

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****May 17, 2022**

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**SUBJECT: POOL HEATING AND THE ASSOCIATED COSTS, MAINTENANCE, AND STAFFING RESOURCES**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide background on initial capital outlay, ongoing maintenance, operation costs and feasibility of programming a year-round outdoor 50-meter heated lap pool.

**City Aquatics Background**

The Park & Recreation Department (PARD) currently operates two aquatic facilities: Marine Park Pool – a combination 25-yard 4 lap lanes & leisure pool that is not heated, and Forest Park Pool – a combination 50-meter 8 lap lanes, leisure and diving pool that is not heated. A third facility at the McDonald YMCA (modeled similar to the Marine Park Pool) is operated in partnership with the YMCA.

**Industry Standards**

PARD and professional pool consultant, Counsilman-Hunsaker (CHA), research determined that 50-meter pools are atypical for municipal facilities, which tend to focus more on recreational and instructional opportunities over competition swimming/training. Research revealed limited examples of municipal facilities which operate outdoor 50-meter pools; the majority are operating 25-yard pools whether indoor or outdoor. CHA reported that they are not aware of any 50-meter pools that are heated for year-round use at the municipal level and outdoor 25-yard pools that are heated are not typical and usually supplemental to a larger indoor facility. Heating outdoor pools for year-round use is more common for institutional facilities which are prioritizing competition swimming/training. CHA is aware of several examples of outdoor 50-meter pools in Texas which are heated (and cooled in some cases); however, all are either independent school districts, universities, or private swim club facilities.

The majority of municipally operated outdoor aquatic facilities provide a facility with 25-yard lap lanes operated seasonally and not heated for year-round use/programming.

**Projections and Assumptions**

In addition to the increased capital and utility costs, ongoing operating and maintenance costs would significantly increase the subsidy for a year-round heated 50-meter pool over that of a traditional summer season pool operation. The increased costs for the limited off-season use would yield minimal revenues, diminishing the feasibility of a year-round operation based on the following assumptions:

- 12 months of operation (three months seasonal and nine months off-season);
  - Off-season (October to May) operating hours of Monday through Friday from 5:30AM to 4PM, and Saturday from 9AM to 4PM.
  - Staff required at facility from 5AM to 5PM Monday through Friday, and 9AM to 5PM on Saturdays.
- Total staff time at 68 hours week would require two full-time Pool Managers (to manage the facility, coordinate the lap swim program, supervise staff, oversee inventory, point-of-sale, cash handling, etc.), three full-time Lifeguards and three part-time Lifeguards (based

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on rotation requirements of two on stand and one down at a time), and one Maintenance Worker (to maintain the facility including grounds, building and pool and ensure water quality and pool cleanliness meets standards for lap swimming activities);

- Current lap swim users [two swim teams (70 team members) and approximately 20 individuals for 116 visits] annualized for an estimated 1,085 visits in the off-season;
- Revenues calculated assume 17 hours a week of swim team rentals and remaining 51 hours a week as open-to-public lap swim access, three weeks of closures for holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year Holiday), and two weeks of inclement weather closures;

It should be noted that because the DFW Region is classified as an ozone non-attainment zone, a “bubble” enclosure to retain heat cannot be considered, therefore any water heat retention device would have to be addressed with a pool cover maintained and monitored by staff.

Estimated Cost Impact of Heated Lap Lanes

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|--|------------------|
| <i>Gas Infrastructure Installation (one-time; heater and service)</i>  | <i>\$111,000</i> |
| <i>Automatic Pool Cover (one-time)</i>   | <i>\$98,500</i>  |
| Seasonal Operating Expense   | \$262,828        |
| Seasonal Operating Revenue   | \$128,677        |
| Off-Season Estimated Operating Expense (staff, chemicals, gas service, minor equipment, operating supplies, contract janitorial service, etc.) | \$458,567        |
| Off-Season Estimated Operating Revenue (additional contract-use by swim teams and individual visits)   | \$ 68,560        |
| <b>Total Year-Round Estimated Expenses</b>   | <b>\$721,395</b> |
| <b>Total Year-Round Estimated Revenue</b>  | <b>\$197,237</b> |

Forest Park Pool

A community meeting was held on September 16, 2021, with over 100 persons in attendance. Those present expressed a desire for retaining a 50-meter, 8-lane pool with sufficient depth for learn-to-swim/diving and increased programming and marketing while retaining the character and integrity of the site. A contingent of competitive swimmers, from various entities, expressed interest in year-round use of the outdoor lap pool and requested options for heating.

In September 2021, the City entered into a professional services contract with Brinkley Sargent Wiginton Architects for the development of Opinion of Probable Cost (OPC) estimates on various aquatic models based on public input. OPCs were produced for three options, two of which considered heating 50-meter lap lane pools. The OPCs included \$209,500 for initial gas utility establishment, automatic pool-cover and the pool heater. In addition, to maintain the outdoor

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pool water temperature at 80 degrees, the estimated monthly gas service would average \$9,000 per month or \$108,000 annually.

Due to the increased cost for capital investment and the ongoing utility costs that would be incurred by a heated outdoor pool, the final scope recommended for Forest Park Pool did not include heating the pool. The recommendation was consistent with industry standards for this type of outdoor aquatic facility.

The final project scope included the demolition of existing facilities and design and construction of an outdoor aquatic facility and associated amenities, including: eight 50-meter length swim lanes, active water play-elements, interactive play area with tube slide, bath house and associated infrastructure.

The total cost estimated for this model scope was \$11,900,000. Funding in the amount of \$11,000,000 was included in the 2022 Bond Program with the remaining \$900,000 appropriated from 2021 Tax Notes.

**Operational Subsidy**

Based on the above estimates, the traditional summer seasonal operation of the recommended aquatic facility would operate at a subsidy of \$134,151. By comparison, the year-round operation of a heated facility would operate at a subsidy of \$524,158.

**Design & Construction**

A design contract with Brinkley Sargent Wiginton (BSW) was executed in January 2021. All preliminary engineering (geo-tech, site assessment, etc.) has occurred and the first public meeting was held on March 10, 2022. BSW is in the design development phase, and a second public meeting will occur in June 2022.

**Conclusion**

Based on the additional capital and operating costs, the fact that industry standards do not recommend the heating of large outdoor pools, the projected minimal usage and the significant utility consumption which would occur, staff does not recommend revising the scope and budget to accommodate a heated pool at Forest Park nor the new Stop Six Pool. In accordance with industry standards heated pools should be considered for indoor facilities.

Should you have any questions regarding this Informal Report please contact Park & Recreation Department Director Richard Zavala, Assistant City Manager Valerie Washington or me.

**David Cooke**  
**City Manager**