility, they should also be able to apply for this grant.
- 2) **Separate funding for public and private projects.** While we fully support funding grant program for this purpose, we would prefer if the bill designated a portion of the grants for publicly owned facilities.

Given the time left in the legislative session, we hope to engage the authors and discuss these potential changes quickly.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.



My name is Christine Rebout. I'm here as Chair of Destinations Wisconsin (formerly the Wisconsin Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus) and as Executive Director of the Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. Destinations Wisconsin represents 26 Destination Marketing organizations throughout the state of Wisconsin and we have signed on in support of this bill.

Tourism is economic development. In 2018 tourism spending in Wisconsin totaled 13 billion and created just under 200,000 full and part time jobs. The tournaments and events that comprise sports tourism in our state are a huge driver of that economic impact. Like any other industry, sports tourism requires infrastructure. AB895 creates much needed funds for development of that infrastructure. There are currently mechanisms in place for funding traditional convention centers, but none for the development of our sports tourism infrastructure.

These developments can be crucial for communities like Janesville that are recovering from a loss of manufacturing jobs and infrastructure. A mid-size sports center in Janesville could bring in 200 new events and tournaments with 120,000 attendees and participants, 100 new jobs and nearly \$10 million in spending for our community.

Thank you for your support of this crucial funding.

Christine Rebout

Chair, Destinations Wisconsin

Executive Director,
Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

