

## Staff Report

**AQUATIC PROGRAMMING 2022-2024 AND POTENTIAL CHANGES TO FURMAN AQUATIC CENTER SCHEDULE**

January 20, 2022

**BACKGROUND**

The partnership between the City of Ames and Ames Community School District (ACSD) to manage and share maintenance expenses related to Municipal Pool has served the citizens of Ames, user groups, and ACSD students well for over 50 years. The current agreement extension is set to expire on February 28, 2022, as demolition is needed to occur for ACSD to complete the final stages of constructing their new high school and pool.

Therefore, City staff are exploring options to continue offering year-round aquatic programming during the interim period of February 28, 2022, and the opening of a City indoor aquatic facility in 2024. During this interim period, the goal is to provide the most feasible level of aquatic services with available facilities, schedules, and staff. This would be achieved by working with community aquatic facilities for use or promoting community options available for the public, and by adding programs to the Furman Aquatic Center (FAC) schedule. The addition of programs to existing FAC schedules would be done with the intent to impose the least possible impacts.

**PROGRAMMING**

Below is a list of aquatic programs that are currently offered. Most programs listed have a variety of classes and levels offered and the intent is to continue as many as possible. In efforts to continue these classes, some may need to be offered at new or alternate locations, in different seasons, and on different days/times than traditionally offered.

- Adaptive Open Swim
- Aqua Fitness Classes
- Certification Courses
- Diving
- Lap Swim
- Log Rolling
- Open Swim
- Private Lessons
- Private Rentals
- Special Events
- Swim Lessons
- Tot Time
- Water Polo
- Water Walking
- Wibit Inflatable

**COMMUNITY AQUATIC FACILITIES**

Staff is exploring options regarding the use of community aquatic facilities (i.e. ISU pools, hotels/motels, etc.) to offer programs. Parks and Recreation currently utilizes the Green Hills pool to offer Aqua Fitness Classes and Parent/Child Swim Lessons and the ISU Forker pool for Warm Water Aqua classes.

Several factors need to be considered to determine whether a community aquatic facility is a viable option for use and what type of programming would be best suited for the facility. Examples of these factors include, but not limited to, water depth, temperature, patron capacity, available times for use, and potential rental fees.

Programming at an indoor facility provides the ability to offer an indoor option as some customers prefer this over being outdoors due to the more controlled environment and no sun exposure. Indoor facilities also limit instances of inclement weather cancellations for summer programming.

Disadvantages to community aquatic facility use could occur from a staffing and supervision standpoint. With City programs at multiple facilities, additional staffing needs may be required, which is currently limited. Additional expenses may result from increased staff needs and from rental fees to use these community facilities. Rental fees and staffing costs may result in higher registration fees for programs, which may result in program fees differing based on the facility rental fee.

An overview of community aquatic facilities and the viability of use is described below.

### **Ames Community School District (ACSD)**

Based on recent conversations with ACSD staff and the current understanding of the anticipated usage for the new high school pool, external use philosophy, and planned water temperature, this facility does not appear to be a viable option.

### **Mary Greeley Medical Center Therapy Pool**

Due to hours of usage that would be available, security concerns, and pool capacity, offering City programs at this facility is not a good option.

### **Hotels/Motels**

Staff has begun conversations with hotels and motels to discuss options for pool use. With the variety of hotel and motel pool configurations, pools at these facilities may not meet the needs or be well-suited for programs to be offered. Some hotels and motels within the community currently offer options for the public to utilize their pool. For those facilities with this public swim option already in place, staff will evaluate the effectiveness of assisting community facilities in promoting swim options, so the public is informed of alternate options.

### **Iowa State University**

Parks and Recreation currently utilizes ISU Forker Pool for Warm Water Aqua classes. ISU charges the City a per registration rental fee for use of the facility. The additional rental charge for use of the facility is applied to the program fee to offset the expense and maintain the subsidy level for aquatic programs. With the existing relationship for facility use, staff is discussing with ISU options to expand use for other programs. ISU Forker would be a conducive facility for all levels of swim lessons, continued aqua classes, and the water depth is well suited for diving and certification course requirements. ISU also has two other pools, 1) State Gym – which hosts most ISU group fitness classes and aquatic-related sport clubs, and 2) Beyer Hall – which is home to ISU Swim and Dive Team. These two facilities will also be discussed within staff's conversations with ISU.

### **Green Hills**

Parks & Recreation Aqua classes and Parent/Child Swim classes are currently conducted at this facility. Parks and Recreation is charged a per participant fee for use of the facility, and the additional fee is applied to the program registration to offset the expense and maintain the subsidy

level for aquatic programs. Staff is meeting with management at Green Hills to discuss future use options for additional programming.

**Private Fitness Clubs**

Staff is initiating conversations with private clubs within the community to better understand the facility’s specifications and current use to determine if options are possible for City programs.

**PLANNED CHANGES TO FURMAN SCHEDULE**

To make time to offer swim lessons lost due to the closure of Municipal Pool, staff is recommending reducing Open Swim hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings as outlined below. As the 50 Meter and Splash Pool basins would be used for lessons, staff is also recommending adding Water Walking in the Lazy River at the same time.

**Planned Change**

- Open Swim                    1:00pm - 6:00pm
- Water Walking            6:00pm - 8:00pm
- Swim Lessons            6:15pm - 8:00pm

The following table represents the FAC program hours per week for the current schedule and planned change.

| <b>Furman Aquatic Center Programs (hours per week)</b> |                |                       |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Program</b>   | <b>Current</b> | <b>Planned Change</b> |
| Open Swim  | 49             | 45                    |
| Morning Swim Lessons                                   | 12             | 12                    |
| Evening Swim Lessons                                   | 0              | 3.5                   |
| Evening Water Walking                                  | 3              | 7                     |

To accommodate a portion of the decreased open swim hours from the addition of evening swim lessons and water walking, staff is proposing to add **Twilight Open Swims**. These open swims would be offered on the second and fourth Mondays of June and July, 8:00pm - 9:30pm, for a total of 3 hours per month. Twilight Open Swim would be offered as a public open swim option, and admission would be included with a Furman Season Pass.

Monday and Wednesday evenings were selected as the days of weeks for the planned schedule changes based on the analysis of average admission swipes per week at FAC. The table below shows fewer admissions on these nights, aligning with the goal to implement changes with minimal impacts to the existing schedule.

| <b>Furman Aquatic Center<br/>Average # of Admission Swipes Per Night (June-July)</b> |               |                |                  |                 |                      |
|--|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <b>Time</b>  | <b>Monday</b> | <b>Tuesday</b> | <b>Wednesday</b> | <b>Thursday</b> | <b>Average Total</b> |
| 5:30pm-6:00pm  | 50            | 60             | 55               | 69              | 59                   |
| 6:00pm-6:30pm  | 40            | 46             | 40               | 58              | 46                   |
| 6:30pm-8:00pm  | 48            | 85             | 39               | 104             | 69                   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>138</b>    | <b>191</b>     | <b>134</b>       | <b>231</b>      | <b>174</b>           |

To further understand why these changes are to be implemented, a listing of pros and cons are shown below:

## **Planned Changes**

Open Swim: 1:00pm-6:00pm; Water Walking: 6:00pm-8:00pm; Swim Lessons: 6:15pm-7:50pm

### Pros:

- A total of 48 additional swim lesson classes offered (accommodates 240 participants)
- The ability to continue offering an evening swim lesson option
- Early start time for evening swim lessons which is more ideal for the age demographic the lessons serve
- An additional 4 hours of water walking per week

### Cons:

- A decrease in open swim hours by 4 hours per week

Twilight Open Swim: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of June & July, 8:00pm-9:30pm

### Pros:

- Bi-monthly event offsets a portion of the decreased open swim hours by 6 hours throughout the season
- Provide a fun special event to differ from the typical daily open swim
- Admission to Twilight Open Swim will be included with a season pass

### Cons:

- Elimination one evening rental timeslot 4x during the season

## **FEES AND CHARGES**

With the aforementioned changes, the Furman Season Pass rate would remain the same, as planned changes to the summer schedule are not significant. Current Furman Summer Season Pass fees are outlined below.

| <b>Pass Type</b>        | <b>Resident Fee</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Individual, Adult (16+) | \$115               |
| Family                  | \$250               |

Program fees are developed to cover direct expenses which include, but not limited to, instructors, lifeguards, and program supplies. When using community facilities, programs are charged at a higher rate as additional expenses are incurred through the facility rental fee.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The planned changes described in this report were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at it January 20, 2022 meeting. Comments from the Commissioners included:

- Swimming is a lifelong activity and we should do what we can to offer swim lessons
- Love the Twilight Swim idea
- Reducing open swim hours to offer swim lessons is a good compromise
- Would Aqua Fitness classes still be held? (Staff responded yes)

- Will Ames Cyclone Aquatics Club and/or Swim America be offering swim lessons?  
(Staff does not know the answer at this time)

**In the end, the Commission approved the planned changes as presented.**

### **STAFF COMMENTS**

**When looking at program offerings, staff prioritized Swim Lessons and Water Walking as high priority programs. Swim Lessons were rated high due to the importance of learning how to be safe and comfortable around water, along with other factors of learning lifelong skills, social development, and the population lessons serve. Water walking was another priority class based on the population served, and the wellness and exercise option of this low impact activity. Additionally, adding more Water Walking time to the schedule is one of the most requested comments staff receives.**

**Since there is a loss of Open Swim time, the addition of Twilight Swims will provide a replacement option for this lost time. The planned changes presented in this report offer additional high priority programs while minimizing the impact on the availability of open swim times. Although these changes may not be an ideal situation for all users, the reality is that some concessions will need to be made until a new aquatic center is built. Staff will move forward with these changes unless Council provides different direction.**