

**TO:** Michael C. Van Milligen, City Manager  
**FROM:** Marie L. Ware, Leisure Services Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Report Regarding Opening of Outdoor Pool(s)  
**DATE:** June 11, 2020

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a report regarding the opening of the outdoor pool(s) for the 2020 season.

## **BACKGROUND**

Staff has been in communication with both Iowa Recreation Departments and aquatic professionals from around the country regarding best practices and season considerations during this COVID-19 crisis. We have also researched and continue to monitor recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and other national and local aquatic authorities including American Red Cross. On Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> the Governor revised her proclamation related to swimming pools. The current proclamation provides that swimming pools can reopen fully with reasonable measures to ensure social distancing of employees and patrons, increased hygiene practices and other public health measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission consistent with IDPH guidance.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff has been considering and researching the equitable and recreational value of this summer amenity to the community as a whole while at the same time balancing the inherent safety risks that pool operations normally have with the added risks of the COVID-19 virus along with new protocols that would have to be developed. The only option to open a pool includes reducing as many added risk factors as possible while maintaining safety and the core values of an outdoor public pool.

### **What is the value?**

- Pools are low-cost/affordable public places and spaces for all members of the community regardless of economic and demographic backgrounds.

- Pools are an enclosed “safe space” for youth to engage in social and physical activity throughout the summer.
- Pools indirectly and directly provide life skill training through the introduction to water safety and independence. For staff, these skills developed include leadership, public engagement, authority, compassion, reasoning, and decision making.

### **What are the risk factors to consider?**

**Staff Lifeguard Training and Safety:** “On land” and orientation training can be conducted in groups of 10 (9 trainees and 1 trainer). Each session is 4 hours long. Lecture portions of the training can be and have been done virtually. Social distancing guidelines/best practice make traditional “in-water” lifeguard training impossible. That is not to say that training can’t happen. There can be alternative ways for staff to train. Typical lifeguard trainings include in-water rescues, victim removal, spinal injuries/back boarding, and multi-victim scenarios. All of these require person to person contact and cannot be performed while wearing a mask. Not only are these skills practiced during training, but they are also completed on a daily basis during the season in-service trainings, before and after shifts, and during mock emergencies to ensure staff readiness. Much like in sports, constant practice and muscle memory play a vital role when saving a drowning victim in such a spontaneous event. Even guards that have been working with us for multiple years have to perform these tasks on a daily basis. Each of these skills will need to be practiced without performing the actual skill on a live person. Any saves being performed in the pools if opened would mean the lifeguard will not be able to social distance from the individual they are saving. Numerous saves are performed each year during the season.

**Sanitation:** There are several areas throughout a pool facility where contact is unavoidable. These areas consist of handrails (on stairs and ladders), play features, restrooms, lockers, lounge chairs, picnic tables, methods of payment, etc. Each area would need to be cleaned and sanitized either after every use, frequently, or during specific breaks in programming throughout the day. Depending on how many areas there are and usage will determine the levels of frequency and staff needed to accomplish tasks.

**Social Distancing:** Lines to enter the pool on a typical hot day can extend for hundreds of feet. Even with a queue system and clear spatial markers, it will be entirely up to the patron(s) to follow the current distancing guidelines. Admission staff can monitor the queue lines, but it will take cooperation of all of our citizens.

The most difficult safety guideline to enforce will be social distancing within the pool water itself. Lifeguards will rarely if ever know the group dynamics of people in the pool. Today’s modern family/household is very different. There are blended families, multiple families living under one roof, multiple generations, etc. Even though the total number of people allowed in the facility can be controlled and represents a number that creates the opportunity for social distancing both in and out of the water, it is not feasible for a lifeguard to continuously scan the pool surface to also take time keeping people apart

for social distancing. Their attention needs to be on safe swimming and scanning for persons in distress.

**Overall:** As previously mentioned, the safest way to open a facility like the pool is to reduce the number of risk areas possible while still maintaining the core function of the facility. This will not only reduce the risk of coming in contact with a contaminated surface but will help to make the sanitation process more effective and manageable. As part of the following pool opening strategy, staff is proposing to remove a list of risk factors. These factors include the removal and/or closing of the playgrounds (both (water and dry), the water slides, high dive, lounge chairs, lockers, drinking fountain(s) and picnic tables. By not having the waterslides open, this will eliminate the need to sanitize the steps, handrails, launch bar, exit ladders, and slide areas. This will also reduce the need for pool users to stand in lines social distancing waiting for their turn. Not only can reducing the option for contact help mitigate spread of the virus, but it will also require less time for staff to sanitize between shifts.

What would remain open would be the main pool, low dive and concessions. Should research gathered or guideline recommendations change, some amenities may open back up. However, with any reopening of an amenity like water slides or water playground, there will be a corresponding additional staff cost.

To help manage protocols for pool admissions (queue system, taking temps, accepting payment, etc.) as well as the social distancing and sanitation within the pool facility, staff is recommending that a maximum number of people be allowed access into the facility per program time.

To come up with a safe capacity for pool use, staff calculated the linear square footage of the water surface in the main pools. Based on this area it was determined that 140 people could be in the water and at least 6 feet away from anyone else. As is traditional for many pool users, staff also believes that at least 25% of the pool patrons utilize the deck and lawn areas. We also know that many families utilize the pools which would allow for patrons from the same household to be closer to each other when in the water. Based on these factors staff believes that 150 admissions per time frame would provide space to properly social distance at Flora Pool. Sutton Pool has a smaller body of water as well as less perimeter space which would reduce the number to 100 patrons per time frame.

Staff is working on what various open swim “program” times may look like to ensure an equitable opportunity to visit the pool by anyone and everyone in the community. Some may be entirely first come first served (FCFS), some might require pre-registration and others may be group specific. These groups would be local partners working with the underserved populations including but not limited to, specific ethnicity groups, low-income providers and members of the special needs population.

## Operation Layout

- Opening Timeline: Can open 3 to 4 weeks from approval. The pool(s) currently have no water and have not started the opening/filling process.
  - Example: If Council decides at the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to open the pool(s) the target date for opening would be July 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Closing Timeline: Closing would be between August 14-August 23 depending upon staff availability with modified hours. Dubuque Community Schools starts on August 13 with orientation for certain grades and all students starting class on August 14. Two of the Iowa state universities moved up the starting class date to August 17 and others have not yet announced.
- Open Amenities
  - Main pool (zero depth to lap lanes)
  - Low dive
  - Concessions
- Closed/Unavailable Amenities
  - Slides
  - Playground(s)
  - High dive
  - Lounge chairs
  - Concession seating
  - Lockers
  - Drinking fountains
- Programs
  - Open Swim (can be FCFS, partner related program, etc.)
  - Adult Swim/Water Walking (pre-registration required)
  - Lessons (parent/tot and only offered to Aquatots through Beginner 2)
    - Class sizes reduced to 4 participants per instructor
    - Participants must be registered along with a parent/caregiver (also in water)
    - Instructors will be teaching from the deck
    - All participants will enter and leave the water via zero-depth area (ladders will not be utilized unless in emergency)
    - All staff will be wearing masks
  - Pool rentals would not be recommended for the 2020 season as they do not provide an equitable service. There are currently 42 rentals already booked for the 2020 season. If canceled there would be over \$9,000 in collected rental revenue that would be refunded from FY20 revenues.
- Schedule:
  - Monday through Friday
    - 7am-8:30am – Adult Swim
    - 9am-10:30am – Adult Swim
    - 11am-1pm – Open Swim

- 2pm-4pm – Open Swim
  - 5pm-7pm – Lessons @ Flora / Open Swim @ Sutton
- Saturday & Sunday
  - 7am-8:30am – Adult Swim
  - 9am-10:30am – Adult Swim
  - 11am-1:30pm – Open Swim
  - 2:30pm-5pm – Open Swim
  - 5pm-8:30pm – Open Swim
- Staffing
  - Minimum 13 staff per shift (includes managers, lifeguards, cashiers, concessions, restroom attendants, temperature takers, etc.)
  - All staff will wear masks (when possible) and follow current CDC sanitation and protection guidelines.
- Daily Admissions
  - Flora - 150 patrons per program time
  - Sutton – 100 patrons per program time
  - \$1 entry fee
- Pool Passes will not be sold this season.
- Entrance
  - Queue System
    - Use parking lot
    - Rear entry to Concessions Building used for Temperature Station
      - Any patrons with temp at or above 100.4 will not be permitted to enter
    - Drive thru lane closed and used for potential lines
      - Will need space for anywhere from 300 to 900 linear feet for proper social distancing in line
    - Daily admissions will enter through locker rooms
    - All patrons will be encouraged to shower prior to entering the main pool area.
    - Patrons will exit through separate gate
- Sanitation
  - Restroom attendants will clean restrooms throughout day
  - All staff will sanitize contact surfaces between programs
  - Dive well guard will wipe down low dive handrails between every use

### **Pool Chemical Treatment Regarding COVID**

Chemical/chlorine treatment to pool water greatly reduces the ability for biological elements to spread. These chemicals combined with additional Ultra-Violet (UV) remediation (which is what both Flora and Sutton already have) is the best and most effective. Unfortunately, as of the date of this memo, no agency has confirmed that these remediation processes have the same effect on the COVID-19 virus. The CDC's Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities, "Proper operation,

maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of swimming pools should kill the virus that causes COVID-19.” Staff did consult with City Attorney Brumwell as well as ICAP Legal Services regarding the City’s recreational immunity. Per ICAP, nothing is for sure. However, in their opinion as long as we follow Public Health Chapter 135i which requires proper certification and inspection along with Iowa Code 670.4L, the City is doing everything currently asked by the appropriate authorities to operate a pool.

Reducing the risks of COVID-19 spread is currently best served through new protocols and processes that encourage social distancing and sanitation.

### **Equity Impacts**

There will be equitable service delivery impacts whether the pool is open or not. If the pools were to remain closed, the community would be without a low-cost recreational amenity that services all demographics. However, the result of this option would be the same for everyone within the community.

If the pools are to open with the revised protocols and services, the impacts would be more disproportionate. The key factors that will provide a difficult atmosphere to ensure opportunity for all are:

- Limiting admission to a maximum number of people per session.
- Potentially only opening 1 location.
- Temperature checks.

A true open swim program would be based on a first come first served format. It is not practical nor feasible during this scenario for staff to be able to monitor the number of times one person is admitted over time compared to another. This can result in several patrons being turned away who may have transportation or other hardships.

Taking individuals temperatures also presents some privacy challenges. Per City Attorney Brumwell there are no privacy restrictions on staff’s ability to take temperatures of the public. However, a policy will need to be put in place if a patron refuses to allow staff to take their temperature. Any refusal to follow this protocol or any other protocol by a patron or staff will result in the refusal of access to the facility.

### **Functional Considerations**

The ability to open 1 or both pools is highly dependent on staff availability. The current levels of certified and available staff are shrinking as some have gained other employment. As of mid-May, there were over 60 applicants available. As of today, the applicant list is at 50. Staff is currently reaching out to each applicant for availability and confirmation that they still are available and want to work at the pools. In order to open 1 pool, we would need a minimum of 25 committed staff. Both pools could open with 40 committed staff. No hiring has been taken place as an offer to work cannot be given unless one knows the pool(s) will be opening.

If there are only enough committed staff for 1 pool, the question then becomes which pool?

#### Option 1 – Flora Pool

- Pros
  - Flora is the largest site which allows for the greatest areas for social distancing both inside and outside of the facility.
  - Being the larger pool also provides the greatest opportunity for participation as the maximum admissions allowed per program is set at 150.
  - With JULE fares currently being suspended, families would have free transportation opportunities to access the site.
- Cons
  - Location not ideal for families with transportation challenges.
  - Greater operating costs due to water volume and staff needs

#### Option 2 – Sutton Pool

- Pros
  - Less expensive to operate
  - Located closer to concentration of lower-income residents
  - With JULE fares currently being suspended, families would have free transportation opportunities to access the site.
- Cons
  - Smaller facility results in less people being able to participate per program time. The maximum admission allowed per program time is 100.
  - Less external area to set-up safe queue system for admission.

#### **What if staff is alerted that a recent visitor had tested positive for COVID-19?**

Per the current CDC recommendations, if a patron who visited the pool notifies the City that they have tested positive for COVID-19 the following steps would take place.

1. Staff will immediately notify local health officials and staff.
2. A public announcement would also be sent to notify the community while maintaining confidentiality of the affected individual. No names would ever be shared.
3. The pool would be shut down for 24 hours prior to cleaning.
4. After the 24 hours is over, staff can then re-enter the facility and begin cleaning all high touch areas.
5. The pool will then be able to be reopened to the public.

#### **Why does the City Council make this decision?**

According to City Attorney Crenna Brumwell the City Council makes the decision in an attempt to avail itself of the most immunity possible. Staff continues to monitor legislative efforts to provide employers immunity specific to COVID 19.

## BUDGET IMPACT

The pool operations are the largest tax subsidized amenity/service within the Recreation Division budget. The FY20 operating budget for the pools accounted for \$359,215 in revenue and \$541,548 in expenses for a tax subsidy/loss of \$182,333. By the end of April, the operating budget stood at a \$228,139 tax subsidy/loss. This total does not include the \$29,155 Administrative expense that is charged at the end of the fiscal year. The reason for the current budget shortfall is due to the delay in revenue generation through the usual April release of the Leisure Services Summer Brochure. In FY19, over \$32,000 was collected in April for swim lessons alone. In the FY19 months of May and June, an additional \$127,325 in revenue was collected. These numbers were even greater for FY's 17 and 18 collecting over \$180,000 in April through June each year.

With a shortened season combined with the protocols in place, there will be a significant revenue loss whether one or both pools are opened. There is also a significant decrease in operating expenses for the last quarter of FY20 and the first quarter of FY21. Unfortunately, neither choice will help close the gap for the FY20 shortfall. Opening both pools (again with the uncertainty of revenue generation) could have a similar effect to the FY21 budget with a projected increase of close to \$20,000 to the budgeted subsidy. Choosing to open 1 pool based on the potential participation at Flora of 150 per session as well as lesson space, is projected to have a positive impact on the FY21 budget with a reduction of the subsidy. Opening just Sutton would also have a positive impact to the FY21 budget but it would not be as significant. The following is a summary of these projections:

Open Both Pools		Open Flora Pool		Keep Pools Closed	
FY21 Projected End	FY21 Budget	FY21 Projected End	FY21 Budget	FY21 Projected End	FY21 Budget
\$266,721.00	\$333,326.00	\$254,721.00	\$333,326.00	\$235,722.00	\$333,326.00
\$494,807.00	\$541,428.00	\$347,456.00	\$541,428.00	\$199,104.00	\$541,428.00
-\$228,086.00	-\$208,102.00	-\$92,735.00	-\$208,102.00	\$36,618.00	-\$208,102.00

## RECOMMENDATION

This memo is to provide a report regarding the opening of the outdoor pool(s) for the 2020 season.

Prepared by: Dan Kroger, Recreation Division Manager

cc: Jennifer Larson, Director of Finance and Budget  
Janna Beau, Recreation Supervisor  
Mary Rose Corrigan, Public Health Specialist  
Crenna Brumwell, City Attorney