



## Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission  
**From:** Robert L. Tetens, Director  
**Date:** May 14, 2013  
**Re:** Rutherford Pool – City of Ypsilanti

#### Background

Due to the difficulties associated with operating a 40+ year old pool, the City of Ypsilanti had struggled for years to keep the Rutherford Pool open and available for public use. Finally, in 2003, the City acknowledged that it no longer had the resources to operate or maintain Rutherford Pool. Rather than close the pool, however, the City entered into an agreement with the Friends of Rutherford Pool (FoRP) – a very active citizens committee – to take over the responsibility for daily operations, maintenance and capital improvement. In the following years the FoRP were tireless in their determination to keep the pool operational, but by 2010 it became apparent that without major work the pool would be forced to close before the 2011 season.

At that time, the FoRP were assisted in evaluating the condition of the pool by two pool companies, the natatorium staff of EMU, and pool staff from the City of Ann Arbor. All were in agreement that continuing to repair the pool would not eliminate exposure to future system failures and was clearly not the appropriate strategy. The pool should be replaced. The estimated cost of replacement at that time was \$600,000. The FoRP immediately initiated a fund raising effort and began working on the design of the new pool. Since 2011, this grass roots effort has successfully secured grants from multiple foundations, corporations, and community leaders.

In a memo from the August 9, 2011 WCPARC meeting, staff summarized the status of the project and indicated that staff had encouraged the City/FoRP to apply for a MDNR Trust Fund grant. Staff further recommended that the Commission provide financial support for the local match required by the Trust Fund program. The Commission agreed unanimously to provide \$50,000 towards the matching funds for the 2011 Trust Fund grant, and an additional \$75,000 as a bridge loan while the outstanding pledges are collected. The City/FoRP were successful in obtaining a \$300,000 Trust Fund grant.

#### Discussion

At our last two Commission meetings I've provided updates on the status of FoRP project. Bids received earlier this year on the original design far exceeded the 2010 estimates. An alternative design, at a lower cost, was considered by the FoRP and has been approved by the City. DNR approval is expected soon. The project cost is now approximately \$900,000.

The FoRP has indicated that they have the available resources (including the \$50,000 grant and \$75,000 loan approved by the Commission) to begin phase I, construction of the pool itself. Further, that they intend to continue fundraising until they have the remaining funds to complete phase II of the project, the remaining infrastructure. Opening the pool this summer is becoming increasingly questionable.

It is clear from the outpouring of support over the past decade that this project is important to the greater Ypsilanti community. It is more than a neighborhood pool, the replacement of which is consistent and complimentary with the broader efforts to enhance recreational opportunities and the quality of life in the community (e.g. RiverUp, the eastern County recreation center, the Border-to-Border trail, etc). I continue to think it is important and appropriate for the WCPARC to assist in whatever way we can to help them be successful.

Our current agreement is very helpful on the capital development side, but it will likely be a burden on the operational side due to the debt repayment for the loan. Even if the repayment schedule is five years, that's still a \$15,000 line item in their annual budget. I suspect that even a \$7,500 per year payment for ten years would be challenging to them, given the revenue likely to be generated by this seasonal attraction. The impact of that responsibility is clearly significant, and likely to be challenging.

### **Recommendation**

The accomplishments of the FoRP over the past decade have been incredible. They are on the verge of a successful project, and we have the capability to help them make that a reality.

Again, since the time of the Commission's previous action the City/FoRP have secured a \$300,000 MDNR Trust Fund grant for the project. They are now \$25,000-\$30,000 away from being totally funded. The WCPARC has a history of often providing the local match for Trust Fund applications by local communities. That support is usually in the range of 50% or more of total project costs (e.g. \$400,000 towards the skate park; \$250,000 for Lakeside Park improvements; etc.). A contribution of \$150,000 as local matching funds for this project would represent a far smaller percentage of the total cost than on any other local match contribution we've made in the past.

I am therefore recommending that the WCPARC rescind its previous pledge of a \$50,000 grant and a \$75,000 loan (\$125,000 total), and agree to provide a contribution of \$150,000 to the City of Ypsilanti to complete the Rutherford Pool project. I believe approval of this recommendation will give the pool proposal the best opportunity for success; it will demonstrate our ability to work together; and it will contribute to the base of support for our efforts in the Ypsilanti community.