From: C Trick
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 6:05 PM
To: CLK-CityClerks <CityClerks@winnipeg.ca>
Cc:

Subject: RE: Preliminary 2024-2027 Multi-Year Operating and Capital Budgets re: Pool Closures - Opposition to Closures

Submission for: Preliminary 2024-2027 Multi-Year Operating and Capital Budgets re: Pool

Closures **- Opposition to Closures**

nittee Commu ; dates: Monday, March 11 and Sunday,

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Council, Meeting date: Wednesday, March 20

Please see my letter of opposition below;

I am writing today in opposition to the Closure of Eldon Ross, Windsor Park and Happyland Park Outdoor Pool, as I feel that the City choosing to close this Pools is extremely short sighted. These closures will have the highest impact on low income residents, as 2 of the 4 free outdoor pools will be gone and one of the two indoor pools that regularly offer free days.

Because I live in the Archwood area and am most familiar with Happyland Park, I will be focusing on this one.

The City of Winnipeg has noted that Happyland Pool has had a low attendance without clarifying in their reporting that, since 2017, this pool is consistently short staffed and regularly closed on Saturdays and Sunday (potentially the busiest days). Some of the staffing shortages at Happyland are due to Lifeguards being pulled from this location to accommodate other pools, and the pool has not been fully staffed and open on a regular basis for attendance numbers to be accurately reflected. This has no doubt impacted attendance numbers and skewed the overall numbers reported in the Winnipeg Free Press for this Pool.

A few examples of articles in regards to this;

Aug 17, 2017: https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2017/08/17/st-boniface-residents-left-high-and-dry-due-to-staff-shortage-at-pool

July 18, 2022: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/st-boniface-happyland-park-pool-closed-on-weekends-1.6524002

July 27, 2022: https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/east/2022/07/27/left-high-and-dry

Happyland Pool is often at capacity with lines to get into the pool, but as stated above capacity can be limited when availability of guards is reduced for this pool. Even with full staffing this pool should be more affordable than others as this is not a large pool and unheated, by comparison should be cheaper to maintain. Some neighbourhood residents have commented that due to the smaller size that this pool is easier and more relaxing for them to attend with smaller children, as the children do not have to be kept at arms length.

In regards to the Lifeguard shortage, many have commented on this issue online. Some examples of online comments; were told part time was not hired, not enough City Clerks to process applications, some hired full time not receiving full time hours. One comment one of a the resident's made on one of Matt Allard's Facebook posts struck me because the person noted that their child and friend had applied to the City ended up getting jobs at the YMCA. If applicants are good enough for the YMCA, one would think they should also be good enough for the City of Winnipeg that is apparently short staffed?

We also keep hearing there will be splash-pads to replace facilities, with no mention of a replacement for Happyland Pool and Wading Pool (that is also closed more than it is open). For the planned replacements with splash pads, are these facilities to have underground holding tanks for re-circulation of water? Since past and some current experiences with drought and lower water levels for many lakes, one would hope that the City would be planning in an environmentally friendly way. Or are they planned to drain into the local sewer systems? What are the additional costs/maintenance that could come from underground holding tanks? The City often comments that the splash-pads are good for kids, but many parents have expressed that older children and teens are not interested in these facilities. Some with experience using these facilities have said that student supervisors won't let the parents use these. Which would also make this less of a family focused outing. These facilities also do little to accommodate adults and seniors. splash-pads also do not help families learn or teach water safety, which should be considered important.

Outdoor pools provide a family friendly activity that all ages can participate in and an activity families can do together, promoting healthier family and community relationships, and assisting in creating family friendly neighbourhoods.

With regards to low income, it has come to my attention that although this area has a mix of incomes, there is a much higher percentage of people struggling than initially realized that may not even be able to afford a small fee. Many of the low-income individuals do not have an option to add an outdoor pool as most do not even have a yard to put out a small child's pool. Many do not have access to vehicles to go to the lake or beach. In addition, a good number of low-income people use these pools as way to cool off during heat waves, as they do not even have access to air conditioning. By doing this the City gives the impression that taking away from low income is OK, and they understandable begin to question when is it enough and how much more is going to be taken away? Could this not also be considered creating poverty barriers to recreation?

Considering the infill in this area that has seen mid-sized 4 to 6 level apartments, smaller 3 and 4 plexes that have previously maximized property uses through variances, and larger infill projects such as Water district / Canada Packers which alone could double or triple the population of the

area, it seems extremely short sighted of the City to remove amenities given the potential influx of residents through infill that is already planned and future infill that will occur.

My hope is the City will consider alternatives to help reduce cost and provide some income for the pool, such as introducing swimming lessons as many have commented the availability is in short supply. Or if needed introduce rotating days for free and days where a small fee might be charged so that the pool could still be accessible to lower income residents.

I feel that the City should at least fully staff this pool for all days throughout the season including Saturday and Sunday to get a true reflection of attendance and demand on this pool, since the numbers reported in the Winnipeg Free Press have been based off limited staff and with closures consistently on weekends dating back as far as 2017.

We all hope for a city that the children will stay in when they grow up and help improve it, but we as a society are only as good as we treat our most vulnerable. We should be inspiring Pride in our City for all people and this is not achieved by taking away amenities that are of importance to the communities and the people within them.

Sincerely,

Christine Trickey