

APRC Park Views Column – March 28, 2019

Setting the Record Straight on Aquatics in Ashland and the Future of the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool

The Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool was dedicated to the Ashland Community on July 4, 1983. The pool was supported by local fundraising efforts and a \$100,000 gift from Margaret and Albert Meyer to memorialize their late son.

By Lonny Flora, APRC Recreation Manager

Recently there has been information published about the work of the Pool Ad Hoc Committee and concerns surrounding the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool. Some of the information could be misconstrued to mean plans for addressing Ashland's aquatic needs and keeping the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool operational have stalled and aren't able to move forward.

To say that plans have stalled is incorrect, as the process of developing a plan is still underway. The reality is the Pool Ad Hoc Committee is working to develop recommendations to help guide the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) in developing plans that will solve the issues Ashland is facing with offering public aquatics. During the process of developing recommendations for APRC the ad hoc committee is considering a wide range of possibilities and determining whether options are feasible. When options related to the design and financing for pool improvements are determined to be unrealistic, it is the responsibility of the ad hoc committee to turn focus toward more feasible recommendations that support APRC's goal to enact a plan that can succeed. This does not mean that options are completely dismissed or that the process has failed, it means the process is working.

APRC is continuing to maintain and operate the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool during the summer months as it has since 1983. APRC has stated one of the top priorities is to maintain and operate the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool during the summer months as the absolute minimum standard for providing public aquatics. This will require significant repairs to keep the pool in working order and many needed repairs include costs that current budgets cannot meet. Maintaining the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool as-is will not address the growing needs for improved access to a variety of aquatics in Ashland and will not change the fact that the pool is reaching the end of a typical lifespan where critical failures could end pool operation altogether.

The Pool Ad Hoc Committee is working to develop plans for the future of public aquatics in Ashland that reflect the community's needs. The ad hoc committee is using several different methods to gather information. A needs assessment survey has been initiated, which is randomly sampling 2500 households within the city limits that will provide unbiased baseline data on the community's needs for a public pool. The ad hoc committee has also conducted listening sessions for the public to discuss their aquatic needs with committee members. Public surveys and other community input sessions are being considered to help direct the ad hoc committee's recommendation to APRC.

In recent years APRC efforts have included pursuing a variety of designs and funding mechanisms that would provide improved aquatic options without exhausting budget capabilities. To this point, none of these ideas have gained enough support to make it past conceptual planning. The APRC created the Pool

Ad Hoc Committee comprised of citizen volunteers, APRC commissioners and staff to determine feasible solutions for resolving the issues facing the Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool and meet the needs of the community.

During this process, the committee is considering multiple strategies to achieve the goals of improving aquatics and some options may not be feasible at this time. This does not mean the process is abandoned and possibility of success is lost. Ultimately the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners will decide what actions to take for the future of publicly available aquatics in Ashland. The work done by the committee will provide information to the commission that is well-researched and relevant to develop the best plan possible.

The Pool Ad Hoc Committee is being informed and directed by community members of Ashland that provide feedback in public forums, complete surveys, write letters and e-mails. Public aquatic facilities are a critical component of healthy vibrant communities and provide equitable access for all community members for swimming instruction and recreation that contribute to a quality of life. APRC and the Pool Ad Hoc Committee believe in these principles and it is why we take on this challenging work.

For more information on opportunities to give your input and stay updated on the progress of the Pool Ad Hoc Committee please visit ashland.or.us/pooladhoc.