



Fox Point files

by Douglas H. Frazer

The Fox Point Pool



Winter in Wisconsin is a good time to contemplate summer. Soon, village residents will receive information concerning the upcoming season at the Fox Point pool. The pool is an important feature of the village – its history, its status, and its prospects are worthy of consideration.

By the early 1960s, a number of village residents were interested in a municipal swimming pool. The Beach Drive “beach” was small, inadequate, and featured chilly water temperatures and not-so-consistently-clean lake water. A municipal swimming pool seemed a worthwhile alternative.

At a village board meeting on May 22, 1962, pool proponents presented a petition with approximately 1,000 signatures in support of a feasibility study. In response, the village sent out a questionnaire. The results: 51.6 percent of the respondents were in favor of a pool, 48.4 opposed. For a number of years thereafter, the issue was the subject of continuing controversy.

Eventually, the pool people prevailed. On March 26, 1968, the village board voted to proceed with construction. The village sited the facility in the area south of the municipal building between the railroad tracks and Santa Monica Boulevard. The pool opened on July 28, 1968 at a cost of \$286,877.

Today, more or less, the same facility is still in service. Now, as

then, the pool is the only municipal facility in the North Shore.

The pool’s capacity is 385 people. The parking lot can accommodate 72 vehicles. The facility supports lap swimming and diving, a separate wading pool, an exterior seating area (uncovered), exterior locker space, restroom and shower facilities, a concession area, a central entry, staff lockers, and equipment and storage rooms.

The season extends from immediately after Memorial Day through the third or fourth week of August. The facility offers resident memberships and up to 315 non-resident memberships. (The fee schedule includes resident family memberships at \$180 per season and non-resident family memberships at \$360. Resident walk-ins and their guests are welcome on a pay-as-you-go basis.) The village charges non-residents more because pool income does not cover pool costs; i.e., village residents, through the levy, subsidize the facility.

For kids and young adults, the pool supports a wildly successful competitive swim team, diving team, and water ballet program. The staff also provides a learn to swim program, swim lessons and hosts special events including carnival day, Halloween night, a movie “float” night, and teen night. Patrons can also rent the pool for special events.

The pool, however, is reaching the end of its useful life and will

need to be replaced in the next several years. Because of the pool’s mechanical features, a refurbishment is not practical – the whole facility will have to be replaced. The current village budget (projected out a number of years) placed the cost at \$1,815,000. The village conducted an existing facilities study of the facility in 2007. The available space probably could not accommodate a Cedarburg Community Pool-like water park; however, the facility could likely support a small state-of-the-art slide and a zero-depth water spray type children’s pool.

The diving board situation may bring the issue to the fore. Over time, the standards for plummet depth – the minimum depth required for a diving basin – have changed. For many years the pool had both 3-meter and 1-meter diving boards. The village removed the 3-meter board about 20 years ago. Currently, the diving basin does not meet standards for even the 1-meter board. For this reason, no supplier is willing to sell a replacement board. According to Bill Wojtanowski, Assistant Director of Public Works, and Erin O’Donnell, the pool manager, the board likely will be safe for only one or two more seasons after which the diving board will be removed.

The key to designing a replacement facility will be to match supply and demand. Our main competitors are the Jewish Community Center (JCC) outdoor

water park in Mequon (no summer-only membership available, however) and the Cedarburg Community Pool (less expensive but further away) – each larger, and at the moment, with better amenities. Still, the Fox Point pool is the most convenient and centrally located public facility available to families in an area that includes Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, Fox Point, Bayside, Glendale, and parts of River Hills and Mequon.

Resident use has remained steady over time; non-resident use has declined. In an effort to reverse this trend, the village, for the second straight year, has lowered nonresident family membership fees. The preliminary results suggest that the strategy may be working.

For many families, the pool provides excellent aquatics programming, instruction and a focal point for summer recreation. It remains an important community gathering place and a unique old-fashioned outdoor pool experience. States longtime “pool person” and Fox Point native Lisa Porfilio, “for our family and many others, the pool is what makes our village what it is in the summer.”

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the village, the village board, other village board members, or Neighborhood Communications, LLC.

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