

Staff Report

**FITCH FAMILY INDOOR AQUATIC CENTER PROPOSED FEES AND FACILITY HOURS
UPDATE**

January 13, 2026

BACKGROUND:

On December 10 and 17, 2024, staff presented City Council with information regarding operational aspects of the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center (FFIAC). Although staff continues to be heavily involved in the construction process, focus has shifted to hiring and training staff (full-time and temporary employees), purchasing furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FFE), and preparing for opening the facility.

This report provides updates regarding facility schedules for FFIAC and Furman Aquatic Center (FAC), hours of operation, FFIAC survey results, and fee schedules for FFIAC and FAC. Also included is a budget update and a comparison to what was presented to Council in December 2024. This report is intended to be informational; no Council action is being requested at this time.

FACILITY SCHEDULE:

As presented to Council one year ago, the year-round schedule for FFIAC and FAC will be as follows:

"Summer Hours" - Saturday Before Memorial Day to Labor Day (14 Weeks)

- FAC is open for programs and open swim
- FFIAC is used only for swimming lessons during mornings and evenings
- When FAC is closed for inclement weather, FFIAC would open during hours when swim lessons are not being held

"In-School Hours" - Tuesday After Labor Day to the Friday Before Memorial Day (38 Weeks)

- FFIAC is open for programs and open swim

Staff recognizes that ideally, both facilities would be fully utilized and fully staffed during warm weather months. However, the reality is that staffing is a limitation to keeping the facilities open for use. It should also be noted that this proposed schedule had been implemented at times when the former Municipal Pool facility and FAC were operational.

On a positive note, having a facility for lifeguards to work during the school year may help with retention as employees could guard year-round and would not have to find another job when Furman closes for the summer. If in the future there is an increase in the number of guards available and hired, this schedule can be revisited. However, staff is not expecting this to be the case for the foreseeable future. Therefore, staff believes it is prudent to plan for this more

limited operating scenario during warm weather months rather than raising expectations that are difficult to meet once the facility opens.

COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY:

In November 2024, staff conducted a survey seeking feedback regarding programming for Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center. The survey focused on the type of aquatic programming the community would want to participate in at the new facility, and what days and times these programs should be offered.

Survey information was sent directly to over 12,589 emails, included in the Parks and Recreation newsletter, made available via Parks & Recreation and City of Ames social media, and announced through a City of Ames Press Release. The survey was open for a total of 10 days and received 2,154 responses. These responses have assisted staff in developing a program schedule for the first year of facility operations at FFIAC.

FFIAC HOURS OF OPERATION:

Below is a breakdown of proposed hours of operations for FFIAC. These hours were developed from: 1) community input, 2) data from past Municipal Pool operations, and 3) the existing Furman Aquatic Center schedule.

"Summer Hours" - Saturday Before Memorial Day to Labor Day (14 Weeks)

- Monday-Thursday:
 - 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM Lap Swim, Water Walking, Aqua Classes
 - 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Swim Lessons
 - 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Swim Lessons
- Friday:
 - 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM Lap Swim, Water Walking, Aqua Classes
 - 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Private Swim Lessons, Adaptive Swim Lessons, and Adaptive Open Swim.
- Saturday & Sunday:
 - Closed - could utilize if FAC is closed for inclement weather for open swim and/or private rentals.

"In-School Hours" - Tuesday After Labor Day to the Friday Before Memorial Day (38 Weeks)

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
 - 5:30 AM - 7:30 AM Early Bird Lap Swim
 - 7:00 AM - 9:45 AM Lap Swim, Water Walking, Aqua Classes
 - 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM Lap Swim, Tot Time, Water Walking, Independent Water Exercise
 - 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Open Programming Times (e.g., homeschool programming, aqua classes, afterschool programming, partnerships, rentals, non-school day open swim, etc.)
 - 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM Open Swim, Aqua Classes
 - 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Lap Swim, Water Walking
 - 8:00 PM - 9:45 PM Possible Programming Options (Volleyball, Kayaking, etc.)
- Tuesday and Thursday:

- 5:30 AM - 7:30 AM Early Bird Lap Swim
- 7:45 AM - 9:45 AM Lap Swim, Water Walking, Aqua Classes
- 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM Lap Swim, Tot Time, Water Walking, Aqua Classes, Swim Lessons
- 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Open Programming Times (e.g., homeschool programming, aqua classes, afterschool programming, partnerships, rentals, non-school day open swim, etc.)
- 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM Swim Lessons, Aqua Classes
- 7:00 PM - 8:15 PM Swim Lessons, Aqua Classes, Water Walking
- 8:15 PM - 9:45 PM Possible Programming Options (Volleyball, Kayaking, etc.)
- Saturday:
 - 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM Lap Swim, Aqua Classes
 - 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Swim Lessons, Aqua Classes
 - 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM Lap Swim, Tot Time, Water Walking, Independent Water Exercise
 - 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM Open Swim
- Sunday:
 - 11:00 AM - 1:45 PM Lap Swim, Tot Time, Water Walking, Independent Water Exercise
 - 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM Open Swim
 - 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM Lap Swim, Water Walking

During In-School Hours, private rentals would be offered Friday, Saturday, Sunday from 8:15 PM - 9:45 PM. Birthday party options will also be available during open swim times. Staff will continually evaluate the schedule throughout the first year of operations and make data-informed decisions to modify the schedule as needed for future seasons.

It should also be noted that the above schedule reflects facility hours for the natatorium space only. The facility may be open for other operations such as fitness classes, youth activities, etc. in the multi-purpose rooms.

PROPOSED FEE SCHEDULE:

As a reminder, the fee schedule for FFIAC was developed using the existing FAC fees as a model. **In Attachments A, B, and C, fees are shown for daily admissions, punch passes, and season passes and vary depending on the user (e.g., youth, adult, ISU student, senior, and household). These are the same fees that were presented to the City Council at the December 9, 2024 meeting.**

It should be noted that FAC is on property leased by Iowa State University (ISU), and the lease agreement stipulates that ISU students pay a fee that is at the midpoint between a youth and adult fee. In addition, in return for the \$500,000 contribution from Story County government towards the construction of FFIAC, all Story County residents will pay an amount equal to Ames resident fees at the FFIAC for a period of ten years.

Also included in the attachments is additional information regarding season passes, including cost per week and cost per visit depending on utilization frequency. This information was the basis for developing the proposed fee schedule for the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center. The daily admission and punch pass fees for FFIAC are proposed to be the same as FAC. For FFIAC season passes, staff started with the cost per

week for a FAC season pass and multiplied it by 38 (number of weeks for the FFIAC season) to determine the proposed FFIAC season pass fees for each user group. Additionally, an Aquatic Facilities pass will be offered and will be good for both FAC and FFIAC. There will be three types of season passes which are shown below:

Season Passes

- Furman Aquatic Center (Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day) - Attachment A
- Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center (Tuesday after Labor Day to Memorial Day weekend) - Attachment B
- Aquatic Facilities (Memorial Day weekend to Memorial Day weekend) - Attachment C

Users will receive a 5% discount if they purchase a FAC pass prior to May 1 or a FFIAC pass prior to August 1. Anyone buying an Aquatic Facilities pass will receive a 15% discount.

Of the 1,577 individual and household season passes sold for FAC in 2025, 3% received scholarship assistance. **Staff recognizes the need for scholarships for individuals and families who need financial assistance in order to utilize the FAC and FFIAC. Scholarships to purchase a pass will be offered. Staff is continuing to work on increasing the Scholarship Endowment Fund so the interest can be used for scholarships. Staff also recognizes that some individuals or households may not be able to pay for a season pass all at once so options continue to be explored as to how to remove this barrier.**

FY 2026/27 BUDGET:

In December 2024, staff presented to City Council the anticipated operational budget summary for FFIAC. As the construction project has progressed, staff has gained a better understanding of building operations, the facility schedule, staffing projections, internal services, utility projections, and so forth. **Below is a table outlining the budget that was presented in December 2024, compared to the current proposed budget that will be presented to City Council for approval in February 2026 for FY 2026/27.**

FFIAC Budget - Full Year of Operations			
Category	FFIAC (as of Dec. 2024)	FFIAC (FY 2026/27 Requested)	Difference
Expenses	\$1,138,043	\$1,154,455	\$16,412
Revenue	\$ 856,387	\$ 858,780	\$ 2,393
Tax Subsidy	\$ 281,656	\$ 295,675	\$14,019
Percent Recovered By Fees	75%	74%	(1%)

STAFF COMMENTS:

The information in this report will be the basis for what will be presented to residents of Ames, Story County, and surrounding areas. Once the Parks and Recreation Commission approves fees and charges on January 15, 2026, staff will start developing promotional materials to be distributed. It has been over three years since Council approved a contract for design to initiate the project and it will be exciting to show the public the finished aquatic center.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment B - FFIAC Admission & Pass Fees & Cost per Visit.pdf

Attachment A - FAC Admission & Pass Fees & Cost per Visit 25-26 .pdf

Attachment C - Aquatic Pass Admission & Pass Fees & Cost per Visit.pdf