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POOL AD-HOC COMMITTEE FINAL RECOMMENDATION

September 9, 2019

SITUATION:

When Daniel Meyer Pool (DMP) opened in 1983, Ashland had two public swimming pools — an indoor pool owned and operated by Southern Oregon University (SOU) and DMP, an outdoor seasonal pool owned and operated by Ashland Parks and Recreation (APRC). The SOU pool closed in 2015, and DMP is at the end of its life cycle in 2019.

BACKGROUND:

APRC currently strives to meet the Ashland community's aquatic needs by operating the DMP in the summer recreation season with a full schedule of aquatic programs, and in the fall, winter, and spring, through contracts with local high school teams and organized swim groups.

During the past six years, staff have been responding to ever increasing failures of the pool's structure by attempting repairs with significantly decreasing success and growing costs. The pool is 36 years old and has experienced rapid deterioration that has led to closing the pool two weeks early this season.

In 2015, SOU removed their 25-yard varying depth pool without replacing it. Until its removal, the SOU pool was the only pool in Ashland capable of hosting competitive aquatics. Since the fall of 2015, APRC has attempted to meet the public's aquatic needs with DMP for organized aquatic groups displaced by the removal of the indoor SOU pool, although the current DMP does not meet all of the standards of a competitive pool. The increased use of DMP transformed the operation from a seasonal recreational pool to a year-round pool which included contracted user groups such as Ashland High School (AHS) Swim Team, AHS Water Polo Team, Talent/Phoenix Swim Team, Rogue Valley Masters Swim Team, and Southern Oregon Water Polo Club. Regardless of the increased use of the pool, competitive events still cannot be held at the DMP because of the current size and depth of the pool.

APRC reached out to SOU, Ashland School District and the Ashland Family YMCA to find a cooperative solution for the severe loss of aquatic facilities in the community. Efforts to establish an effective partnership to build a new pool with these organizations have thus far failed. Regardless, APRC has continued to independently investigate ways to address the

needs of the DMP and the needs of the Ashland community.

APRC has continued to prioritize the pool solution and the Commissioners have consistently adopted goals to support that prioritization. A current, high priority APRC goal is to *"Improve public aquatic recreation and competitive options in Ashland consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Pool Ad Hoc Committee and ensure the continuous operation of an adequate recreational pool in Ashland during the summer months, at a minimum, until construction begins on a new pool."*

Consistent with the pool goal and to determine a best course of action moving forward, APRC formed the Pool Ad-Hoc Committee (the Committee) in June 2018. The Committee moved forward quickly and created Sub-committees that were tasked with completing the following responsibilities:

1. Determine the aquatic needs of the Ashland Community by performing a Needs Analysis/Feasibility Study
2. Determine the best pool site and design to respond to the aquatic needs of the Ashland Community by performing a Site Analysis Study
3. Research funding options for capital and operations of a new pool, and make a recommendation to the Parks Commissioners

ASSESSMENT:

The Committee has completed two of the three tasks – the group was asked to forgo the final task since APRC staff will address that item specifically.

The following actions have been accomplished by the Committee to help determine the most appropriate course of action to take about improved aquatic access in the Ashland community:

1. Aquatic Needs Analysis

    a. Two local public listening sessions were facilitated where the public was invited to attend and tell the Committee about their concerns, aquatic needs, and desires for a public pool in Ashland; these were held in February and March 2019 and were well attended. Key points expressed by the public at these two (2) sessions were:

        i. A desire to have a 25-yard X 25-meter pool, with a portion to exceed six (6) feet in depth to accommodate increased aquatic activities, such as high school swim block starts, high school water polo and other deep-water programs
        ii. A desire to have a pool large enough to accommodate more than one program happening at one time
        iii. A desire to have a pool with a seasonal cover and be operated year-round
        iv. A desire to have many programs appealing to all ages – multi-generational and multi-purpose aquatic classes and programs
        v. A desire for funding methods that minimize the impact on taxpayers

    b. This sub-committee also created a survey which was randomly mailed to 2500 Ashland residents, asking for their input regarding their aquatic needs. The results from this survey backed up the information learned from the listening sessions and offered these key points:

i. More than 60% of surveyed community members utilize aquatic facilities in the area
ii. Surveyed community members expressed desire for multiple use options (diversity of aquatic activities occurring simultaneously) at aquatic facilities
iii. Community members expressed needs for improved options in recreational swimming, lap swimming, aquatic exercise, swim lessons, and options for competitive/organized swim groups

2. Site Analysis

a. The Site Analysis sub-committee evaluated several properties in Ashland to determine if additional locations, other than the current DMP site, should be evaluated as a new pool site. The Committee gave consideration to several potential properties for a new pool site, some of those properties were owned by APRC and others were not. It was determined that land acquisition costs, associated timing issues, new infrastructure construction costs and regulatory costs were significant enough factors to eliminate those properties from consideration, which led the focus back to the current DMP site.

b. In addition to the work being done by the Committee, APRC contacted Anderson Poolworks, who performed an audit on the condition of the DMP. The executive summary of their findings was:

i. The severity of structural failures and the accelerated deterioration of the DMP realistically prohibits the option of repairing the pool for long-term use
ii. Additionally, the size/depth of the current DMP does not serve all the identified needs of Ashland citizens
iii. According to industry standards, a typical outdoor recreation pool has an expected lifespan of 30-40 years. DMP is on the higher end of the life-cycle and is experiencing critical structural failures signifying the end of its life-cycle

c. Specific Pool Design:

i. Consistent with the public meeting and survey results, as well as the research conducted by the Site Analysis Subcommittee, the Committee concluded that in order to satisfy the aquatic needs/requirements of the community that APRC should replace DMP with a 25-yard X 25-meter outdoor pool, with the following characteristics:

- Varying depths, including a portion of the pool to exceed 6 feet in depth to accommodate deep water programs for water safety training, recreation, high school water polo, high school swim team competitions, etc.
- An additional adjoining recreation/therapy-based pool space that is shallow, to accommodate a variety of uses and user groups
- An ADA access between the Senior Center and pool to incorporate the new pool into the programming of the Ashland Senior Services Program
- Inclusive pool designs such ADA Handicapped standard approved pool entry systems and a zero-depth entry system for the pool

d. General Pool Design:

   i. The Committee also concluded that the building of a new pool should use the highest standards for construction methods and mechanical components that reduce long-term maintenance and operational costs
   ii. The design of the pool and deck area should accommodate the construction of a future cover for the pool, allowing adequate space for footings and construction of the structure without interrupting the pool
   iii. Prioritization needs to be given to environmentally efficient and sustainable features providing operational and maintenance cost savings, such as:

      - a heat exchanger to offset costs to heat water for the pool and showers
      - rooftop solar to reduce electrical costs
      - ultra-violet light to sanitize water and eliminate/reduce the need for chlorine and other chemicals

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The vision that was formed by the Committee during the process of evaluating aquatic needs in Ashland is:

> *To construct and operate a public swimming pool in Ashland that serves the diverse aquatic needs of its citizens, including all ages, genders, abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.*

1. **Pool Design:**

   a. **The Committee recommends the aging DMP be replaced with a new 25 yard x 25 meter outdoor community pool, with the characteristics detailed in the Site Analysis section above, including an attached recreation/therapy alcove, to be located at the current DMP site in Hunter Park.**

2. **Timing:**

   a. The Committee recommends immediate action to plan, design, and construct a new swimming pool supporting the identified aquatic needs of the Ashland community, of which this recommendation is based upon.

3. **Funding:**

   a. The Committee recommends that APRC staff and Commissioners address the funding requirements for meeting the Committee's recommendations in the most appropriate and expedient manner possible

   b. The Committee recommends that APRC seek out non-profit organizations and partners to support the funding and implementation of strategies to improve aquatics in Ashland

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Additional Needs Identified by the Committee, for future phases (in no particular order):

    a. The Committee recommends the following projects and improvements, as funds allow:

        i. Seasonal cover
        ii. Infrastructure and budget to support year-round operations for groups and individuals
        iii. Redesign or reconstruction of bathhouse using highest standards for reducing long-term maintenance costs and decreasing carbon footprint
        iv. Amenities for user groups to improve experiences in aquatic programs, including spectator and aquatic recreation equipment and facilities
        v. Other facility improvements to improve operational efficiency, address long-term maintenance and sustainable practices supporting the longevity of a new aquatic facility
        vi. Conversion of the attached recreation/therapy pool to its own separate tank with independent equipment system

2. Until 2015, Ashland citizens had access to both a year-round indoor public pool and an outdoor seasonal public pool. Since the removal of the SOU indoor pool, the DMP has only been able to fill a portion of a major deficiency in pool accessibility for the citizens of Ashland. Although the replacement of DMP is required due to its end of life-cycle and will improve aquatic access for the citizens of Ashland above what is available in 2019, a new outdoor pool will not completely alleviate the loss of the indoor public swimming pool at SOU that existed until 2015. The Committee recommends that APRC continue to work with partners to reestablish a year-round indoor facility, even after the DMP is replaced as recommended in item 1., above.