



# Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA  
Clerk

DAVID H. KNAPP  
Chairman

MELANIE VILARDI  
Deputy Clerk

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## COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 16, 2021 DEBRA CODY, CHAIR

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Bush, Mrs. Ervin**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Mrs. Tassone**

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Mr. Knapp, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Kinne, Mr. Fox, Mr. Voss, Mr. Fensken, Mr. Bottar, Ms. Breichnbach, Mr. Yaus, Mr. Kelly, Ms. Velasco, Ms. Harris, Ms. Primo, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Glazier, Mr. Kwasnowski, Ms. Lesniak, Mr. Paro, Ms. Vilardi

Chairman Cody called the meeting to order at 10:42 p.m. *A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn and seconded by Ms. Ervin to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED.*

### **1. TRANSPORTATION: Mr. Martin Voss, Commissioner**

- a. Authorizing the Sale of Surplus County Property Consisting of a Portion of Managers Place, C.R. No. 221, in the Town of Geddes to 1200 State Fair Blvd, LLC and the Concomitant Discontinuance and Removal Thereof from the County Road System

Mr. Voss:

- Morning – two items – item “a” is sale of property in the Town of Geddes – given to County when the State installed 690 many years ago – services only one business and that business is interested in buying it – serves as a driveway – no purpose for the County to keep it – buyer approached County to purchase it – working with the Law department since early spring – selling for \$20k to United Auto

*A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Mrs. Ervin to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

- b. Authorizing the Acceptance of Donated Land Adjacent to Kirkville Road in the Town of Dewitt for Highway Purposes

Mr. Voss:

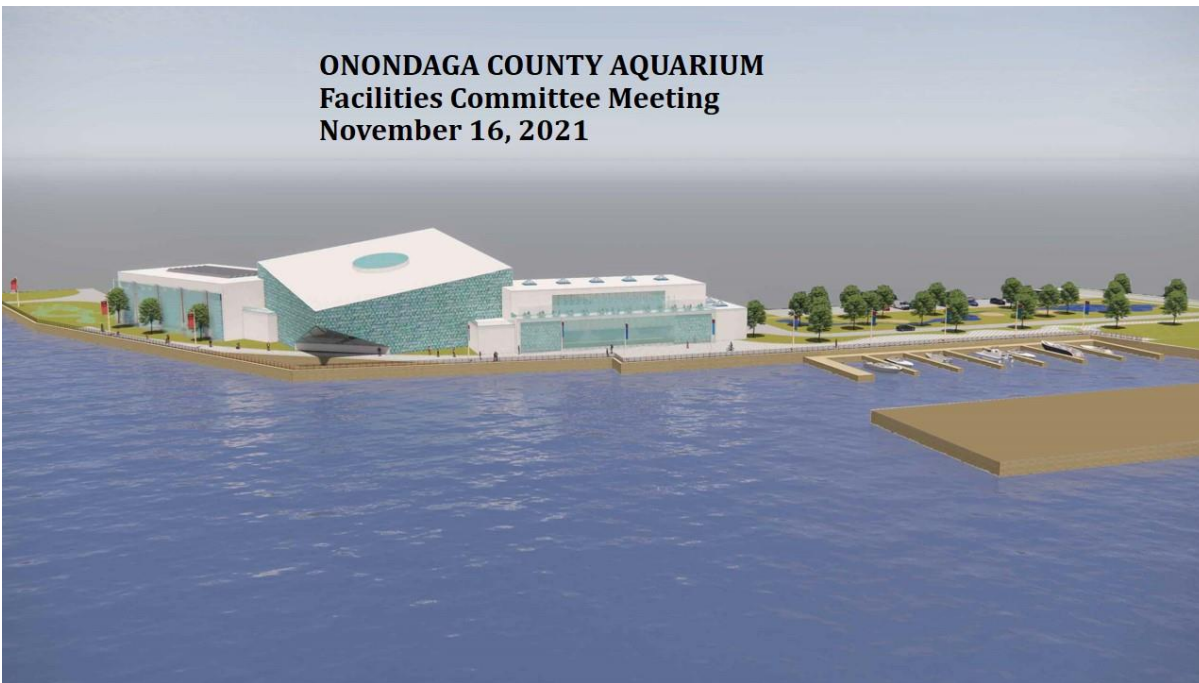
- Tail end of closing out with Amazon projects in Dewitt and Clay – acceptance to magnum needed to reconfigure traffic – now will become property of Onondaga County (“OC”) and maintained by DOT – network traffic lights into our system – costs borne by developer now that the project is finished assets will become property of OC
- Answered Ms. Kuhn’s question - are you working with Dewitt to get land – town of Dewitt is not part of it – located on a County road – expansion of the right away – Dewitt planning was not involved – may have been brought in early on in the process – part of the agreement that was reached when this was proposed – part of the SEQR
- Answered Mr. Bush’s question about what happens to the millings from the roads when the County does roadwork – all millings go back to shop and reuse or if we have a lot then goes to auction and purchasing does disposal – farmers and earth moving companies want them – auction is public – yes goes on purchasing website – quite easy to register and get online – plenty of millings to go around and not enough space to keep them – mountains of millings at all 4 shops

***A motion was made by Ms. Ervin, seconded by Mr. Bush to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

Mr. Bush:

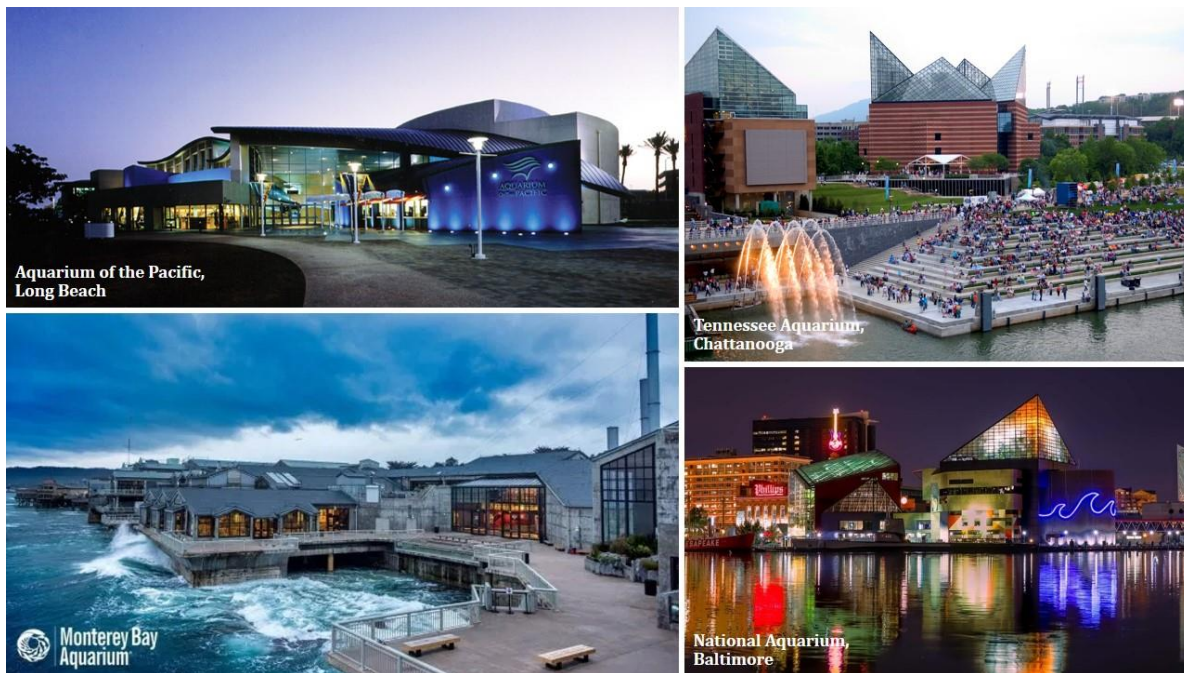
- When the county does work what happens to the millings – Mr. Voss answered – millings go back to shop and reuse or if we have a lot then goes to auction and purchasing does disposal – farmers and earth moving companies want them – auction is public – goes on purchasing website – quite easy to register and get online – plenty of millings to go around and not enough space to keep them – mountains of millings at all four shops

## **2. INFORMATIONAL: Aquarium**



Ms. Primo:

- We have been invited to come back and talk about the County Executive's ("CE") very exciting and bold proposal to build a \$85m, 80k square foot, 600k gallon aquarium on the banks of the City's Inner Harbor



- This is aspirational but something that can be achieved - 4 of 60 aquariums in the Country are accredited – aspiring to be the 61<sup>st</sup> – most of these had tremendous impacts in the communities and neighborhoods – similar to Chattanooga’s size



AA



## **“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
- Hired a consulting firm – based in Cambridge MA – quote from consultants – aside from an exciting facility for our children and grandchildren – makes sense economically for our community – some think that it is not the case
  - Consultecon is the organization that was hired to do the study – very skilled expert professional organization that did this study – they answered an RFP – very impressed with who they are and what they have done over 30 years – more than 100 studies on aquarium projects – main focus is zoos and aquariums and other facilities of that source – tremendous confidence in what they have given us – when we first started we were looking at the Roth steel sight
  - Could build an aquarium here and will get people the first year – they had already scoped our community the night before – they had looked at the Inner Harbor area – we had no idea we would have the opportunity to buy property in Inner Harbor – we were pushing Roth sight –tells us they are a firm of integrity
  - Authored this after gathering data – talked to people – sick of them calling for more and more information – not just from CE but Visit Syracuse and SU – came up with a study
  - We are associated with water – spent millions on cleaning up the lake – spent millions on the path – millions on amphitheater – millions on trail system which NY has now connected to and connects to creek walk – spent millions on the water that many communities don’t have – this is very unique and we have Inner Harbor which allows boat travel to Europe, the great lakes – amazing asset that we have let it sit dormant – need government to step in and help with development – this will help out our whole community
  - New educational opportunities for our children and students to delve into studies that they ordinarily wouldn’t be able to do – enhance the quality of our lives – seniors will enjoy – another opportunity for great volunteer experiences – new jobs – that is what we learned from Consultecon – based on real data

**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 <sup>1/2</sup>	\$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 <sup>1/2</sup>	\$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 <sup>1/2</sup>	\$195.96 <sup>1/2</sup>	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	State Govt. / Support Org.
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	City Govt. / 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	1988	129,289	800,000	130	1,426,793	\$66,468	High	640,231	8,894	\$24.95	\$22.95	\$19.95	\$150.00	City Govt. / Support Org.
<b>Average</b>			<b>131,601</b>	<b>949,372</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>1,801,029</b>	<b>\$64,126</b>		<b>614,786</b>	<b>14,680</b>	<b>\$26.12</b>	<b>\$23.84</b>	<b>\$19.24</b>	<b>\$174.86</b>	
<b>Median</b>			<b>129,289</b>	<b>920,500</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>1,195,886</b>	<b>\$58,443</b>		<b>640,231</b>	<b>10,872</b>	<b>\$27.45</b>	<b>\$24.49</b>	<b>\$19.95</b>	<b>\$179.00</b>	
<b>Onondaga County Aquarium</b>	<b>Syracuse NY</b>		<b>80,000</b>	<b>600,000</b>		<b>1,005,000</b>	<b>\$59,130</b>	<b>Medium</b>							



Mr. Bottar:

- Full consultant report has more information than is presented – detail flows into summary pages – key highlights with relevant data
- This is a representative list – not meant to be exhaustive – picked from 15 aquariums across the country
- Attendance is very, very strong – driven by demographics – number that live within market areas
- The choice of location is critical – some communities have located in not the best location which impacts their success
- OC will determine size and type of exhibitory – some have tried to do this on the cheap – you must have the better exhibits – first year everyone comes to take a look – without high end they will not come back
- Operating structure from the facility – do you have community engagement with volunteers – all pieces that is relevant to business operations

- Average attendance – not all the biggest aquariums are listed – representative of what we would likely see – draw your attention to the Tennessee aquarium located in Chattanooga – get on the website for the aquarium and for the city – similar to Syracuse – population is almost identical to Syracuse – city and suburban area – perfect example – we were drawn to this aquarium when we looked at this 20 years ago
- Typical argument is we don't have the population base as other large cities so not indicative – point of contention this year when the CE brought it up – a community our size opened an 130k sq. ft. aquarium in 1992– have added on another 60k sq. ft. because so successful – competing with a major new aquarium that was opened in Atlanta GA 2.5 hours away – 250k sq. ft. largest in the country and largest in the world – hurt their attendance for 1 year – continued to operate at levels of attendance after one year
- Ticket prices are higher than what you may expect – SU basketball game, concert, movie – ticket prices are similar to what you would pay across the country – 2 hour visitor experience – competitive in the market place
- Many facilities are operated by nonprofit organizations

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

Name	Location	Expansion	Year Opened	Reported Total Square Footage	Total Gallons	Original Construction Cost <sup>1/</sup>	Estimated Construction Cost in 2021 Dollars <sup>2/</sup>	Estimated Construction Cost Per SF in 2021 Dollars	Notes
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	\$1,600,000	\$5,440,000	\$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.
<b>Average</b>				<b>85,083</b>	<b>730,625</b>	<b>\$53,666,667</b>	<b>\$77,677,250</b>	<b>\$1,071</b>	
<b>Weighted Average</b>								<b>\$913</b>	
<b>Median</b>				<b>75,500</b>	<b>625,000</b>	<b>\$48,300,000</b>	<b>\$77,191,000</b>	<b>\$928</b>	

<sup>1/</sup> 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.

<sup>2/</sup> 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.

- Issue of cost to construct is relevant – database on cost to build an aquarium in Syracuse – adjusted for 2021 dollars – average cost is \$100 per foot – they are expensive facilities because equipment to keep species alive is very expensive – exhibitory is expensive – acrylic panels from the ceiling to floor – sophisticated pieces of glass – walking through an acrylic tube – those kinds of exhibits are expensive to build

**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		Low	High	Low Range Attendance	Mid Range Attendance	High Range Attendance	
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 <sup>1/</sup>				400,000	490,000	570,000	

- Numbers provided by the experts – if they didn't think the aquarium would work we would be talking about the low range attendance – because of the location and the county's representation that they would build a first class aquarium – they centered on midrange attendance
- Personal point – I think we are in the high range – county's commitment will allow us to hit a higher range – half from within one hour drive – others from five hour drive – population is 60 million within a five hour drive – NY, Boston, Philly, Montreal, Buffalo, and Rochester – projecting we will get less than ½ of 1% of the 60 million that live within a five hour drive

**Table X-5  
Preliminary Net Operating Net Operating Income Potential Summary  
Onondaga County Aquarium**

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



- Aquariums attract foundation support

**Table X-2**  
**Preliminary Revenue Potential Estimate in a Stable Year in 2021 Dollars**  
**Onondaga County Aquarium**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Stable Year Current Dollar Value</b>	<b>Percent to Total</b>
Total Attendance	490,000	
<b>Earned Revenues</b>		
Admission Revenue	\$6,403,062	53%
Membership	986,628	8%
Gross Retail	1,543,500	13%
Net Café Revenue	220,500	2%
Net Facility Rental Revenue	306,000	3%
Net Programming and upcharge Revenue	980,000	8%
<b>Total Earned Revenue</b>	<b>\$10,439,690</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>Contributed Revenues</b>		
Contributed Revenues <sup>1/</sup>	<b>\$1,565,953</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$12,005,643</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Rounded (\$000)</b>	<b>\$12,006,000</b>	

- Key point of design is where to locate the gift shop – was at an aquarium in Chicago that hosted an evening event

**Table X-1**  
**Operating Assumptions in Stabilized Year Mid-Range in 2021 Dollars**  
**Onondaga County Aquarium**

<b>General</b>			
Aquarium Attendance Potential	490,000		
Attendance Growth Factor	0.5%		Every year after stabilized year
Aquarium Square Footage	80,000		Estimated
Water Volume in Gallons	600,000		Assumption
Inflation	2.0%		Annually
<b>Ticket Prices and Assumptions</b>			
Adult Ticket	\$21.95		
Per Capita Admissions Revenue	\$12.97		
Ticket Price Increase Every Other Year	5%		
<b>Memberships</b>			
Number of Memberships in Stable Year	5,720		
Average number of visits per membership	12		
Average Membership Fee	\$171		
Ticket & Membership Price Rate of Increase	5%	Every other year	
<b>Retail Sales</b>			
Per Capita Retail Spending	\$3.00	Per visitor	
Outside Sales as a % of Visitor Sales	5%		From non-aquarium visitors, website + events
Cost of Goods Sold	50.0%		
<b>Café Net Revenue</b>			
Per Capita Café Spending	\$3.00		Assumed to be operated by outside vendor
Owner's Share of Gross Café Sales	15%		
<b>Miscellaneous and Outdoor Programming Revenue</b>			
	\$2.00	Per visitor	Includes Camps, "Behind the Scenes" tours, Animal Encounters, Kayak and nature boat tours and other paid programming / upcharges.
<b>Facility Rentals</b>			
Major Rentals Per Year	52		Major, Minor and Birthday Parties
Target Attendance in Stable Year	5,200	100	Avg. attendees per event
Average Net Revenue	\$3,000		Per rental to the Aquarium
Minor Rentals Per Year	50		
Target Attendance in Stable Year	2,500	50	Avg. attendees per event
Average Net Revenue	\$1,250		Per rental
Birthday Parties Per Year	250		
Target Attendance in Stable Year	6,250	25	Avg. attendees per event
Average Net Party Revenue	\$350		
Year 1 Ramp up to full Facility Rental Activity	75%	Year 1	Of Stable Year Rentals Activity
Year 2 Ramp up to full Facility Rental Activity	90%	Year 2	Of Stable Year Rentals Activity
<b>Contributed Revenue Assumption, Stable years</b>			
	15%	of Earned Revenues	Represents potential revenue from grants, gifts, fundraising events, and endowment proceeds, if an endowment is developed.
<b>Contributed Revenue Assumption - Years 1 &amp; 2</b>			
	12%		

Source: ConsultEcon, Inc.



**Table X-4**  
**Stable Year Operating Expenses in Current Dollars**  
**Onondaga County Aquarium**

Project Parameters		Factors		
Aquarium Interior Square Footage	80,000			
Gallons of Water	600,000			
Mid-Range Annual Attendance	490,000			
Employees (FTE's)	107.0	See Personnel Schedule		
Detailed Budgetary Analysis		Amount	Factor	Note
Salaries (FTE, PTE)		\$4,978,500		See Personnel Schedule
Overhead and Benefits <sup>1/</sup>		1,244,625	25%	Of Salaries
Retail Cost of Goods (COGS) Sold		771,750	50%	Of Gross Retail Sales
Land Lease Assumption		1		\$1 per Year
Professional / Contract Services		107,000	\$1,000	Per FTE
Administrative Expenses <sup>2/</sup>		240,750	\$2,250	Per FTE
Special Events		100,000		Budgeted
Telecommunications/ Technology/ Website		133,750	\$1,250	Per FTE
Education Programs		245,000	\$0.50	Per Attendee
Printing & Publications		122,500	\$0.25	Per Attendee
Advertising and Promotion		735,000	\$1.50	Per Attendee
Aquarium Animal Food <sup>3/</sup>		240,000	\$0.40	Per Gallon
Aquarium Animal Collections/ Care <sup>3/</sup>		300,000	\$0.50	Per Gallon
Exhibit Reinvestment / Changing Exhibits		245,000	\$0.50	Per Attendee
Insurance		120,000	\$1.50	Per SF
Building, Maintenance, Landscaping & Supplies		400,000	\$5.00	Per SF
Utilities		640,000	\$8.00	Per SF
Dept. Misc. & Discretionary		318,716	3%	of Total Operating Costs
<b>Subtotal Operating Expenses</b>		<b>\$10,942,592</b>		<b>97.1%</b>
<b>Capital Reserves</b>		<b>\$328,000</b>	3%	of Total Operating Costs
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>		<b>\$11,270,592</b>		<b>100.0%</b>
Operating Benchmarks				
Operating Expense Per Square Foot		\$141		
Operating Expense Per Attendee		\$23		
Operating Expense Per FTE		\$105,333		

<sup>1/</sup> See personnel table.

<sup>2/</sup> Includes Dues & Subscriptions, Office Supplies, Professional Travel, Postage & Shipping, uniforms, Volunteer Costs, Equipment Rental and other Administrative costs.

<sup>3/</sup> Animal food and collections care expenses will ultimately depend on the type of the collection and species but are assumed to be both local and from differing saltwater and freshwater habitats.

Source: ConsultEcon, Inc.

- 80 full-time and 40 part-time employees – have a good idea about the staffing requirements

**Table X-9**  
**Preliminary 10 YR Net Operating Net Operating Income Potential Summary**  
**Onondaga County Aquarium**

	Stable Year										Stable Year	
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	490,000	
Attendance	588,000	539,000	490,000	492,450	494,900	497,350	499,800	502,250	504,700	507,150		
<b>Revenue</b>											<b>Current Dollar Value</b>	<b>Percent of Expenses</b>
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 <sup>2/</sup>	\$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%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$14,073,000</b>	<b>\$12,908,000</b>	<b>\$12,490,000</b>	<b>\$12,593,000</b>	<b>\$13,182,000</b>	<b>\$13,322,000</b>	<b>\$13,778,000</b>	<b>\$13,924,000</b>	<b>\$14,587,000</b>	<b>\$14,745,000</b>	<b>\$12,006,000</b>	<b>107%</b>
Operating Expenses <sup>1/</sup>	\$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%
<b>Net Operating Income After Contributed Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,766,000</b>	<b>\$831,000</b>	<b>\$764,000</b>	<b>\$620,000</b>	<b>\$958,000</b>	<b>\$841,000</b>	<b>\$1,035,000</b>	<b>\$913,000</b>	<b>\$1,302,000</b>	<b>\$1,181,000</b>	<b>\$735,000</b>	<b>7%</b>

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

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

<sup>2/</sup> 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.

- This would operate in the black and continue over 10 years – earned revenue peaks in first year – stable year is in year 3 –these are conservative numbers in my opinion
- Encourage you if you have the patience to go through the detailed report that backs up these numbers

## Baltimore – Inner Harbor

c. 1973



Today



Ms. Primo:

- Slides that you have seen during budget presentation – before and after slides

## Chattanooga, TN – Riverfront

c. 1988



Today



- Very blighted area – during budget presentation read from some folks that lived during that period
- In October, shortly after CE news release about the aquarium they reached out to Tom Henderson, retired TV person in Chattanooga – aquarium reshaped downtown and jump-started what the city needed – project was highly controversial – Henderson said you would be rare today to find voices that think it would be a waste of money
- Article that appeared in 2019 – looking at 150 year celebration – interviewed Kim White, President of nonprofit river – focuses on downtown Chattanooga – foundation for many reasons – been \$5 billion since it opened – none of what happened downtown would never have happened – Chattanooga is not Chattanooga without the aquarium





- A well-developed master plan for the Inner Harbor with Destiny, construction of Aloft hotel – still viewed as phase 1 with Destiny, phase 2 with development – ready for phase 3 – blocks represent buildings that could be built – there is about 45 acres in and around Inner Harbor – big green space has 23 acres of vacant land – property adjacent to Inner Harbor – consideration for the location for the aquarium – 150x150 2 store buildings – maybe a mix of activity – second phase of Iron apartments – apartments are fully occupied at this time – see a demand for office space like Bankers Health – limited amount of retail because of Destiny up the street – adequate space for about 1m sq. ft. – would an aquarium stimulate that kind of activity – these are iconic structures that will create a lot of buzz in the community

## 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

Ms. Cody:

- Site selection at Inner Harbor – Ms. Primo answered land is owned by COR – negotiating now – a budget of \$85m will allow us to stay in the budget and includes purchase of land
- Relationship with the zoo – would they be county employees – Ms. Primo answered – OC will build and put fish in there – we don't want to and don't have expertise to run it – the next job will be to look at private enterprises – experts suggest nonprofit structures – 501c3 – like a friends group at the zoo but more involved – it may be going forward that we see synergies to get to one entity – initially looking at it separately – zoo pulls in a lot of grants and revenue from donors – anticipate aquarium would pull in a lot more money – we don't want the zoo to suffer – Ted has assured me that this will enhance the zoo



Mr. Fox:

- The 60 aquariums are a tight knit group – 16 are combination of zoos and aquariums – great thing is everyone wants to share in successes and failures – how to advocate to the community to get their buy in – have same missions and goals – we don't want to compete for anything – aquarium is located on Inner Harbor – will be a different topic to focus on – all schools, college and universities will use this asset

Ms. Kuhn:

- Feasibility study is massive – had it 6 weeks – budget, reapportionment and elections – concerned with the speed
- Chattanooga already has a high tourism and difference in median income – \$50k versus ours of \$36k – poverty rate is different
- Is ESF been involved in any discussions – Ms. Primo answered - none as of today but will be involved
- We heard about the positives – any data on fiscal risk – Mr. Bottar answered the risk is if we don't achieve the projection

Mr. Bottar:

- Answered – median income from OC is comparable to Chattanooga so want to be sure we look at accurate comparisons

Mr. Fox:

- Answered Ms. Kuhn's question regarding soft or salt water - would be a combination of both – essentially looks like salt you put on your table – create a mixture that is like ocean water – facility would have equipment to desalinate

Ms. Primo:

- Chattanooga today has a high tourism rate which you could accurately point to the aquarium

Mr. Bottar:

- Chattanooga choo cho – think of Great Lakes, Finger Lakes and Adirondacks – far superior to Chattanooga

Ms. Primo:

- \$1000/sq. ft. doesn't include property but includes outfitting of aquarium – fish aren't that expensive – \$500-\$750k for fish – a lot of the cost is for transportation of the fish

Mr. Fox:

- Contact other aquariums and they will grow fish for us

Ms. Cody:

- How often will you change exhibits?

Ms. Primo:

- Aquariums are noted for attracting repeat customers – they are designed for space for changing exhibits – new things for people to see and experience every 6 months or 12 months – I lived in Boston and went to the aquarium many times – will rotate different kinds of exhibits

Mr. Bottar:

- Chattanooga has grown 4% per year – ties to the aquarium – there are other attractions but if done right we can expect those kinds of numbers
- One of the great things we have is to create a room with a virtual aquarium – you can change it frequently – new element in last 10-15 years to use latest technology to give you another reason to come back

Ms. Cody:

- Chattanooga has a river – Ms. Primo answered - started with fresh water and expansion added salt water – aquarium became the anchor for the river walk – we have the trail so we are trying to enhance the trails

Ms. Ervin:

- Thank you for the presentation – my concern with tourism issue – what happening at Destiny is going downward – so how are we going to get tourists if Destiny isn't doing well

Ms. Primo:

- Let's assume Destiny isn't coming back – I think the aquarium will help Destiny – we have \$25m rehab in the baseball park, \$50m on amphitheater, the trail network – take Destiny away and we will still succeed – I disagree with Dave a bit – I think people like to shop at boutiques – I would love to have a senior facility – I think Destiny needs this aquarium

Mrs. Ervin:

- Attendance – what was it for the past 5 years – Ms. Primo answered – we can see if this is representative of history – many have weighed in on \$85m – return that your showing looks good on paper – benefits tourism but how about people that are living here – if I can't afford to go how will it benefit everyone

Ms. Primo:

- If you live here the price of \$21.95 for adults, will be less for students, seniors, and military – have a family membership that will bring your price down – have opportunity for children to go with field trips – again go back to the economic impact this will have on this community – everyone is benefiting – we run this place on people having jobs - will provide more jobs, recoup sales and occupancy tax – you would have to spend more money to go and travel five hours away to see other aquariums

Mr. Fox:

- Accessibility for all demographics across the community is important – some this is their only exposure for nature and environment – work with CNYworks – do free visits for first and second graders – not just a visit but programming – how to be better land stewards – just on a zoom call to have sponsorship days like Tops or Wegman's – seems to be working well – helps increase accessibility for everyone

Mrs. Ervin:

- Will this facility have county employees

Ms. Primo:

- Will be a 501c3 and that organization will run it – instead of at the zoo the 501c3 takes care of marketing, ticket takers, and fundraisers
- They will hire professionals to run it – OC will be oversight – they will be overseeing it – thinking members of the Legislature will be on the board – similar to OnCenter and Amphitheater – MSN and Live Nation take care of it – not foreign to OC – will be cross marketing for the zoo and aquarium

Ervin

- Income goes to whom-

Ms. Primo:

- Answered Mrs. Ervin's question as to who will get the revenue - nonprofit will be set up – obviously an endowment – will be responsible for the facility improvements – don't know exactly what the agreement will be – we will come to this body with the agreement and request your approval

Mr. Kinne:

- Why would we vote on this when the county doesn't know about this – just like the OnCenter has been subsidized
- If you take rings and put that around the amphitheater – 1 mile and 5 miles these people aren't going to be able to attend – what happens when Niagara Falls decides to build onto their aquarium where does it end –

Mr. Bottar:

- Within a 5 hour drive there are 60 million people – I would think that if Buffalo built an aquarium – if we are only looking at 250,000 people from the 60 million – we have SU, Lemoyne, and Destiny – maybe they go down to 15m or 10 m – even if competition surfaces at some point – impact of 60 million people close by – we can withstand the competition
- A first class aquarium is a great opportunity – we have to do well – how serious is the CE and legislature – you have to commit to a first class aquarium
- 130k sq. ft. up against a 250k sq. ft. 2.5 hours down the road – that's Chattanooga against Atlanta - there is room in the market place for aquariums

Mr. Kinne:

- You may or may not know this but I was in favor of the aquarium in 1997 but for 20 years I've heard don't spend the fund balance – last year it was pouring out and we wanted to spend \$2m – I happen to think it is a good idea but I don't understand why we don't bond for it – for 30 years we have been hearing don't spend the surplus – its hypercritical – that is why I'm a naysayer as some people like to call me – those people saying that have not seen what is being done

Ms. Primo:

- Answered Ms. Kuhn's question regarding parking - will be on sight and on the street – looking at kiddy corner from Aloft hotel – south of Kilpatrick – will have ample parking

Ms. Kuhn:

- Why is this such a rush – I don't think we have community buy in – what is the rush

Ms. Primo:

- This has been studied for 20 years – and on top of the feasibility studies that Mr. Bottar said he did three others – OC talked 20 years ago about an aquarium - I would welcome the opportunity to sit down with you – this study makes a strong case that this is a project that this community should get behind – I don't look at it like rushing – at the budget hearing there were volunteers for zoo that spoke

Ms. Kuhn:

- I am elected to do my due diligence – what's the rush – why can't we have a couple more months – not clear about where the profits go – don't understand the speed

Ms. Cody:

- We aren't voting today – they will give presentation on Thursday

Mr. Bush:

- I bet a lot of those going to Chattanooga are from NY after they retire
- I don't know how my constituents are going to get there with 81 coming down
- Don't handle the CIP normally – financing of the project

Ms. Kuhn:

- This surplus came from many of OC departments being shorted over the past few years – our public health department is very problematic – unusual to have surplus



Mr. Morgan:

- I think we have had a conversation on the narrative – the 2022 budget invested in a lot of these things that you're talking about – what is short changed – we run the government – we know the resources that are needed – not sure what the comments mean – we can do both things - we can ensure that these groups are being funded

Mr. Kinne:

- With all due respect - let's get back to the question Mr. Bush and I are raising – this is a CIP project and I don't think you can give me one example of a project that has been paid in cash – I'll give you one example the lead program – I was shocked how the people in Geddes were in favor of the aquarium – city was in favor but they would like some things first – narrative 1 this should be bonded for and 2 we need to address issues that aren't being addressed – we spent a lot on metro – but how many miles of pipes have we replaced that are over 100 years old

Mr. Morgan:

- We use cash – do we use it all the time no – but just because we have always done that doesn't mean we should always do that– if cash is available there is no reason not to use cash – we are investing millions of dollars - mandates alone eat up \$170m – false narrative

Mr. Kinne:

- I was suggesting there is a difference of opinion – we as adults should agree to disagree - just because you have the money doesn't mean you should spend it – you're asking me to vote for something I don't have answers to – even if it's a good reason this should be done the way projects have always been done

Ms. Cody:

- Any other questions regarding the project – asked Mr. Liedka to share some thoughts

Mr. Liedka:

- Taking Chattanooga many years to meet us – we compete with them – one for the top three reasons we lose is amenities – this would captivate people to stay an extra day – numbers are accurate with hotel guests – when we talk about Buffalo we are still in the middle – we will pull from everywhere in the northeast – at least \$500m comes from sales tax – Mr. Morgan answered \$300 million – something like this will increase sales tax – our data shows that we lack a few amenities – it makes a whole lot of sense – I've see a lot of feasibility studies – we spent three weeks and turned over 75 pages of data – we will be tasked to market this – why not Syracuse – if you want to sit on your hands then don't do it – be a leader to help generate all the dollars we need to do other things

Ms. Cody:

- Location at Inner Harbor – connection to downtown – can walk from a lot of places – love the walk through tunnel –aquarium was in Chicago – still have questions that need to be answered – thanks for the opportunity to sit down with you

Ms. Primo:

- Can't end without rebutting what Mr. Kinne has said that you don't have a plan – our consultants have said to run via 501c3 – only two are not run by 501c3 – have tremendous contacts that are run by 501c3 – don't have contract details – we built an amphitheater without a strong management plan – no one is going to talk to us without serious consideration of building – that's going to take a commitment on our part which will be a vote for funding – we know how it will be operated but don't know specifics – anyone sitting here today would not know any other details until we move further along

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

## ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE

DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2021

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Ted Fox	Parks- Zoo
MARY ROSS	OCDOT
James Fenslen	OCDOT
JD BOTTAL	CNY RPD
Michelle Brickhuback	The Post - Standard
Ben Hays	Leg Dept
Bri Kelly	Park St.
Yvette Velasco	LAW
Isabelle Harris	CE
Marybeth Preme	CE
Liam O'Connor	CE
Tina's Glazier	ONE
Dan Kwashowski	SOCRA