



Onondaga County Legislature

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Chairman

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PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 18, 2021 KEVIN HOLMQUIST, CHAIRMAN

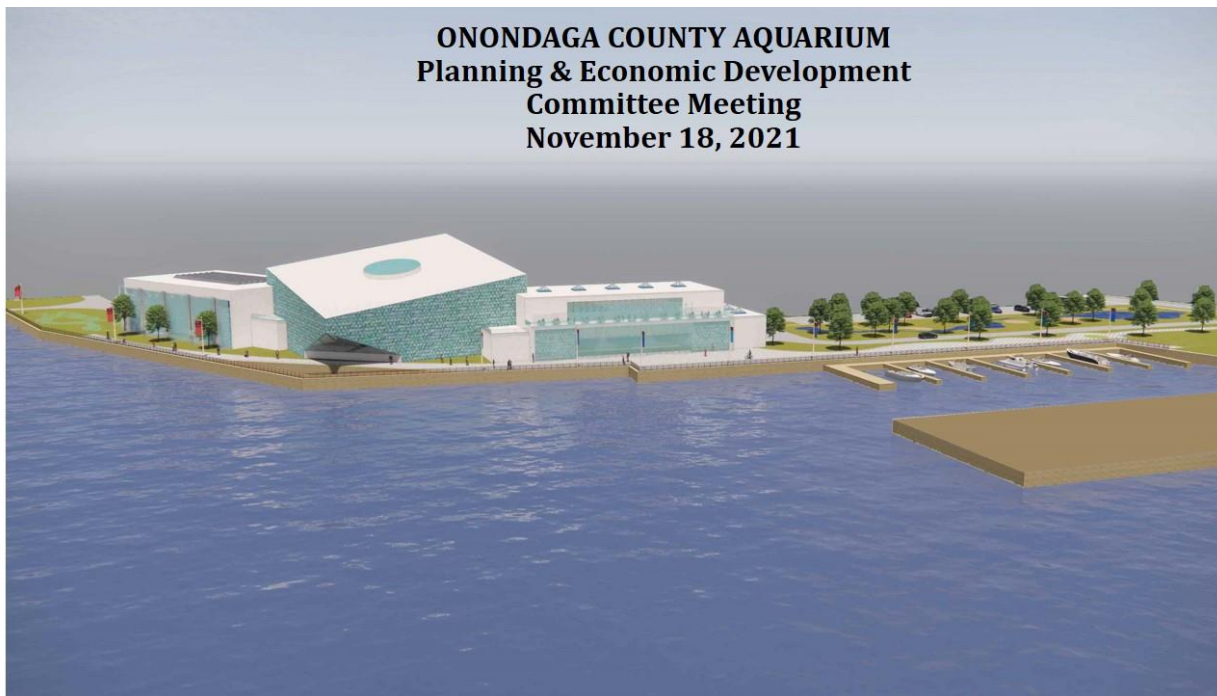
MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Abbott, Dr. Kelly

ABSENT: Mr. Kinne, Mr. Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Ryan; Mr. Liedka, Mr. Fox, Mr. Bottar, Ms. Foss, Ms. Harris, Mr. Wixson, Mr. Kelly, Ms. Primo, Ms. Murphy, Ms. Felice, Mr. Kwasnowski, Ms. Vendetti, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Frantzis, Ms. Lesniak, Ms. Vilardi

Chairman Holmquist called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. *A motion was made by Mrs. Abbott-Kenan and seconded by Dr. Kelly to waive the reading of the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED. A motion was made by Dr. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Abbott-Kenan to approve the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED.*

1. INFORMATIONAL: Aquarium



Ms. Primo:

- Good morning – here to talk about a transformational project proposed by the County Executive (“CE”) for \$85m for 80k square foot, 600k gallon water volume tank aquarium to sit at Inner Harbor



Aquarium of the Pacific, Long Beach



Tennessee Aquarium, Chattanooga



Monterey Bay Aquarium

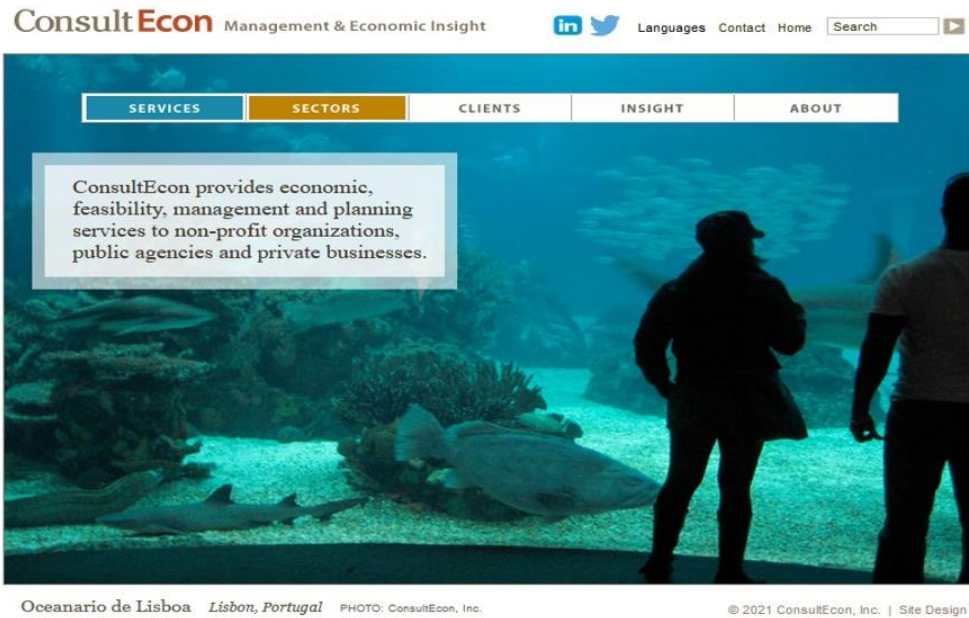


National Aquarium, Baltimore

- Shows 4 accredited aquariums – beautiful buildings - been transformation in their communities



- Examples of exhibits that aquariums offer now – typical to what we are asking you to support to have our residents enjoy here



- Why we think this can be transformational and a great investment – doesn’t come out of thin air – been discussed for over 20 years – 4th feasibility study – Mr. Bottar has been involved in all 4 – all have said it will be successful if done right
- CE in office three years ago – heard that the aquarium is something others are interested in pursuing – if it wasn’t for the pandemic would have happened two years ago
- Had to seek out professional guidance – drafted an RFP – one of respondents was Consult Econ - been in business over 30 years and has done work throughout the world – zoos, aquariums, operational analysis, sight analysis – many for aquariums – more than 100 such studies for just aquariums – country only has 60 aquariums – Asia, South America, and China
- This process of hiring this company with expertise will pay off for the community – learned a lot through this process

“Aquariums have a strong track record of being catalysts for economic and community development”
 ConsultEcon 2021 Onondaga County Feasibility Study

- Generate substantial new economic activity (\$51.9 million annually)
- Expand employment opportunities with hundreds of new jobs (423)
- Grow tourism economy
- Catalyze Inner Harbor revitalization and private real estate investment (project over \$200M of private investment)
- Create new fiscal revenues
- Enhance Onondaga County brand
- Provide new educational opportunities
- Enhance quality of life

- 80 fulltime and 40 part-time employees – will grow because we have had conversations with Dan Liedka – he is here today and will speak as how it will help his organization

- We as a community have made a lot of investment in lakefront and Inner Harbor – sometimes we take for granted as to what an asset it is to have a lake
- OC has spent money and Honeywell has spent a lot of money – Amphitheater was \$50m which has been successful – have national acts bringing in thousands of people – trail system – seventy-five percent around the lake and currently working on the final leg – connects to empire trail system which connects to state trails – begun to take advantage – millions spent on state fair – \$25m to renovate stadium – so much going on but growth has stagnated and needs a jolt – this is what government sometimes does – this will draw more and more investment money – Inner Harbor is so special because you could take a boat through the Great Lakes – down the Mississippi – we have a connection to the whole world – if we do it right this area can be an amazing playground for our community and our visitors – sales and occupancy tax will increase – will help brand the community

Criteria for a Successful Aquarium

- Great Location
 - Properly Sized
 - Top Notch Facility & High-Quality Exhibits
 - Appropriate Ticket Pricing
 - Well Operated and Marketed
-
- Learned that it needs to be done right – have to hit the five points for success
 - Inner Harbor is a location that will work – consultants went and toured the area – we wanted to build on Roth steel near highways and on the water – consultants said site is cut off by railroad tracks and near the waste water treatment plant – will not be sustainable – place wasn't right because of surroundings – they point to Inner Harbor and said it was unique to community – near where things can grow – pushed back and realized they were right – now in negotiations to buy property – based on population within 60 minute drive and tourism market – makes it affordable to operate
 - Ticket price is a balancing act – has to be affordable but has to meet expenses – starting at \$21.95 and students \$9.95 – discount for seniors and military
 - So many partners with zoo, Visit Syracuse, and Destiny – need to draw people in and market this place

**Table V-1
Benchmark Aquarium's Scale and Market Characteristics**

Name	Location	Year Opened	Total Square Footage	Total Gallons	Full-Time Equivalent Employees (FTE) 1/	60-Minute Drive-time Pop 2021	60-minute Drive Median HH Income 2021	Tourism Activity High/Medium/Low	2019 Annual Attendance	Memberships	Adult Ticket	Senior Ticket	Child Ticket	Family Membership	Governance
Aquarium of Niagara	Niagara Falls, NY	1965	32,000	176,000	42	1,121,621	\$58,315	High	306,000	816	\$19.95	\$17.95	\$14.95	\$95.00	Nonprofit
Audubon Aquarium of the Americas	New Orleans, LA	1990	168,104	1,000,000	194	1,195,886	\$54,347	High	687,818	31,155	\$29.95	\$24.95	\$24.95	\$220.00	Nonprofit
The Florida Aquarium	Tampa FL	1995	250,000	1,000,000	201	3,874,483	\$58,443	High	810,000	13,101	\$27.45	\$24.70	\$23.45 ^{2/}	\$175.00	Nonprofit
Living Planet Aquarium	Draper, UT	2014	136,000	500,000	132	2,602,134	\$80,223	Low	800,000	NA	\$20.95	\$17.95	\$15.95	\$189.95	Nonprofit
Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk	Norwalk, CT	1988	140,000	249,610	88	5,221,117	\$68,262	Low	493,938	8,250	\$28.95	\$24.95	\$19.95	\$190.00	Nonprofit
Mystic Aquarium	Mystic, CT	1973	141,500	2,369,600	187	1,595,373	\$70,537	Medium	719,000	12,297	\$27.99	\$24.49	\$20.74 ^{2/}	\$205.00	Nonprofit
Newport Aquarium	Newport, KY	1999	125,000	1,000,000	182	2,394,769	\$66,810	Medium	853,000	54,000	\$22.99	\$22.99	\$14.99 ^{2/}	\$195.96 ^{2/}	For Profit
North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher	Fort Fisher, NC	1976	93,000	455,000	68	369,615	\$58,301	High	482,079	18,408	\$12.95	\$11.95	\$10.95	\$89.00	Support Org. / City Govt. /
Oklahoma Aquarium	Jenks, OK	2003	72,000	NA	122	1,124,700	\$56,536	Low	341,909	NA	\$18.95	\$14.95	\$14.95	\$150.00	Support Org.
Oregon Coast Aquarium	Newport, OR	1992	110,000	1,800,000	92	59,689	\$53,685	Medium	435,734	5,825	\$24.95	\$19.95	\$14.95	\$150.00	Nonprofit
Seattle Aquarium	Seattle, WA	1977	115,518	841,000	131	3,680,260	\$93,352	High	865,309	10,872	\$29.95	\$29.95	\$20.95	\$179.00	Nonprofit
South Carolina Aquarium	Charleston, SC	2000	93,000	750,000	122	787,565	\$69,774	High	471,183	8,925	\$29.95	\$29.95	\$22.95	\$189.00	Nonprofit
Tennessee Aquarium	Chattanooga, TN	1992	195,000	1,150,000	235	1,005,886	\$52,813	High	769,100	11,800	\$34.95	\$34.95	\$21.95	\$175.00	Nonprofit
Texas State Aquarium	Corpus Christi, TX	1990	173,600	1,200,000	199	555,544	\$54,028	High	546,496	6,500	\$36.95	\$34.95	\$26.95	\$269.95	Nonprofit
Virginia Aquarium	Virginia Beach, VA	1986	129,289	800,000	130	1,426,793	\$66,468	High	640,231	8,894	\$24.95	\$22.95	\$19.95	\$150.00	Support Org.
<i>Average</i>			131,801	949,372	141	1,801,029	\$64,126		614,786	14,680	\$26.12	\$23.94	\$19.24	\$174.86	
<i>Median</i>			129,289	920,500	131	1,195,886	\$58,443		640,231	10,872	\$27.45	\$24.49	\$19.95	\$179.00	
<i>Onondaga County Aquarium</i>	<i>Syracuse NY</i>		80,000	600,000		1,005,000	\$59,130	Medium							

Mr. Bottar:

- Tasked with walking you through some of the numbers – presented same information to Facilities committee – directing you to a few key tables from the consultants
- 10 key documents – benchmarks of aquariums throughout the country – consultants put together a representative list that had some correlation to Syracuse – won't see Boston aquarium on the list because of its size – this is a good list of facilities
- 2019 attendance list on highlighted areas – not automatic home runs – have to do it right – not just size – can have a large aquarium but not achieve success
- Talk about the Tennessee (“TN”) aquarium which is most relevant located in Chattanooga TN – community similar in size, history to Syracuse – city is a little bigger than Syracuse – located in county that is a bit smaller - income in city is higher but income in OC is higher than TN county – have one of the most successful aquariums in the country

**Table VIII-1
Analysis of Construction Cost of Selected Aquariums
Onondaga County Aquarium**

Name	Location	Expansion	Year Opened	Reported		Original Construction Cost ^{1/}	Estimated Construction Cost in 2021 Dollars ^{2/}	Estimated Construction Cost Per SF in 2021 Dollars	Notes
				Total Square Footage	Total Gallons				
Texas State Aquarium Phase 1	Corpus Christi, TX	New Aquarium	1990	43,000	NA	\$31,600,000	\$83,141,000	\$1,934	Aquarium has expanded substantially since this first phase.
Tennessee Aquarium	Chattanooga, TN	New Aquarium	1992	130,000	400,000	45,000,000	121,216,000	\$932	First major freshwater aquarium.
Virginia Aquarium	Virginia Beach, VA	Expansion	1996	88,000	NA	32,800,000	77,309,000	\$879	Expansion tripled aquarium size.
South Carolina Aquarium	Charleston, SC	New Aquarium	2000	93,000	750,000	69,000,000	141,933,000	\$1,526	68% public funds, 32% Private gifts & donations.
Tennessee Aquarium	Chattanooga, TN	Expansion	2005	65,000	750,000	30,000,000	40,405,000	\$622	Focus on exhibits in a separate building - first saltwater exhibits at Tennessee Aquarium.
SEA LIFE Charlotte-Concord Aquarium	Charlotte, NC	New Aquarium	2013	30,000	165,000	10,000,000	13,260,000	\$442	For profit aquarium developed within a major mall space.
Living Planet Aquarium	Draper, UT	New Aquarium	2014	136,000	500,000	24,000,000	30,597,000	\$225	Construction Cost only, many exhibits were moved from old location and installed by volunteers. Does not include pre-opening and organization ramp-up.
Texas State Aquarium- Caribbean Journey	Corpus Christi, TX	Expansion	2017	71,000	NA	58,000,000	65,618,000	\$924	Includes 4D Theater, outdoor attractions and refurbishment of some existing area.
Odysea Aquarium	Scottsdale, AZ	New Aquarium	2017	200,000	2,000,000	100,000,000	113,135,000	\$566	52% construction, 48% building fit out, soft costs and start up costs.
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium	Tacoma, WA	Expansion	2018	35,000	280,000	51,600,000	55,440,000	\$1,584	This expansion is called the Pacific Seas Aquarium.
Mississippi Aquarium	Gulfport, MS	New Aquarium	2020	80,000	1,000,000	79,000,000	77,073,000	\$963	55% construction costs, 45% design and soft costs. Land cost of \$14.5 million in addition.
Seattle Aquarium	Seattle, WA	Expansion	2021	50,000	NA	113,000,000	113,000,000	\$2,260	53% private, 47% city, County, State and Federal sources. Earthquake construction standard and challenging waterfront site add to construction costs.
Average				85,083	730,625	\$53,666,667	\$77,677,250	\$1,071	
Weighted Average								\$913	
Median				75,500	625,000	\$48,300,000	\$77,191,000	\$928	

^{1/} Care must be used in translating these data to probable future costs as the reported development budgets include a variety of inputs to aquarium development; some are more inclusive of total costs than others; also the localities of the construction projects, site conditions and the particular architectural complexity as well as the nature of the exhibits can create substantial differences in project cost. Also note that the cost of various components of aquarium development have changed over time.
^{2/} Construction costs are adjusted to current dollar value based on CONSTRUCTION ANALYTICS Construction Inflation Index
 Source: Aquarium and Zoo Association (AZA); Individual aquariums; CONSTRUCTION ANALYTICS Construction Inflation Index Tables, and ConsultEcon, Inc.

Mr. Bottar:

- Focus on far right hand column – put construction numbers into 2021 dollars – expensive to build but have to do it right - \$1k per square foot – higher because sophisticated facilities with exhibits drive the cost

**Table VI-1
Visitation Potential Estimates
Onondaga County Aquarium**

	Estimated 2026 Population	Market Capture Rates		Attendance Range			Percent to Mid Range to Total Attendance
		Low	High	Low Range Attendance	Mid Range Attendance	High Range Attendance	
RESIDENT MARKET							
Primary Market Area (Total 20-Minute Drive)	402,000	30.0%	40.0%	120,600	140,700	160,800	29%
Secondary Market Area (Onondaga County, Less 20-Minute Drive)	60,000	25.0%	35.0%	15,000	18,000	21,000	4%
Tertiary Market Area (40-Minute Drive, Less Onondaga County)	175,000	18.0%	25.0%	31,500	37,625	43,750	8%
Quaternary Market Area (60-Minute Drive, Less 40-Minute Drive)	368,000	10.0%	15.0%	36,800	46,000	55,200	9%
Total Resident Market (60-Minute Drive)	1,005,000	20.3%	27.9%	203,900	242,325	280,750	50%
TOURIST MARKET							
Tourist Market as a Percent of Total		49.0%	51.0%	195,904	244,057	292,209	50%
Total Stabilized Visitation Range				399,804	486,382	572,959	100%
Rounded Stabilized Visitation^{1/}				400,000	490,000	570,000	

- Attendance drives revenue – revenue pays operating costs – 4th time been through feasibility studies – each time the presentation is generally the same – look at population of tourism market – how many could you capture to come to the aquarium
- Low range – pick a lousy site and build an average facility

- Mid-range is what they are expecting in Syracuse – of the three firms I’ve dealt with this is the most conservative – the feasibility consultants tend to be conservative – pleased to see OC is going to spend \$85m – encouraged by the level of commitment by the CE
- Half from resident market Utica to Rochester and Binghamton to Watertown – I keep making a point to consultants that they are very conservative – we have 60 million people within a 5 hour drive

Table X-5

**Preliminary Net Operating Net Operating Income Potential Summary
Onondaga County Aquarium**

Stable Year		
Attendance	490,000	
Revenue	Current Dollar Value	Percent of Expenses
Earned Revenue	\$10,440,000	93%
Contributed Revenue Assumption ^{1/}	\$1,566,000	14%
Total Revenue	\$12,006,000	107%
Operating Expenses	\$11,271,000	100%
Net Operating Income After Contributed Revenues	\$735,000	7%

Mr. Bottar:

- This is a summary only as there is a wealth of information in the detail report – consultants have a database on all the operating information to use as a basis for making the presentation
- Contributed revenue is sponsorships – clearly a key part of the revenue stream

Table X-9

**Preliminary 10 YR Net Operating Net Operating Income Potential Summary
Onondaga County Aquarium**

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	Stable Year YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	Stable Year		
Attendance	588,000	539,000	490,000	492,450	494,900	497,350	499,800	502,250	504,700	507,150	490,000		
Revenue												Current Dollar Value	Percent of Expenses
Earned Revenue	\$12,565,000	\$11,525,000	\$10,861,000	\$10,950,000	\$11,463,000	\$11,584,000	\$11,981,000	\$12,108,000	\$12,684,000	\$12,822,000	\$10,440,000	93%	
Contributed Revenue Assumption ^{2/}	\$1,508,000	\$1,383,000	\$1,629,000	\$1,643,000	\$1,719,000	\$1,738,000	\$1,797,000	\$1,816,000	\$1,903,000	\$1,923,000	\$1,566,000	14%	
Total Revenue	\$14,073,000	\$12,908,000	\$12,490,000	\$12,593,000	\$13,182,000	\$13,322,000	\$13,778,000	\$13,924,000	\$14,587,000	\$14,745,000	\$12,006,000	107%	
Operating Expenses ^{3/}	\$12,307,000	\$12,077,000	\$11,726,000	\$11,973,000	\$12,224,000	\$12,481,000	\$12,743,000	\$13,011,000	\$13,285,000	\$13,564,000	\$11,271,000	100%	
Net Operating Income After Contributed Revenues	\$1,766,000	\$831,000	\$764,000	\$620,000	\$958,000	\$841,000	\$1,035,000	\$913,000	\$1,302,000	\$1,181,000	\$735,000	7%	

NOTE: Year 1 is in 2021 dollars. All figures rounded to nearest 1,000

1/ Does not include any land lease payment beyond \$1 per year, as land cost is yet to be determined.

2/ Contributed revenue, or "non-earned" revenue, are part of all aquarium operations. Sources and amounts of Contributed Revenue can vary widely and could include grants, corporate sponsorships, annual gifts, gifts-in-kind of goods and services, fundraising events, endowment proceeds, and government support.

Source: ConsultEcon, Inc.

- Year three we can make this thing hum – 10 year is typical cycle – projecting it would operate in the black – profits will be needed to maintain a world class facility that we are proposing to build

**Table XI-8
Estimated Development Period Impacts to Onondaga County
Due to the Development of the Onondaga County Aquarium**

	Construction & Fit Out	Architecture & Engineering & Soft Costs	Total
Estimated Preliminary Development Related Expenditures ^{1/}	\$52,000,000	\$28,000,000	\$80,000,000
Percent of Expenditures within Onondaga County	40%	20%	
Development Related Expenditures in Onondaga County	\$20,800,000	\$5,600,000	\$26,400,000
Estimated Average Annual Industry Wages ^{2/}	\$74,077	\$106,994	
Direct Person-Years of Employment ^{3/}	90	31	121
Multipliers ^{4/}			
Applicable Multipliers, Onondaga County	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Person-Years of Employment ^{5/}</u>
Construction	1.4163	0.3948	6.1843
Architectural, engineering, and related services	1.3181	0.4735	6.0651
Indirect and Induced Impacts in Onondaga County by Project Component			
Construction	\$29,459,040	\$8,211,840	121
Architecture & Design	\$7,381,360	\$2,651,600	32
Total Direct, Indirect & Induced ^{6/}			
Impacts in Onondaga County	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Person-Years of Employment ^{7/}</u>
Total Indirect and Induced Impacts	\$36,840,400	\$10,863,440	153
Total Direct Impacts	\$26,400,000	\$9,983,753	121
Estimated Total Economic Impacts	\$63,240,400	\$20,847,193	274
Rounded	\$63,200,000	\$20,800,000	274

- Shows the economic impact from construction – will generate a lot of money

**Table XI-7
Summary of Estimated Economic Impacts of the Proposed Onondaga County Aquarium
on the Onondaga County and New York Economies Under a
Mid-Range Attendance Scenario in a Stabilized Year**

<i>Direct Expenditures - (Rounded to \$000)</i>	Total Net New Spending In Onondaga County	Total Net New Spending In State of New York
Distribution of Potential Net New Direct Spending		
Onondaga Aquarium	\$9,449,000	\$9,974,000
Lodging	1,669,000	976,000
Meals	3,044,000	1,602,000
Shopping	3,809,000	2,005,000
Recreational/Attractions/Events	1,563,000	823,000
Local Transportation	1,648,000	916,000
Total Net New Spending	\$21,182,000	\$16,296,000
Direct Employment	215	176
Total Direct, Indirect and Induced Effects of Aquarium-Related Spending Expenditures, Earnings and Employment on the Geographic Areas Evaluated ^{1/}		
Total Economic Impacts	Total Spending In Onondaga County	Total Spending In State of New York
Expenditures	\$51,917,000	\$43,554,000
Earnings	\$15,994,000	\$14,095,000
Employment ^{2/}	423	359
Fiscal Benefits - Selected Tax Revenue Generation (Rounded to \$000)		
	Total Spending In Onondaga County	Total Spending In State of New York
Sales Taxes Generated By Direct Visitor Expenditures ^{3/}	\$660,810	\$558,967
Indirect Sales and Income Taxes Generated by Directly Supported Employee Wages and Salaries	\$78,256	\$535,951
Indirect Sales and Income Taxes Generated by Other Multiplier Effect Employee Wages and Salaries	\$56,465	\$494,090
Total Tax Revenue Generation (Rounded to \$000)	\$796,000	\$1,589,000

- Standard procedure and methodology that consultants use – tried and true methodology – actual use a model that is used by the Federal government
- \$21m circulates throughout the community – projecting \$51m once it is in operation
- Key tables have been presented today – other tables feed into these tables

Onondaga County Aquarium Operations

- Facility Ownership – Onondaga County
- Operation and Management – private non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation
- 501 c(3) will be governed by a board of directors
- 501 c(3) board of directors will have representation from County Executive's Office and County Legislature
- Aquarium staff - employees of 501(c)(3)
- Public/Private Partnership agreement to be negotiated by Onondaga County and the 501(c)(3). Anticipate a revenue sharing model wherein, at minimum, Onondaga County will receive a percentage of revenue to fund an aquarium capital improvement account.

Ms. Primo:

- County will own the facility – will be a big operation and outside of what we do on a day to day basis – some are public, private and not for profit – recommendation by consultants look at a public private model and lean towards a not for profit to run – OC would run it – employees would be employees of 501c3 – cost to maintain would be 501c3 – healthcare for animals, food, cleaning and maintenance would all be responsibility of 501c3 – would have a board where CE and Legislature would have a seat on – contract between county and operator – laying out who was responsible for what would be negotiated – would be a revenue sharing agreement – OC could take some and put in a fund for capital improvements - OC would take on major improvements
- Details have not been worked out completely – this is a way many aquariums operate in this country – Mr. Fox is in contact with other aquariums to learn best practices – once we get approvals to move forward we will reach out with RFP – can't commit until they know what it looks like, location, and design will drive this – this is in initial phases
- Let me remind you about the huge opportunity this presents to us

Baltimore – Inner Harbor

c. 1973



Today



Chattanooga, TN – Riverfront

c. 1988



Today



- Have talked to folks in Chattanooga – gentlemen retired news director – aquarium reshaped cities downtown – something Chattanooga needed – controversial at the time but would not find anyone today that would say it was a waste of money
- Foundation of the city is the aquarium for many reasons – spawned \$5b in investments since it opened



Mr. Bottar:

- Inner Harbor is unique to smaller cities – been some great development within the past 20 years but clearly much more opportunities in this area – these little building blocks suggest to you what could happen if we build the right facility in the right location
- About 45 acres of land for development – accommodate over 1m sq. ft. of development – showing great ability to attract development and investment – could see this over a 5-10 year period if we build it correctly

COST/BENEFIT SUMMARY

All numbers are based on mid-range annual attendance of 490,000

- Annual Economic Impact from Aquarium (direct + indirect + induced spending) = \$51.9 million
- Annual Jobs (full & part time throughout Onondaga County) = 423
- Economic Impact of Construction = \$63.2 million
- Direct and Indirect Construction Jobs = 274
- Project Inner Harbor Development of at least 1 million sq. feet of building space and \$200 million of private investment

*Stabilized year (year 3) based on 2021 dollars

Mr. Holmquist:

- You mentioned marketing – we have Mr. Liedka with us – can we anticipate how will marketing look

Ms. Primo:

- County would market in a supportive way – a lot would be in collusion with other amenities – good point to ask Dan Liedka to talk

Mr. Liedka:

- I'm not involved in any decisions but we would absolutely embrace this – we market the OnCenter – new things coming on the horizon – we would jump in head first – you can build and they will come – I've looked into quite a bit
- Gave information for feasibility study – had two Maxwell students do research – top interest was shopping and sporting events – today leaning towards outdoor adventures – second attractions and museums which includes zoo and parks – market has shifted – online shopping is here to stay – something like this will anchor the area – consumers are there – economic impact is strong
- When I sat in the Legislature we would try to poke holes – direct spending is who is coming – indirect spending is the people that work there are making money and putting back into the economy – when we market conventions we use a tourism agency and I think they are conservative — research why we lose business – amenities is one of the reasons – people will extend their stays because of what we have to offer
- Look at shoulder season which is January, February and March – decreased occupancy rates for hotels – this will help this time of the year – great to show case and develop that area – I worked for Marriott doing feasibility studies – government steps in and creates a vibrant area – we are perfectly located within a 5 hour drive of a lot of people – get them here and make them stay – \$900m industry here which represents 1 of 11 jobs here – this will push the rock over the hill

Mr. Holmquist:

- Always inspired by Mr. Liedka
- Served on the zoo board for 4 years so would like to hear from Ted Fox about what the relationship between zoo and aquarium will look like

Mr. Fox:

- At this point you know more than most about the zoo – to Ms. Primo's point this is in early stages – we have access to a tight knit group that love to see others succeed – relying on a living collection to succeed – there will be some type of collaboration that will be important – don't believe it will hurt the zoo – most people that support the zoo are excited
- Aquariums resonate in different ways from zoos – better feel because fish don't sleep like elephants and tigers – compare with programming with the highest standards and it will draw people

Mr. Holmquist:

- I read in the feasibility study – some have local and global fish – what might it look like

Mr. Fox:

- TN wanted to focus on just the native fish – that didn't resonate with the visitors – they want larger colorful animals – critical for location – conversation around Onondaga lake but want it more complex – difference between Onondaga and Skaneateles lake will be a serious story – hands on stuff for children is so critical – our new animal health center is exciting – this will be a major point for us to see how critical animal health is to us

Mr. Holmquist:

- Feel compelled to ask the Casey Jordan question – city will benefit greatly – any conversations about how the city could benefit and provide input

Ms. Primo:

- CE has spoken to mayor – at this point there hasn't been a need to ask for anything from the mayor

Mr. Holmquist:

- Know CE and mayor are in collaboration

Ms. Abbott:

- Think we have to share in the benefits – have you had investors reach out at this point

Ms. Primo:

- Have had conversations realizing this will make it an easier process

Ms. Abbott:

- Extremely excited about the children – have Otisco and Skaneateles lake nearby but city kids don't have this opportunity

Mr. Fox:

- Every first and second grader in the city school district comes to the zoo – not only a field trip but a program – conservation, water ways and how it is important to do better as land stewards – children are the focus – make it successful and accessible – great ideas from other facilities – sponsor days like Tops or Wegmans to pay for the day

Ms. Abbott:

- Two water sheds that urban don't appreciate – water comes from Skaneateles – where it comes from and why we have to worry about our farm land – lake association has a pontoon boat and has an environmental club with a lot of kids signing up
- When comparing and talking about aquariums I realize it has to be done right but what is quality – has low attendance – why would that be – what happened

Mr. Bottar:

- Very fair question – glad you focused on this – been to about 20 aquariums but not this one – quality of exhibits, location and how it is operated – has to be run like a business – have to spend money to market – reading an article about the Georgia aquarium which is one of the largest in the world – spending marketing dollars completely wrong – have to do it right

Ms. Abbott:

- Wasn't in Legislator but was a journalist back 20 years ago - why didn't it happen

Mr. Bottar:

- Different business interests that could not come to an agreement – private development approach – different model – OC will be funding this project – started as a private for profit endeavor – weren't able to pull it together

Ms. Abbott:

- Excited – appreciate forward thinking momentum

Dr. Kelly:

- Major projects like this live and die – one thing I zeroed in they receive 97% projected revenue – could you speak to the pool of the local sponsorships

Ms. Primo:

- Contributed revenue could be state grants – the zoo gets \$300k a year from the state – would be from naming rights for facility and different exhibits - galas and things like that to raise money – had a lot of conversation with Ted about efforts harming the zoo – absolutely not – so many opportunities to raise additional funds for aquarium – Ted has developed wonderful relationships with many donors of the zoos as well as foundations that are a source for the zoo – there is an upstate foundation that has funded two aquariums that are interested in supporting a local aquarium

Mr. Fox:

- We have a small section of the zoo that is dedicated to the aquatics – they were active with feasibility study – they are offering to do meet and greet dinners to try and get this kick started – the foundation that Ms. Primo is speaking in would love to put their money in our aquarium that is local
- Federal grant because it checks so many boxes to Danny's point – connecting to nature which is we saw during COVID people want to be outside

Dr. Kelly:

- We think we can hit the benchmark on an annual basis – Mr. Fox answered – others say consultants are conservative Table that references higher and lower attendance – feasibility study did a nice job –

Mr. Bottar:

- Go to column under market capture rate – to achieve the high attendance rate you achieve the higher numbers – to spend one more moment – if we have 400k within a 20 minute radius would we get 40% to attend once a year – good quality aquarium

Dr. Kelly:

- Ok receives a 7% operating funding – we aren't discussing OC contributing

Ms. Primo:

- There have been legislators asking about the wisdom of using cash as opposed to bonding – number of very good reasons we should not be doing this – if bonding we would pay 20-30m more – this will add to our operating costs and we won't be burdened with this

Mr. Bottar:

- Chattanooga TN had a large wealthy donation and then the community got behind it – had sufficient revenue to build another building adjacent to theirs – if you do it right you can experience what they have seen in chat

Ms. Abbott:

- What is the time frame should this pass

Ms. Primo:

- After vote we will go forward with design and engineering – probably realistically January to November – once you have design you can RFP for construction – get a contract in mar 2022 – construction about a year

Ms. Kuhn:

- In any of these numbers were any developed pre-pandemic – school bus issues, massive violence – people are excited to do things outdoors and this is indoors – news this morning looking at healthcare crisis

Mr. Bottar:

- Couple points in the narrative assuming there will be some return to normalcy

Ms. Kuhn:

- Projected sales tax – 28.8% generating about 365m a year

Ms. Primo:

- What they don't take into consideration is a lot of the economic effect that additional development will have – additional conventions, property development – take this operation and what it will in sales tax – this is a lot smaller than we anticipate occurring because this is going to have an effect – tax rev is what we want but more opportunity for employment, education, volunteers, new employers to move here, a new amenity that will help sell this place

Ms. Kuhn:

- Don't doubt the excitement but the timing – have more people testing positive, people dying – my question is the timing and how much can we project in the times we are in – the amount of cash that could maybe help what's going on in our community because of the current situation

Dr. Kelly

- Potential new development and amenities – I thought this was one thing where this was conservative

Ms. Primo:

- Current this doesn't show anything about this

Ms. Abbott:

- I like the conservative consultants and helps my decision making process

Mr. Holmquist:

- Would like to echo the conservative approach – transformation and exciting – appreciate all your time

A motion was made at by Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, seconded by Dr. Kelly to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 2021

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Danny Liedka	US
St. Fed Zap	Parks - Zoo
D. BOTTAL	COM RPOB
Jacqui Foss	Animal Alliance of Greater Syracuse
Isabelle Harris	CE
Archure Watson	Fac
Brian Kelly	PLANS.
MS	CU
Tenesha Murphy	CE office
Matthew Edice	County Law Dept
Dan Kwasnowski	SOCBA
Tara Vendetti	
Steve Morgan	
Ryan Frantzis	
Darcie Lesnat	