

Park Views – December 27, 2018 Column
Working Toward Solutions for the Aging Daniel Meyer Pool
By Lonna Flora, APRC Recreation Manager

What do you do when your community pool is at the end of its lifespan?

The Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) created the Daniel Meyer Pool Ad Hoc Committee to investigate how to provide for the need of improved aquatic facilities in the Ashland area. The Committee is made up of six volunteers, two Parks Commissioners, APRC staff and a volunteer Senior Services liaison.

The goal of the committee is to develop an executable plan for the funding and rebuild of the Daniel Meyer Pool. Currently, the ad hoc committee is studying the feasibility of pursuing a remodel and expansion of the Daniel Meyer Pool to address ongoing maintenance issues and the needs of the community.

APRC operates the Daniel Meyer Pool to provide affordable access to aquatics and swim lessons in a safe, supervised facility. In addition to promoting swimming skills and water safety for children and adults, aquatic activities are valuable for the general well-being of all community members. It is a public health and recreational obligation APRC aims to continue providing.

Originally designed for recreational use as a seasonal facility, the Daniel Meyer Pool provides summer-season aquatics and swim lessons. The summer season, typically June through early September, has traditionally provided ample opportunities for lap swimmers, recreational swimming and water exercise. However, with recent smoke-filled summers and with the closure of the SOU pool, it has become clear that access to aquatics must be expanded beyond the summer months. Swim lessons that were regularly at capacity were reduced by nearly 50% the past two seasons because of necessary cancellations due to unhealthy air quality from smoke.

In recent years during the offseason, the Daniel Meyer Pool has provided a practice facility for Ashland and Phoenix-Talent School District Swim and Water Polo teams, as well as the Masters swim club throughout the year. Unfortunately, the pool is not large or deep enough to provide a competitive venue for swim meets. As a result, our local swim teams must travel and coordinate with other teams to host competitive events, which requires more travel and expense for schools and parents.

Public pool facilities are an important fixture in the network of private and public entities addressing public health and safety needs. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that approximately 3,500 people die annually from drowning (non-boating related) and is the second leading cause of deaths in children one to four years old. Public pool programming also provides access to fitness activities that are low impact and benefit people of all ages. The CDC also reports water-based exercise can decrease risk of chronic illness, decrease pain and improve the use of joints affected by arthritis, improve mental health, improve the quality of life and decrease disability for aging adults.

The Daniel Meyer Pool, built in 1984, has reached the end of a typical life span for an aquatic facility its age. In its current condition, the pool will soon require major repairs of the pool tank lining and pump system to stay open to the public, while requiring more funding for ongoing operations.

Since the Daniel Meyer pool was originally built there have been major advancements in aquatic facility design that promote efficient energy use in pump systems, water heating, and utilities required to operate aquatic facilities. Even with enough funding for the required repairs needed to keep the pool in operation, it will not be able to meet the community's needs for an aquatic facility in our area. The Daniel Meyer pool was not designed for the current demand to operate year-round, uncovered, in the winter months. Ashland has the opportunity to solve this growing problem and make the Daniel Meyer Pool an important part of our community.

The ad hoc committee will soon implement more needs assessment strategies, listening sessions and open houses to gather input and direction, and develop strategies to solve this important issue. It is with your participation and understanding that we will reach these goals. Watch for updates/scheduling on our website, AshlandParksandRec.org, and on Facebook @AshlandParksandRec (use the hashtag #DanielMeyerPool).