

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Swimming Pool Committee
February 27, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Board members – Matthew Prane, Brooks Barnett, Laura Holland, Renee Cassiano, and Scott Evans. Staff in attendance was Town Clerk Alissa Fender.

Call to Order

The special meeting of the Swansboro Swimming Pool Committee was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Minutes

On a motion by Mrs. Cassiano, seconded by Mr. Evans the October 24, 2024, Special Meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Business

Discuss the New River YMCA Presentation given to the Board of Commissioners
Mr. Prane summarized a presentation given by Charlie Myers, CEO of the YMCA, highlighting the organization's mission, financial standing, and capacity to support community programs. He noted that the YMCA had been identified as a strong potential partner due to its extensive history and financial resources. The town had previously expressed interest in collaborating with the YMCA, recognizing its ability to provide year-round indoor swimming facilities. Mr. Prane emphasized that demonstrating a lack of existing swimming programs in the community would be essential in justifying the need for such a partnership.

No comments or questions were offered from other committee members.

Draft Enterprise Plan

The Committee was provided with a copy of the Draft Enterprise Plan at its October 24, 2024, special meeting for review. Mr. Prane reviewed that there were programming needs for a potential aquatic facility in Swansboro, emphasizing the town's large youth population and the lack of local swim programs. It was highlighted that a learn-to-swim programs were crucial for safety, given the town's proximity to water. The need for such programs could extend to older adults for mobility and health benefits. The enterprise plan compared a large, year-round facility with a smaller, seasonal pool, with the latter being seen as more financially sustainable. Economic impact studies from similar facilities suggested that hosting events like swim meets and triathlons could generate significant revenue for the community. The YMCA's interest in the town was noted, but the plan remained independent of their involvement.

Phased approach to permanent location/programs

Mr. Prane reviewed that bringing a pool to Swansboro would require a phased approach. Starting with Phase 1 to create program development and water safety awareness, phase 2 to install a MEGA Insta Pool option which was quoted for under \$60,000, and phase 3 would be a permanent pool with or without including the YMCA. Mr. Prane shared that research highlighted the benefits of a local swimming programs, citing safety, community engagement, and economic impact. The possibility of utilizing grant funding was mentioned, along with the potential role of the YMCA in meeting programming needs. Alternative uses for the pool, such as triathlon training, scuba acclimation, and dog diving competitions, were also considered. Challenges, including accessibility, compliance with state and local regulations, and long-term sustainability, insurance coverage and total expenses were noted.

In response to inquiries from the Board, Mr. Prane clarified the following.

- A deck could be built around the pool
- The pool could be used for scuba diving, and or dog diving – but Mr. Barnett noted that there could be a health code issue around dog diving.
- Municipal Park behind the recreation center building was identified as a good location for the MEGA Pool.

Mr. Prane will create a development proposal to present to the committee at the next regular meeting, that will eventually be presented to the Board of Commissioners.

Public Comment

Mr. Hucal of 512 Misty Pond in Hubert, NC, emphasized the economic benefits an aquatic facility could bring to Swansboro, noting that his son's swimming endeavors had taken their family to major aquatic centers across the state. As a transplant, he saw the town missing out on tourism and revenue opportunities. He highlighted the potential for events, partnerships with the YMCA, and even a water polo program to drive growth. Hosting swimming competitions, like those held at the Triangle Aquatic Center, could attract visitors, boost local businesses, and position Swansboro as a key destination for aquatic sports.

Tammy Cassell of 213 Oak Grove Circle of Hubert, NC, also shared her experience with the challenge of limited pool access in the county. Her family traveled extensively for swim meets due to the lack of local facilities. She suggested exploring partnerships with nearby hospitals, as seen in Winterville, to secure funding for therapeutic aquatic

programs. She also referenced Washington's six-lane pool, noting it faced a recurring \$40,000 annual deficit, highlighting the financial challenges of sustaining a pool long-term. While she supported the need for a facility, she emphasized the importance of financial planning for its sustainability.

Mr. Prane responded to Ms. Cassell's comment about operation deficits emphasizing that pool sustainability depends on strong programming, as many pools fail due to declining participation and financial challenges. He expressed confidence that Swansboro's demand for swim programs would remain steady due to the constant influx of young military families from Camp Lejeune.

Hayleigh Gordon of 709 Peytons Ridge, shared as a lifeguard with the New Bern YMCA she's witnessed a number of aquatic programs, including water safety, exercise classes, and youth activities that keep the community engaged. She emphasized how lifeguarding helped her build connections, stay in shape for swimming, and wished for a closer pool for convenience.

Chairman/Board Thoughts/Staff Comments

Mr. Prane emphasized the importance of community, networking, and opportunities a pool could provide, including employment and swimming education for all ages. The phased approach was needed for moving forward, and he was aiming to present a proposal to the town in April, addressing key concerns like liability and financial sustainability. He will create a draft presentation for committee review in March.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Barnett, seconded by Mr. Evans, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.