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Kaukauna water park on thin ice

Financing status prompts council to issue ultimatum

By Roger Pitt

Heart of the Valley bureau chief

KAUKAUNA — The developer of a proposed indoor water park at the 100-acre Fox Valley Greyhound Park site says he likely will reject an ultimatum by the city to move the project forward.

"I can't see putting \$150,000 on the pass line and rolling the dice on financing," Paul Kaczrowski, president of Prestige Realty Inc., Green Bay, told *The Post-Crescent* Tuesday.

"I have \$188,000 and a lot of sleepless nights invested in this project over the last year."

"We gave the developer a drop-dead date of Friday to decide if he will agree to our terms," Mayor John Lambie said.

Kaczrowski said following a closed-door meeting with the Common Council late Tuesday that he has invested enough time and money in the project.

"I don't expect to change my mind," he said. "I think the city has other offers on the property."

Kaczrowski objected to paying \$200,000 earnest money to guarantee the project would move forward within 90 days, conditions the council set for extending a Dec. 15 deadline in a developer's agreement to file plans to finance the project.

The developer envisioned a 35,000-square-foot indoor water park, 320-bed hotel and convention center at the U.S. 41-State 55 site. The estimated cost was \$50 million, with another \$35 million in value estimated with the development of the out lots for associated businesses.

"Nobody wanted this to work more than I did," Lambie said. "It was to the point that something had to be done to move the project forward."

"I felt I was entitled to at least one extension," Kaczrowski said. "The city had me on a very short leash to arrange financing."

Lambie said the terms put to Kaczrowski were the result of council direction.

Those conditions included a \$200,000 payment to the city, \$150,000 of which would be applied to the developer's costs of the project if the financing deadline was met. The other \$50,000 would be retained by the city to pay for existing costs of maintaining the site and other expenses.

Parks in progress

There are six indoor water parks being built and seven others are in the planning stages in Wisconsin. Those under construction:

Lodge at Cedar Creek, Rothschild

Lake Lawn Resort, Delavan

Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan

Wilderness Phase VIII, Wisconsin Dells

Meadowbrook Resort (expansion), Wisconsin Dells

Kalahari Convention Center (expansion), Wisconsin Dells

Besides Kaukauna, parks are being planned in Castle Rock Lake, Wisconsin Dells (two), Kenosha, Hayward and Oconomowoc

Source: **JLC Hospitality Consulting Inc.**

Lambie said the city had paid about \$5,000 to heat the building in 32-degree weather and another \$8,000 to repair the boiler.

"The city also has not collected any taxes on the property. The project is no further along than it was six months ago," he said.

"Somebody is going to take my dream and build the water park. I thought about that project a long time," Kaczrowski said.

The city purchased the dog park site in August for \$5.3 million.