

Town of Hartford, Vermont

Pool Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Present: Scott Hausler, Joe James, Mark Mariano (Weston & Sampson), Hilde Ojibway, Scott Snyder, Kim Souza, Mike Vanasse.

Unable to attend: Chris Hamilton, Steve Lagasse, Brett Mayfield, Skip Nalette, David Sherman, Joseph Trottier.

Meeting commenced at 6:05 p.m. in the Selectboard Chamber, Town Hall.

Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves for the benefit of Mr. Mariano, Project Engineer at Weston & Sampson, who was in attendance to present progress on the Sherman Manning (SM) Pools assessment being conducted by his firm. No other non-committee members were in attendance, thus there were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting two weeks prior on August 7 were reviewed and Mr. Vanasse made a motion to approve them. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

Mr. James asked if those minutes had been forwarded to Mr. Mariano—they had not, although Mr. Hausler had updated him on the committee's previous discussions—and then raised two unresolved questions: whether use of a School property for an alternate pool site was possible, and whether the pool program should include diving. On the first question, Mr. Hausler spoke with superintendent Tom DiBalsi, who said he could potentially support a pool so long as the schools did not lose other athletic space. On the second question, the committee remains divided, not fully ready to surrender diving, and would like it to be included among the pool features presented for the public to vote on via "dot boards" at the upcoming Glory Days event.

Weston & Sampson report on pool assessment progress

Mr. Hausler explained that Mr. Mariano would give an oral report tonight, but that no written deliverable was due and no draft copies would be circulated at this time. Any such draft report would automatically become a public document. Given that the work is still ongoing, it is appropriate to avoid challenges to managing the committee's decision making process.

Mr. Mariano first summarized SM pool attendance over the past four years: In 2014, over 2,000 season passes were sold and typical usage rate was about 48 non-campers per day. In 2015 the pools were closed for repairs and upgrades. In 2017, about 800 season passes were sold, with typical usage rate at 26 non-campers per day. Ventures camp usually adds 80 campers per day. Possible explanations are that, during the period when the SM pools were closed, people found preferable swimming venues elsewhere, or they simply lost the habit of attending SM.

The major deficiency in the SM pools is the inability to hold water, which is the basic function of a pool. On top of this, there are several code deficiencies (e.g., wading pool not accessible), per relevant ADA and ANSI standards and the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC).

Mr. James asked if the concurrent drop in student enrollment in Hartford Schools might partly explain the declining pool attendance. Ms. Ojibway asked about Rutland in comparison. Mr. Mariano said that unlike Hartford, Rutland re-opened with a brand new facility, and does not have as many nearby swimming options.

Mr. Mariano detailed the two major technical flaws contributing to the substantial water leakage at the SM pools, namely, the gutter and structural cracks. The gutter, he explained, was inadequate from the time it was built, using details that are prone to fail and difficult to repair. These flaws are not uncommon among 1950's-era pools built in the northeast, typically in "Z", "T", or "L" configurations, and usually relying on federal LWCF grant funding that allowed municipalities to contract from a relatively small number of pool builders.

Leaking water has washed out fines in adjacent soils and led to voids under the deck and pool floor, which has worsened the structural integrity of those surfaces. The deck surface violates code minimum variation in straightness.

Other code violations range from lack of skimmer drains to the size of gaps in fencing.

The pool area itself can accommodate 464 bathers (based on 15 ft²/person in shallow water, and 20 ft²/person in deep water), which is a much larger occupant load than recent attendance numbers demand. The bathhouse, however, would require more fixtures should attendance increase significantly.

Ms. Souza asked what our objective usage rate should be. Mr. Hausler suggested that with 80 campers plus about 12 staff, it would be great to have an additional 100 kids per day, making the daily target between 200 and 250 people. The committee briefly contemplated target fees, with Ms. Ojibway mentioning that Lebanon charges \$4 for a non-resident day pass, compared to \$10 at the Storrs Pond pool.

Mr. Mariano touched on the filter house and pump house. Mr. Hausler described how the current set up causes an excessively long backwash cleaning process for the filters, which has to happen even more frequently because water leakage makes it difficult to keep up with contaminants. The backwash process takes 45 minutes when it should take about five.

Mr. Mariano emphasized that water leakage causes a definite health risk.

Shifting between pool and football usage adds challenges to operation of the existing facility. Mr. Hausler described some ideas for a new entry point that could combine changing rooms and concessions, and possibly share use with athletics ticketing. The pools had operated for an average season of 63 days. Extending that to 80 or 90 would help revenue. Post-Labor Day is an option with reduced hours and staffing.

Mr. Mariano concluded his progress summary with a very preliminary estimate that put the cost to repair on par with that of rebuilding, noting that the existing pool is very large in area but small in terms of diversity of features.

Discuss next steps

The committee proceeded to think about the project timeline, backing out the required steps leading to completion of construction. A realistic schedule puts a new pool opening in 2021, taking into account all stages in the project, including the current feasibility assessment, preliminary engineering and design, a municipal bond vote on final design in March of 2020, contract documents, public bidding and permitting processes, etc.

Public input event

The next event on the pool committee calendar is the Hartford Glory Days event, where Weston & Sampson will set up a dozen or so posters illustrating various possible pool features. Visitors to the event will be asked if they are town residents, and if so, will be given ten sticky dots that they can place on any of the poster boards to indicate their pool feature preferences.

Ms. Souza asked for the posters to include a range of options including budget-conscious choices. Mr. Mariano agreed to include a plain pool among the boards, but will not have costs associated with the options because the goal for this public input event is simply to learn which amenities have the most appeal, then his job is to design the most appealing pool within a budget that will be determined by the Town.

Mr. Mariano also confirmed that the poster boards would not show alternate pool sites. The committee had proposed three leading candidates for alternate sites: Kilowatt Park, Watson Park, and the Dothan Brook School. Weston & Sampson was to look at these as part of its overall evaluation. However, Mr. Mariano said that in his experience, towns always defer to the familiar and end up building a new pool on their existing sites.

Mr. Vanasse agreed that the poster boards should represent pool features which can happen at any site. Mr. Snyder contended that some important features are inherently site-dependent, e.g., proximity to a river, views, or access by public transportation. However, while recognizing the advantages that some of the alternate sites may have, the committee consensus was in favor of the existing location, mainly due to the extra cost (on the order of \$1M or more) and delay that developing the infrastructure for a pool anywhere else would necessarily entail.

Mr. Snyder shared some images of the Leça de Palmeira tidal pools, which are a national monument in Portugal, as a counterexample for inspiration, and a model for an approach that integrates the pool design with the natural landscape.

Mr. Mariano will send out a preview of the poster boards ahead of the event, and will follow up afterwards with a memo summarizing the results.

Next committee meetings

Committee members determined to meet again on September 25, at which time the draft final report from Weston & Sampson would be ready for review by the pool committee in conference with the Parks & Recreation Commission. Two weeks later, on October 9, the pool committee plans to have Weston & Sampson present the final pool assessment report and recommendations to the Selectboard.

Old and new business

No old or new business was raised.

Adjournment

By motion duly made and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted by: Scott Snyder, Recording Secretary.

Draft minutes of the meeting on August 21, 2018 to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Any changes noted and signed by Chair or Recording Secretary.

Minutes were reviewed at the meeting on _____.

Any changes or corrections:

Draft

With the corrections noted above, minutes were approved:

Signature: _____

Date: _____