

**KJ Design, LLC**  
**Tukwila Pool Administrative & Program Assessment**  
**For the Tukwila Metropolitan Park District**  
Authored by Kevin & Karen Johnston





## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	page 5
Information Reviewed.....	page 7
Interviews, Meetings & Formal Presentation.....	page 10
Abbreviations & Terminology .....	page 11
Identifications of Best Practices for Pool Programming Maximizing Your Pool Potential.....	page 12
Comparison of the Pool’s Current Operation to Best Practices.....	page 17
Pool Schedules.....	page 19
Membership & Entry Fees.....	page 23
Water Fitness.....	page 26
Lifeguarding & WSI.....	page 28
Staff Training & Certifications.....	page 29
Learn To Swim.....	page 31
Special Programs and Partnerships.....	page 40
Special Events.....	page 42
Teams and Special Interest Rentals.....	page 44
Recommendations	
Facility Layout and Changes .....	page 45
Marketing, Branding & Advertising .....	page 46
Employees, Members and Guests.....	page 47
Review of Job Descriptions for Employees.....	page 48
Cost Review to Privatize Services for Current Support Services.....	page 49

4 P's Of Marketing.....page 50

Metropolitan Parks District Model of Governance Comparison.....page 51

    Definition of Governance Styles.....page 51

    Advantages & Disadvantages of Each Style.....page 53

    Comparison of Parallel Communities with Each Style.....page 54

Executive Director.....page 57

    The Role of an Executive Director.....page 57

    Job Description of ED.....page 57

    Qualifications of an Ideal Candidate for ED.....page 60

The MPD Commissioners .....page 61

Recommendations for Efficiency in Operations.....page 62

    Labor Costs .....page 62

    Utilities .....page 63

    Replacement Equipment Fund .....page 64

    Other .....page 64

Governance: Summary and Recommendations .....page 65

Appendix.....page 66

    Cost Per Lane Hour .....page 67

    Pool Program Costs .....page 68

    Scheduling Matrix .....page 70

## Introduction

Contained herein is the written report entitled The Tukwila Pool Administrative & Program Assessment. It was crafted after an on-site visit that took place on August 13 through August 16, 2013 at the Tukwila Pool and voluminous amounts of material was reviewed. The scope of work has two major components: (1) Pool Operations & Programming and (2) MPD Model of Governance Comparison.

- ***Pool Operations & Programming***

The analysis for this portion of the work will include: identification of best practices for pool programming; comparison of the pool's current operation to those practices, reviewing pool schedules for efficient & effective operational use; cost analysis of pool operations (defining a lane hour or space hour cost), program cost analysis (per program); salary analysis for employees compared to neighboring communities and compared to privatized and partnership aquatic operations; a review of job description and qualifications for employees; and a cost review to privatize services for current support services (pros & cons).

- ***MPD Model of Governance Comparison***

The analysis for this portion of the work will include: definitions of governance styles, advantages and disadvantages of each style, comparison of parallel communities with each style, the role an executive director could play including job description and identifying the qualifications of an ideal candidate and recommendations for efficiency in operations.

The Tukwila Pool is meeting a number of needs within the community, i.e. supporting high school and club swim teams, hosting the community's learn to swim program and fitness activities, as well as providing recreational opportunities.

Kevin Johnston, principal of KJ Design, and Karen L Johnston, his most trusted partner, both contributed to this effort. Between them they have over 50 years of professional aquatic experience to draw from. The purpose of the analysis is to determine both short term and long term direction and areas for improvement that should be the district focus and integrated into the district's strategic plan. This evaluation is practical and helpful assessment of the current programs and administration of the district for the aquatic facility.

The report contains and is organized under the following headings:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Pool Operations & Programming
- Recommendations & Summary

## MPD Model of Governance Comparison Recommendations & Summary

One of our assessment findings should be stated up front. There is a great amount of support in the community given that the various groups want to see the pool excel and be successful. We need to thank: Tukwila P&R Staff (part time & full time), the pool's lifeguards & instructors, STP, TPAC, the commissioners that we were in contact with and who listened to our presentation & dozens of guests which we interviewed.

The recommendations we have crafted are intended to assist the pool in becoming more successful in all aspects: operation, marketing, administration and governance. Throughout the report, recommendations are made to help in the decision making process of the pool's staff, administration and commissioners.

## Information Reviewed

The following information was requested by KJ Design, LLC on August 5, 2013. Tukwila Pool and P&R departments provided the information for review. KJ Design, LLC has thoroughly reviewed this list.

**Pool Programming Information:** Please provide copies of any or all information for “programs” (i.e. swim lessons, water fitness classes, diving, synchro, WSI, LGT, etc)

- Instructor’s manual
- Caregiver’s manual
- Participants manual
- Membership manual
- Level requirement
- Program specific
  - General description
  - how many employees are needed to operate
  - For example with a swim lesson class (one class) you would need 1 instructor, 1 lifeguard and 1 desk employee, although the LG and desk would be amortized over multiple programs. Include necessary administrative staff (program supervisor) who may be needed as well.
  - Supplies needed for program (or budgeted amount)
  - lesson plans
  - block plans
  - program goals
- Lesson schedule (daily, weekly, sessions, etc)
- Instructor evaluations (caregiver, participant, self, and supervisor)
- Program evaluations
- Print and on-line marketing materials

**Special Events Information:** Please provide copies of information for special events (annual events such as Spooky Splash or monthly events such as Dive-In Movies). Can be individual, family or rental programs

- Calendar of events
- Attendance records
- Participant and staff evaluations
- Program descriptions
- Print and online marketing material

**Print and on-line marketing material examples:** Please include others if you have them

- Program Guides
- Seasonal schedules
- Marketing materials
- Online resources
- Radio advertising / radio copy
- Facility flyers, handouts, etc

**Attendance Records / Facility Usage:** (as detailed as possible)

- By program
- Hourly by day of the week
- Seasonally
- Membership records (including drop in guest visits)

**Pool Schedules:**

- Terminology / definitions
- Daily, weekly, seasonal, annual
- Print and online versions
- Holiday closures
- Special Event closures (rentals, team meets, etc)

**Annual Operating Budget:** (costs and revenue)

- general annual operating budget
- specific program budgets

**Operations Costs (fixed):** actuals, not budgeted for at least 1 year. Broken down as much as possible

- Utilities (water, electricity, gas, etc)
- Private or city sponsored services (IT, payroll, phone, landscape, etc)
- Facility Director salary and benefits
  - Presumption is that this person is required and salary cannot be allocated to specific programs
- Maintenance / Custodial Director
  - Presumption is that this person is required and salary cannot be allocated to specific programs

**Staffing Costs (variable):** can be budgeted values for all employee positions

- Hourly rate chart
- Cost of benefits
- Training hour requirement
- Uniform requirements
  - Who pays for items
  - What is cost of items paid for by MPD

**Staff Salary Review:**

- Job descriptions and qualifications
- Pay scale w/ Union requirements
- Hours worked
- Benefits packaged offered

**Staffing model:**

- Who (job title, not specific person's name) works when
- How many employees each shift
- Total for each employee category for the year, season,
- Can be adjusted per season
- Chain of command

**Support Services (city supported and private):**

- What they are (IT, payroll, landscaping, custodial)
- Job Descriptions
- Hours needed for each role
- Cost associated with each

**Additional Documents Reviewed** (not originally requested, no particular order):

- Pool Operations 101 (prepared by Rick)
- 2010 Salary Data (provided by WRPA)
- MPD 20 year Plan (prepared by Rick)
- TPAC folder on Tukwila Website (link provided by Vanessa)
- TPAC recommendations (summary provided by Vanessa)
- STP Comparison Report (provided by Stephanie)
- MPD Board Meeting and Agenda (link provided by Stephanie)
- TPAC Best Practices (provided by Vanessa)
- STP prep and materials for Budget workshop (provided by Vanessa)

## **Interviews, Meetings & Formal Presentation**

The following interviews were conducted:

- Facility Manager (Malcolm)
- Ass't Manager (Amy)
- Program Leads (Swim lesson coordinator)
- Support Leads (Head lifeguards)
- P&R staff (Rick & Robert)
- Informal exit interviews with adult patrons (a few dozen)

The following phone meetings were conducted:

- TPAC (group phone meeting)
- STP (group phone meeting)

Directed conversation:

- Allan Ekberg, one of the park commissioners, was in Pullman and requested to see Karen and Kevin Johnston during the information gathering phase of this project. We had a general conversation about engaging the public and advisory groups during this project.

On September 16, 2013 KJ Design, LLC presented their preliminary findings to the Tukwila Metropolitan Parks Board, professional staff, TPAC, STP and interested community members. The parking lot method was used to create a question and answer segment following the formal presentation. All questions have been reviewed and answers were given during our presentation and/or incorporated into the document as necessary. Additional clarification can be offered if required.

## **Abbreviations**

- WEX Water Exercise / Fitness / Walking
- PC Parent Child
- PS Preschool
- HS Home School
- PE any school district program (except team)
- Team any type
- LTS Learn to Swim
- AA Active Adult (senior aged, 60 +/-)
- WLR women's locker room
- MLR men's locker room

## **Terminology**

- Class one individual meeting
- Lesson one specific group of classes during one session
- Session dates of classes for registration purposes
- Level distinct requirements

## **Identifications of Best Practices for Pool Programming** **Maximizing Your Pool Potential**

Pools are inherently expensive, but a prudent operator can minimize the associated costs through effective operation. In certification courses, such as the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) course, students learn how to be effective operators. AFO students learn to prioritize good water quality, thus ensuring a safe and healthy pool while becoming aware of other risk management principles. A welcoming pool for the community includes safe water, clean facilities, qualified and competent employees and may also include great programming. Depending upon the mission and goals of an organization, programming may entail membership loyalty, drop-in visits, swim lessons, water fitness and specialty classes as well as unique events.

Meeting the needs of the consumer can be a challenge. Each guest has their own opinion of what is best for them, while the employees in charge of scheduling need to do what is best for the majority of the consumers. For example, most lap swimmers would embrace having a lane of their own and will begrudgingly circle swim if they need to. Many would seek out a less busy time if they knew they could expect only one other person in that lane and that, in essence, they could keep “their half”. While one person to a lane seems ideal to a lap swimmer, it is typically not a financially feasible way to fill a pool. A program coordinator knows that swim lessons could have up to 6 people in one lane and a swim coach with limited space may be able to put more than 10 teammates into a single lane. The pool programmer must balance the needs of individuals with program requirements, all the while looking at the safety of the guests and employees while keeping within the budget, of course!

A pool is very rarely viewed as a single space. In fact, the Tukwila pool can be viewed in 10 or 12 sections of varying configurations. In essence, 6 lap lanes plus the shallow section. The shallow section has numerous configurations depending upon the activities filling the space. These include: 4 horizontal lanes, 6 vertical lanes, 4 quarters or 6 sections in the shallow area. Creative use of each of these ensures that the activities are given enough space to be effective without wasting valuable pool water. These same 10 or 12 spaces can be reconfigured based on time of use, day of the week, and season of the year. Thus, the basic layout of the pool may be changed many times a day. Again, the pool programmer looks at the big picture and balances those needs mentioned above.

On the rare occasion that a pool is viewed as a single space, it is referred to as block programming or sole use scheduling. In general, block programming means that the pool schedule is divided based on time of day rather than pool space. For instance, a mock schedule for blocks may look like this:

- early morning lap swim
- mid morning PS lessons
- noon lap swim
- early afternoon WEX

- mid afternoon LTS
- late afternoon swim team
- evening lap swim

The downfall to this schedule design is that there may be obvious times when the pool is over or under-utilized. In general, we recommend against block programming. Many of the times that are traditionally “blocked” could become shared with other programs with a change in programming mentality. For instance, teams routinely request the entire lap space, but an agency can condense the team program and continue to offer lap swimming to further accommodate its members. Based on the size of the team and their practice schedule, this may be little more than an inconvenience.

There may be times within the day or week when all the spaces are utilized for the same activity, but this would be part of the space use formula and not a true block format. An example at the Tukwila pool would be the men’s and women’s only swim on alternating Sunday mornings. Utilizing off peak times for blocked programs may also be considered, but again those blocks are part of the space use design.

Space use is a more effective use for a multi-purposed and programmed pool. In addition to the 10 or 12 spaces designated above, creativity can be used to divide the pool space. For instance: deep v shallow water, left v right (more than one lane used for each program), quadrants in the deep area and/or the shallow area, underwater v on top. As the pool programmer, combining these methods may be the best option. As referenced above, safety is also a consideration. The participants must be safely supervised by the instructors and lifeguards, and they must be comfortable where their class is being offered. While it may be physically possible to have scuba on the bottom of the pool and deep water exercise directly above them, it isn’t the wisest or safest choice.

Deck and spectator space, office space and locker room usage must also be considered. Spectators should be kept away from instructional space, but may need to be near during recreational times. Many advanced classes (for example, lifeguarding) may need classroom space near the pool and teams may want dry land exercise space as well. Of course, knowing the needs of the spectators is not always obvious and may not be easily accommodated.

When filling a pool with members, students, and guests, locker room size, amenities and use becomes a major factor in the decision making process. When possible, staggering the start and end of classes will limit the demand on the showers, benches, lockers and changing stalls in each room. In addition, by human nature, people are more apt to be on time if their class begins at an unusual time (for instance, 5:05 or 5:10 instead of 5:00 or 5:15). Some programs naturally compete for the same space and time, but don’t necessarily lend well to being offered that way. Active adult (senior) water exercise at 11:00am may not do well following a parent child class that ends at 10:45am if the adult do not appreciate the enthusiasm (crying, screaming, and laughter)

of little ones! By altering a schedule and having the classes back to back (no 15 minute stagger), the locker room can accommodate both programs with limited overlap.

Filling the pool with people entails selling memberships, accommodating drop-in visitors, ensuring that classes have participants, and that teams are given the space they need. Pricing of these services is a delicate balance of cost recovery and market potential. Ultimately, any municipal pool supported by tax dollars must be a prudent steward of the tax payer's dollars. When determining class sessions, the total cost must be considered. A monthly pricing structure may be more feasible than a seasonal one. Local pay days may be considered when planning session start dates and registration deadlines. Start dates may also be staggered to accommodate the student's and caregiver's schedules and be perceived as student friendly. If a prospective student or their caregiver inquires about start dates for classes, it would be a disservice to say "that class begins in 8 weeks." It is a buyer's market and most want instant gratification. Telling them, "we have classes that start next week (or even within a few weeks)" should ensure that they will enroll.

Best practices may also entail a few rules or guidelines. One we believe is prudent for the operator is to guarantee a minimum of one lap lane during all operational hours. A membership based agency has participants who are proud card carrying members. The agency that provides lap space during all hours will be able to cater to the swimmers with varying or flexible schedules. The perception to the buyer is that there is always a lane available to swim. You are giving the buyer (aka the future member) a chance to control their own schedule and use the facility for their convenience. This is not a guarantee that the lap swimmer will get "their" lane exclusively, but rather that a lane will be designated for lap swimming. It has been observed in other pools that emphasizing the availability of all day lap swimming and knowing the off peak times will encourage many swimmers to adjust their schedule towards the less busy times. It is important for the information desk to know the peak and off peak use of the lane(s) in order to guide swimmers to the lesser used times.

Similar to offering a lap lane at all times, it may be prudent to offer a space for shallow water exercise. Shallow water exercise has many options from water walking and jogging to stationary strength exercise. Each of the various types has different space demands. By varying the space offered, based on the other uses of the shallow section, the fitness enthusiast will also realize that they can exercise during all (or most) operating hours.

Specialty times can also be wise for a membership based facility. Typically, the hours before school and work are utilized by "adults only". While this may be observed by attendance records, many adults may prefer to know that children are not welcome during certain hours. Some facilities have successfully designated an Active Adult time during the mid-afternoon. For adults who prefer their solitude, this may be an attractive time to use the facility. Similarly, the gender specific times target ethnic and heritage groups that may not be routine pool attendees due to religious and cultural beliefs. One more use of specialty times is Teen nights or afternoons.

The pool programmer's job entails viewing the pool in every possible configuration for every minute of every operating hour. Many of these times can be chunked into segments (30 minutes for a swim lesson or 45-60 minutes for a water fitness class). The job of filling the pool also means that the staff is available to lifeguard, teach and coach and that the program is offered at a time when people can attend. In general, offering a PC class at 2:00pm does not work, since most young ones are sleeping and their older siblings will be arriving home from school within the hour.

The perception of a nice pool is often based on water and air temperature, plus the atmosphere of the locker rooms. In general, locker rooms need to be warm, clean, always have hot water, and when possible, be dry. Air and water temperature on the other hand is based on perception and each person has their own opinion. In the big picture, air temperature should be a few degrees above the water temperature of the main body of water. Water temperature becomes a game where you keep the most people happy while not exactly pleasing everyone. The lap swimmers will complain it is too hot, but continue to purchase their memberships. The AA water fitness participant may complain that it is chilly, but continue to come to class and tell their friends about the program. The swim lesson children look cold, but keep coming back with a smiling face every time. Each individual is happy with the temp, but prefers it a few degrees colder or warmer than it is. Ultimately, it is a delicate balance of the least amount of complaints. Since most pools are designed without a separately controlled spectator space, it is to be expected that the observer would always say "it is so hot". Great, since it is nearly 85 degrees in the pool environment!

In summary, the job of the pool programmer is to juggle a three ring circus, while being the conductor of a well-attended symphony. Every decision they make includes risk management principles, guest service skills, organization, employee needs, and facility use. Each scheduling decision entails the program description, the quality of the instructor delivering it, as well as the time and day it is offered. Changing any one of those variable could make or break a program.

Programming (swim lessons, water fitness, special events, etc) plays an important component in offering other services to the community that may enhance the pool experience. Swim lessons offer life assurance to caregivers and should be viewed as a life safety requirement of public government. Water fitness provides an alternative exercise environment for many people who cannot do traditional land exercise. As we observed at Tukwila Pool, people of all ages utilized the facility. On any given day, you will see active adults at the pool. Unfortunately, we don't see many 80 year olds on the soccer field, but fortunately, we do see them exercising and socializing at the pool.

We've referenced above the importance of being a membership based facility. Creating a membership philosophy where people are proud to be card carrying members is vital for community support. The country club model does not apply to most fitness clubs and community pools. You cannot sell "too many" memberships and there is no such thing as a maximum amount of members. Quite the contrary, using the fitness club

model, we know that people will buy a membership with the intent of being committed to exercise and many will not continue to utilize it. Citizens will buy their membership because it is a better value than drop-in visits, they can get a program discount, they will use it beyond its worth, and / or to help sustain the pool in the community.

In theory, a pool has a maximum amount of programming that can take place at any given time. What is used to fill program space may change in regards to the participants and the activity, but the essence is that there is a maximum capacity for programming. Membership, on the other hand is unlimited. Again, in theory! To compensate for membership growth a facility can expand its hours of operation and adjust program use. From a financial perspective, membership revenue can continue to increase while programming may level off, except for pricing increases. Over a short amount of time the percentage of revenue coming from memberships and recreational visits can quickly surpass the percentage from programming revenue.

The last two areas of best practices include guest services and custodial maintenance. We use the guest service philosophy because we believe that everyone should be treated as if they have a pool in their own backyard, and as if they were a guest in their own home. Guest service is not just the role of the information desk employees, but rather, it should be well over 50% of every employee's job. A lifeguard must know how to speak to all members about safety issues. A swim instructor must be able to communicate effectively with the caregivers of his/her students. Fitness instructors must know how to communicate with the clientele that may be of a different generation. Of course, the management team must understand the importance of effective communication with even the most difficult guest or employee. The guest service philosophy covers every interaction with members, guests, students, caregivers and even other employees. Ideally, guest services should be the second priority, since safety will always be number one.

Following those is the third priority of cleanliness. Custodial and maintenance services must have a goal of having all systems working all the time, while keeping the facility as clean as possible. Custodial service includes cleanliness, but it also includes the little things that make a big impact: paper in the toilet and towel dispensers, no hair in the drains and sinks, light bulbs always replaced, and hot water in the showers. Maintenance schedules must be organized to maintain all equipment, provide upkeep and improvements on time, all while limiting the impact to the members, students and guests. The maintenance of equipment should always include the minor things such as the wheels of the rolling carts. The major things, such as the pool pumps or motors, must be kept operating as well. Each one is important to a specific component of the operation, although the impact of some items being broken may be minor by comparison.

## **Comparison of the Pool's Current Operation to Best Practices**

Historically the pool made it to the budget chopping block. The City Council challenged each Department Head to reduce their budget. As a result, the pool was listed as a public service, supported by the tax payer's dollars that could not be funded in a reduced budget. While the P&R Director may have been the person tasked with reducing the budget, he should not be the scape goat for eliminating the pool in the community. The City Council made the decision that funding the pool could not be a priority of City money. Ultimately, the role of public service is to provide for the safety of its citizens. Swim lesson and the opportunity to develop comfort in the water offer a basic life assurance to the members of the community. Realistically, it is a duty of a community to fund water education. Learn to swim programs play an important role in public safety and drowning prevention.

The community of Tukwila, through its voters, spoke loud and clear by electing to fund the MPD. Their voice and dollars said that the pool and its renovation were priorities for water education and recreation. The renovation provided for an improvement in water quality, facility aesthetics, and long term pool use by the community. Overwhelmingly, based on our exit interviews with guests, we heard positive and supportive feedback regarding the operation: "Won't change a single thing"; "It is a great pool"; and "Everything is just perfect."

Overall, the Tukwila Pool is very well operated and programmed, but has room to grow. While membership is a component of programming, most people would typically think of programs as the activities that fill the pool with an educational or recreational experience. This approach is certainly the case at Tukwila. The diverse program content is offered by a culturally diverse group of employees who take to heart their role as public servants. The example they are setting for inclusive programming for a diverse community is precedent setting in aquatics. Much of this success can be attributed to the people who fill the employee roles, especially Malcolm and Amy.

When looking at pool programs and schedules, it is important to determine if titles match the goals and the needs. Verbiage is very important when communicating with the public. Each term used may be interpreted differently. As a provider of services you do not want to leave any word to have multiple definitions or interpretations. Program titles must be vague enough to keep people interested, but clear enough to not over promise or offer room for false goals. The overall mission, vision and goals of a facility and its' programs must meet the needs of the consumer, but not be limited by the title and words used.

The Tukwila Pool environment is very inviting. The water is acceptable for most activities and is set at a pleasing temperature. Just as important is the air temperature. The climate controlled environment is set adequately for the participants to stay warm enough in the water. For comparison purposes, when we are in the shower and open the door, we feel a cool breeze on our wet skin. This same thing happens when we get

out of the pool. As much as possible, the air temperature should be a few degrees warmer than the water. This seems to be the case in Tukwila.

## Pool Schedules

Rick Still provided us with a copy of the Pool Operations 101 manual. Part of the Appendix was a color coded document used for pool scheduling. It is clear that considerable time goes into organizing the pool for use. Additional information was provided by Amy regarding the typical week view of the pool, and a scheduling matrix. The multiple organization styles demonstrate that the administrative staff has thoroughly organized the activities at the pool. We spoke with Malcolm for further scheduling clarification. In addition, we reviewed two of the Tukwila Parks & Recreation Activities Guides (May through December 2013). Currently published operation hours are Monday through Friday 5:45am – 8:00pm and Saturday & Sunday 11:00am – 3:00pm. Our comments, concerns, and recommendations are based on this schedule. See Appendix A: Typical Weekday and Weekend Modified by KLJ for the recommended pool schedule.

*Lap Swimming, Vertical Exercise and Water Walking* are not available from Monday – Friday from 1:00pm – 7:00pm. During the school year, this time is designated for special interest rentals, aquatic team rentals, and swim lesson use. In the summer, the open swim is added from 3:00pm – 4:00pm. We highly recommend adding a minimum of one lap lane during all facility operating hours. If possible, extending this to include a shallow water fitness space and deep water vertical space would be ideal. Currently there is 61.25 hours available for some form of lapping. With a minimal adjustment to swim lessons and open swims you could dedicate and guarantee one lap lane from open to close which would add an additional 30 hours of lap availability. Our understanding is that the current rentals may not use the entire space designated as rental time. The staffing model provides for a minimum of two lifeguards during all operational hours. (Employees rotate between the front desk and the lifeguard stand.) In essence, by adding lap and fitness space, you are adding facility availability without adding additional staffing costs.

If additional rental only hours are consistently filled with special interest groups, and these groups do not need the entire space, it would be wise to add lap lane and water fitness times during these hours. For instance, Saturday morning 8:00am – 11:00am or Monday through Friday evenings from 8:00pm – 8:30pm. In essence, the staffing cost would be funded by the rental and an additional service could be offered to the members and guests. If these times are sporadically filled, this may not be a wise addition. Once the hours are advertised and members get accustomed to using the facility, they will not want “their” space taken away.

*Swim Lesson and Instruction* will be covered in the Instruction section.

*Single Gender Swims* is a fabulous way to be inclusive and respectful of cultural and religious requirements. Our only concern is that the time it is offered may be during religious services. Depending upon cultural and religious observances, any weekend time may offer a conflict (Saturday or Sunday). Adding gender specific swim instruction

could also help this program grow. This is one of the examples of progressive programming that we observed in Tukwila.

*Family Swim* is designated as shallow pool only and requires that an adult be in the water directly supervising all children under the age of 18. The supervision policy (listed directly above in the pool use information section of the guide) states that children under 6 years of age must be accompanied by an adult in the water at all times. With today's changing definition of families this may limit many youth from participating during this designated time. The rising scope of the obesity epidemic among children should be a guiding factor in extending as many hours for their attendance as possible. Limiting these recreational opportunities to families only limits the youth who could be in attendance.

Family Swim is also very limiting in the time it is offered. For caregivers of young children who have flexible day schedules, limiting them to arriving at 11:00am seems unreasonable. If they have other children in preschool or kindergarten, they will need to be recreating between 9:00 – 11:00am. We would recommend changing available hours to Open Recreation and expanding the hours it is offered. In addition, we would broaden the supervision policy (see verbiage below).

*Open Swim* implies that this time is for swimming only (as in traditional laps back and forth). If the pools have open spaces for recreation (splashing, using noodles, tossing balls, etc) this time should be called Open Recreation. The summer open swim time is immediately following the special interest rentals. If the rentals do not use all the space or are not consistently renting, it would be advisable to expand the Open Recreation times.

Following our guidelines above, there could still be one or two lanes for lap swimming and deep vertical exercise and one space for shallow water fitness. Deep water open recreation should include use of the diving board or slide. We feel that leaving this to the discretion of the users and lifeguards would be wisest, instead of designating specific times for each. Therefore, the weekend Deep Water Open Recreation hours of 1:00pm – 3:00pm would include diving (boards or blocks) or sliding. Considering purchasing an inflatable fun run would be wise

*Late Night (Teen Event)*: This is a fabulous partnership with the Tukwila Community Center. The combination of teen recreational activities with pool use is ideal. The program is further enhanced by the van service. Keep up the great work!

*Special Interest Rentals* may be infringing upon member and program space. On the contrary, they may be a consistent revenue source and an opportunity for people to be exposed to the pools who may otherwise not realize that the pool in Tukwila is open for everyone. For example, the rehabilitation programs (physical therapy, wounded warriors, etc) should be recommending that their participants buy a membership when they are ready to return to independent exercise. Some of the summer special interest rentals are camps. If these are consistent, guaranteed revenue and space fillers it

would be unwise to limit their use. But, if they don't need the entire space and it can be shared with Tukwila Pool use that would be our recommendation. Again, looking at the shallow and deep spaces as separate entities may be wisest. Can open recreation be expanded into either of the spaces and still accommodate the special rentals?

*Aquatic Team Rentals* typically ask for more space than they really need and in many cases are not paying the full retail value of prime pool space. Depending upon the demand for lane space in a particular community we have seen coaches put 10 or more athletes into each lane. This may not be the ideal and will only work if the athletes are doing similar workouts. As is the case with Special Interest Rentals, the teams may be infringing upon member and program space. Reviewing the team use and revising their rental times and lane use may be needed.

*Party Rentals* are currently available on Sundays and Saturdays from 3:00 – 5:00pm with special consideration given to earlier or later on both days. We would also recommend extending the advertised time of party rentals. This would include 8 – 10pm on Friday and 6pm – 10pm on Saturday / Sunday. While this may not be a widely used rental time, the perception will be that more hours are available for rentals.

#### **Scheduling Recommendations:**

- A minimum of one *lap lane* should be available during all operating hours. Adding a minimum of one space for shallow water fitness would also be advised. Adding a deep water vertical exercise lane should be considered (but may not be realistically possible). Hours designated for private rentals would not be included in this recommendation.
  - SaSu 11:00am – 3:00pm
  - M – F 5:45am – 8:00pm
- Adjusting open swim and family swim to *Open Recreation* with a broader definition. This can be in the shallow, deep, or both pools (published schedule will designate which pool, but definition remains the same). If the water fitness classes have enough attendance to limit recreation, this may be advisable. Afternoon hours need to be reviewed for additional times. Open Recreation should be offered during the following times:
  - M – F 5:45am – 1:00pm (school year only)
  - M – F 5:45am – 9:00am (summer schedule)
  - M – F evening schedule stays as is w/ title change
  - SaSu 1:00pm – 3:00pm title change
- *Party rental* times be added or extended
  - Friday 8:00pm – 10:00pm
  - Saturday 3:00pm – 10:00pm
  - Sunday 3:00pm – 10:00pm
- Reducing Special Interest Rentals to accommodate general membership and drop in visits.
  - Guarantee one lap lane
  - Offer open recreation when possible
  - Review use and needs by special interest groups

### *Supervision Policy Recommendations:*

This policy is a direct copy of Pullman Aquatic & Fitness Center's Policy and was approved by Washington Cities Insurance Authority when it was created. Verifying this policy with your City attorney and insurance agent would be advisable.

- Children 7 years and younger are REQUIRED to be supervised by a responsible caregiver 16 years old or older within arm's reach in the water at all times.
- We RECOMMEND that children age 8 to 12 years old be supervised by a responsible caregiver 16 years old and older.
- All non-swimmers, including those wearing floatation devices, must be within arm's reach of a responsible caregiver 16 years old or older in the water at all times.
- Children 7 years and under and/or non-swimmers wearing floatation devices, require 1 caregiver per 5 children in the water at all times.
- Children 7 years and under whom successfully demonstrate the Tukwila swim screening requirements (TBD) may swim without a caregiver in the water. Caregivers must ACTIVELY SUPERVISE from the deck.

*Space Use Policy Recommendations:* Again, this is modified from Pullman Aquatic & Fitness Center and may need a diagram as part of the signage.

- When possible, the presence of 4 or more water fitness participants will designate the need for a separate section.
- Due to limited space, you are not guaranteed an exclusive water fitness section.
- When a scheduled party exists during open recreation or during (*if an exclusion is needed*), designated exercise space will not be available.
- Instructional programs will ALWAYS have the right to divide the pool for use during shared and open recreation times.
- As the shallow space can be used for many water activities during open recreational hours, please always be respectful of others while exercising.
- Tukwila Staff and Management reserve the right to modify this policy as necessary.

*Circle Swimming and Lane Use Guidelines* (a diagram may be needed):

- Due to limited space, you are not guaranteed a lane to yourself.
- 1-4 people per lane; if there are more than two swimmers, swimmers will need to circle swim.
- 5–8 people will have the use of two lanes, when available.
- Tukwila Pool guarantees a minimum of 1 lane for lap swim during all recreational hours.
- Instructional Activities will be encouraged to have 4 or more participants per lane. The presence of a 5th participant will allow them to bump to an additional lane.
- Swim Lessons will ALWAYS have the right to exclusive use of one lane per instructor.
- *Tukwila Staff and Management reserve the right to modify this policy as necessary.*

## **Membership & Entry Fees**

While membership, multiple visit passes and drop-in entry are not traditional programming modalities, they are an important component of a facility's fee structure. As discussed in the best practices section, programs can have a limited amount of growth due to pool space. In theory, memberships and daily visits can be unlimited and can continue to have revenue growth even when programs have reached capacity.

We are suggesting that you rebrand your pass to a membership. We believe offering a membership and developing a community of card carrying members is vital to the long term growth of a facility. Creating value through the price point and perks of membership will foster a long term commitment by members. If the price point is right, people will buy the membership. By adding in services, even ones they don't need or want, the member will perceive extra value. Memberships should also be priced where the more you buy the greater the discount. In essence, purchasing a membership would be the wisest choice financially and the most logical, even with limited use.

From a marketing perspective, you do not want a complicated membership pricing structure because the information desk staff needs to be able to explain it and the potential member needs to understand it. In addition, we propose having 2 or 3 additional membership promotions with the goal of making the annual membership so popular that there is no reason not to buy it. The financial impact to the revenue side of the budget should be offset by the quantity of memberships sold, in essence balancing the projected sales to surpass projected revenue.

Internally, having a base formula for the pricing structure makes the most sense for determining the prices of each membership level. For instance, an annual membership is the daily visit price at 3 times per week (adult is \$4) times 52 weeks (= \$624) with a discount of 40% for a total of \$375 per year. This is slightly lower than the current non-resident rate. This same thing can be done for youth / senior memberships and the total is \$280 for an annual pass, significantly higher than the current non-resident youth / senior rate.

A family membership currently does not exist, although we would recommend adding one. Flexibility with the definition of family is important. We would interpret family as 2 caregivers and their children. From a pricing perspective, using the formula of 2 adults and 1 child to create the family fee would be wise. We have not seen a flexible definition of family be abused when it comes to selling memberships. On the other hand, we have seen negative publicity at facilities in communities that did not have a flexible definition of family.

We believe the base daily rate is acceptable. If a membership program can be successfully marketed, implemented, promoted, and advertised this rate can ultimately be raised by 25 - 50% more. Until there is a solid base of members, we would recommend keeping the daily rate as it is. The 10 visit punch card price is accurate and should not be changed.

Membership should have benefits. Ones that we have seen as perks of membership include discounts on programs (10 – 25%), early registration for members, free special events, towel services, and faster facility access. Other perks may include free coffee, consultations with a personal trainer, and long term reserved lockers. At a minimum we would recommend discounts on programs and free special events.

We were told that there was a joint membership with the Tukwila Community Center (TCC), but it is not advertised in the Activity Guide in either the TCC or Pool section. The joint membership can be targeted to the individual who wants to cross train or who have family members with different fitness needs. It would be wise to cross market and specifically advertise this membership option at the Pool and TCC.

### **Membership and Entry Fee Recommendations**

- Change terminology to membership instead of passes
- Change terminology to visits instead of punches
- Add the same disclaimer for multi-visit and memberships that is listed with TCC memberships (p 19 Fall Activities Guide)
- Determine the resident discount and keep it the same throughout all pricing Or follow the discount formula consistently.
  - 5% discount for drop-in wex punch
  - 10% discount for drop in visit punch pass
  - 15% discount annual for lessons
  - 20% discount for memberships (currently called passes)
- Develop an annual facility birthday promotion for the month of October
  - all *annual* memberships are sold at 50% off the regular price
- Develop a Gift of Fitness promotion for *annual* memberships
  - 20% - 50% off on Black Friday
  - 20% - 50% off on January 1 (or 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - 20% off from Dec 1 – 25
- Develop a pre-summer promotion for *annual* memberships
  - 20% off in May or June
- Create an all-inclusive membership
  - include access to the TCC fitness room
  - include discount for programs (lessons, wex, sp)
  - include special events at no charge or very reduced fee
- Offer a reduced fee entry to TCC (and/or other clubs) members of \$2
- Eliminate 6 month membership (annual should be a better deal)
- Add a family membership option
  - Price it as the same total of 2 adults and 1 child
  - Be flexible with the definition of family
  - Do not charge for each additional child

- Create a pricing formula using the \$3 and \$4 base daily visit price (round up as necessary, include tax in total for even sales). Amounts listed are youth / senior, adult and family
  - 10 visit
    - Non-resident stays with no discount (\$30 / \$40 / \$110)
    - Resident reflects 10% discount (\$27 / \$36 / \$99)
  - 1 month (\$ x 3 visits x 4.3 weeks x 10% discount)
    - Non-resident (\$35 / \$46 / \$127)
    - Resident reflects 20% discount (\$28 / \$37 / \$102)
  - 3 month (\$ x 3 visits x 13 weeks x 25% discount)
    - Non-resident (\$88 / \$117 / \$322)
    - Resident reflects 20% discount (\$70 / \$94 / \$258)
  - Annual (\$ x 3 visits x 52 weeks x 60% discount)
    - Non-resident (\$187 / \$250 / \$687)
    - Resident reflects 20% discount (\$150 / \$200 / \$550)

In one of the exit interviews, one of the guests proclaimed: “The prices are great and it is one of the best values around for a pool.” In general your members and guests are pleased with the pool and the programs at the price points offered.

## Water Fitness

Tukwila Pool meets the basic water fitness needs of the community. The Parks & Recreation Activities Guide (Fall, p 29) offers Water Aerobics with 3 options and times. On page 30 of the same guide, the times and classes are repeated. The addition of classes marketed to special populations can be limited based on pool temperature. Fortunately with the Tukwila pool, the current temperature should be able to accommodate participants that would fit some of the more common special populations. For instance, students with arthritis may think the water is cool, but will find it does not limit's their movement after class. Quite the opposite, guests with Multiple Sclerosis who need cooler water will find this temperature does not leave them exhausted and unable to function for the rest of the day.

Currently, a shallow space for water fitness is available during the *Family Swim* time, although we could not find that information in the public material (program guide). We found it in the Pool Program Description document provided by the professional staff. Ensuring that this space is available during all open recreation time is crucial. Again, we reiterate that maintaining an open lane for deep water fitness and a shallow water space will be important for members who desire flexibility in their exercise schedules.

Our only concern with the description is that aerobics implies that it will be a cardio vascular activity. Descriptions and titles should be clear. A novice exerciser may expect different outcomes based on the title of the section. A better choice for programming would be water fitness or water exercise. The class titles of Low Impact and Balance & Flexibility are very general and imply that this is for beginning exercisers or those with movement issues. Based on our observation and participation, these are accurate description.

The GAMBA program (now Aqua Zumba) is listed as high intensity water aerobics. We did not have the chance to observe the class during our visit, but understand that both of these would target an active population. When describing a class as high intensity water aerobics, it needs to meet those needs. I would expect a class that is challenging on a cardiovascular level and involves quite a bit of strength and stamina. Having this class offered to the “after work” crowd is a logical choice.

Our **recommendation** is for the instructors to seek a national level certification for water fitness. One quick search on the web for aquatic fitness certifications and many options are available. There are numerous certification agencies and each has its strengths and weakness regarding the instructor program, continuing education requirements, and associated cost of certification. By far, the standard is the Aquatic Exercise Association. Their certification program requires intense studying and practice prior to taking the test. Available locally at a reasonable cost, and definitely applicable to the current daytime clientele, would be the Arthritis Foundation Certification program. This program provides a broad range of exercises and alternatives for an instructor to develop a program for their students. The basics taught and reviewed in this class establish a strong baseline for aquatic exercise knowledge.

Water has the amazing ability to treat and heal our bodies and provide for exercise. This can be attributed to our body being 90% weightless in deep water and water being twelve times more resistant than air. The support of the water enables many people who cannot exercise on land to be successful in the water. We **recommend** developing partnerships with the local retirement and assisted living communities as well as hospitals, medical offices, rehabilitation centers, and physical therapy clinics. The partnerships can successfully bridge rehabilitation with long term exercise and healthy habits.

## **Lifeguarding & WSI**

The Tukwila Pool currently uses the American Red Cross (ARC) program for lifeguard and swim instructor certification. The ARC is a nationally recognized program that has offered water safety training for over 100 years. There have been many changes recently with the ARC, but they remain as the largest training agency in the United States.

Malcolm is certified as a Water Safety Instructor Trainer (WSIT). Amy is currently certified as a Lifeguard Instructors and is a candidate for WSIT. Maintaining these certifications is essential for the organization to provide quality in-service training as well as pre-screening of lifeguard and instructor applicants. The on staff Lifeguard Instructor completes all staff certifications and re-certifications for Lifeguarding, CPR, AED, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, Asthma Inhaler, and Epinephrine Auto Injection.

In addition to having immediate access to ARC training materials for staff development, they offer these national certification classes 3 or 4 times per year. By offering these courses routinely, the pool should have a readily available applicant pool (no pun intended) to support the pool's hiring needs, as well as provide an additional revenue source. The classes are a fabulous way to have an informal interview process. The LGI or WSIT can see a future employee's skills related to time management, swimming, rescue, guest services and social interactions.

## Staff Training & Certifications

### *Staff Certifications:*

Both full time staff are trained as core level lifeguards and swim instructors. In addition, Amy is trained as ARC Lifeguard Instructor. Malcolm is trained as a Water Safety Instructor Trainer while Amy is pursuing certification and is currently a candidate in the process.

All lifeguards are trained as ARC lifeguards. Swim instructors are trained in-house to teach the customized swim program designed in 2003. The length of teacher training depends on previous teaching experience, national level certification, and experience working with children. Swim instructors can become certified through the facility class.

### *Uniform Requirements:*

We would recommend a consistent color for the bottom of the lifeguard uniform (shorts or pants). In addition, it is prudent that the Lifeguards wear fanny packs containing breathing barriers, gloves, and basic first aid supplies. Water proof pouches can be purchased that go into the fanny pack to ensure that supplies stay dry when performing a rescue. During our observation, we did not see the lifeguards wearing their packs.

### *Pre-service Screening and Training for Lifeguards:*

All lifeguard applicants go through an evaluation process including an interview and lifeguarding skills test. In addition there is an in-depth pre-service staff training program that includes an orientation and shadow lifeguard experience for first time guards. The initial orientation of 1.5 hours covers basic administrative topics, facility orientation and employee introductions, review of EAP and emergency procedures, and daily operation procedures. The shadow experience includes 1 shift (3-4 hours depending on schedule and shift length) with a mentor guard. The new lifeguard gets an opportunity to observe, be observed, and learn from the mentor guard during this training.

Our **recommendation** would be to have the shadow experience be for all new employees and not just those who have not lifeguarded before. The shadow experience allows a new employee to figure out the blind spots, hazards, and facility routines necessary to be effective. A veteran guard may be qualified by skills and certification, but will not know the specific and unique challenges of guarding at Tukwila pool.

### *Pre-service Screening and Training for Swim Instructors:*

Swim instructors also participate in a training and shadow teaching experience with a mentor instructor that lasts roughly 24 hours before they begin instructing students solo. Alternately, applicants who have completed their WSI training may begin teaching after a brief orientation to the swim lesson program.

### *Volunteer Program:*

Volunteers are recruited from the employee's friends and family. The unique role a volunteer plays is that they have an on the job experience and interview. Many

volunteers start with mentoring in the swim lesson program with the full time staff. As they learn about the swim program and show competency for working with children and coworkers, they are encouraged to become a certified lifeguard. The combination of volunteering during lessons and being a lifeguard student give the full time staff an informal interview for the future employee. Plus, the volunteer / student is indoctrinated into Tukwila policies and procedures, thus “growing your own” with the employees.

Again, our **recommendation** for an experienced instructor who has attended an orientation is that they are not “let loose” to teach on their own. Based on our conversations with Amy, we believe that they are mentored well and watched through many of their initial classes, but feel that clarification is necessary in case this is not happening. Watching a veteran instructor and ensuring that they teach to the Tukwila standard will be beneficial to the student, caregiver, and other employees.

*In-service:*

Full time staff develop and execute a comprehensive in-service program that trains all employees to perform at their best in any situation. In-services are held 6 times per year and included 2 hours of in-depth training on topics including:

- Lifeguarding Skills
  - Back Boarding & Spinal Injury Management Techniques
  - Active Drowning Victim Rescues
  - Passive Drowning Victim Rescues
  - Distressed Swimmer Rescues
  - Water and Land Rescue Scenario Simulations
  - First Aid Scenario Simulations
  - CPR and AED Practice and Simulations
  - Review of Emergency Action Plan
- Physical Conditioning
- Swim Instruction Training
  - Teaching Swimming Progression
  - Teaching Specialized Swimming Skills
  - Class Management Techniques
- Providing Excellent Customer Service Training
  - CLASS Training
  - Special Event Planning/Training
  - Review of Policies & Procedures

Current national practices, quickly becoming national standards, would recommend 1 hour of in-service training for every 40 hours worked. For all full time employees, this is easily 1 hour per week. With a predominantly part time staff, keeping track of how many hours worked and their training hours can become a paperwork nightmare. Plus, all employees need to be trained to the same level of safety and quality. Thus, using an employee average of hours worked per year would determine what an ideal amount of training hours are.

We personally believe that an employee can never have too much training. We want them to know how to respond under the utmost pressure in the worst case scenario. If an employee can do that, then simple rescues, responses and guest service interactions will become routine. The current total of 12 hours per year would mean that an average employee is working 10 hours a week or less. Maintaining their ARC lifeguard training certification (review course) means a minimum of 13 hours for course completion every 2 years and we recommend completing the review every year.

In addition to the above list of training topics, the reality is employees also need skills (and therefore training) in custodial work. As basic as it may seem, managers need to teach employees how to adequately scrub the deck, clean toilets and change paper dispensers as well. Combine this with the above list and 12 hours seems inadequate for the three goals of safety, guest services, and cleanliness. One of the objectives of the training has to be to build confidence in the various skill sets, ultimately this takes time.

Budget and time have always been limiting factors for the amount of training offered. From a liability perspective, additional training is cheap compared to an insurance loss. Teaching and learning guest service skills and how to maintain cleanliness are essential to guest satisfaction and retention! Well worth the price on either account.

#### **Training Recommendations:**

- Adding additional in-service training hours for all employees. At a minimum require monthly training for 2 hours instead of every other month.
- Provide lifeguard recertification for all employees annually
- Provide lifeguards with fanny packs and supplies
- Train all staff in custodial responsibilities
  - How to change the paper dispensers
  - How to hose a deck (not water a garden)
- Supporting professional staff for attendance at local and national training and conferences
  - Association of Aquatic Professionals
  - National Recreation and Parks Association
  - Washington Parks & Recreation Association
- Provide a swim lesson workshop or series of workshops
  - Parent Child progression
  - The “Why’s” of teaching swimming, not just the “How’s”
  - Class management
  - Effective LTS stroke progression
  - Maximizing class time through skill drills
  - Teaching adults to overcome their fear
- Certify WEX instructors

## **Learn To Swim**

The review of the LTS program includes the Minnow and Shark skills, other LTS information provided, and on deck observations during our site visit. Reviewing the program guide ensured that we knew the information provided to the public. Best practices in progression programs may change based on the needs of the community, facility space available and caliber of the instructing staff.

From a marketing and branding perspective, getting families excited about the pool when their children are young will keep them returning for many years. If a child was to attend one class a week in a progressive program, year round, they would need 5 to 7 years of lessons to become proficient in all of the swimming and safety skills. General marketing philosophies state that keeping a customer is significantly less expensive than finding new ones. This same principle applies to swim lessons. Caregivers need to know that once-in-a-while lessons are not as effective as a long term commitment for their child to learn to swim.

### *Registration System:*

Tukwila had a unique registration system for organizing classes. We have not reviewed a program where all (or nearly all) levels can be offered at the same time. Caregivers may be able to enroll all their children at the same time. This registration format gives quite a bit of flexibility to the caregivers and allows the management team to change levels offered “on the fly” to accommodate the paying customer. The employees have access to class level times to assist the caregiver when registering and can ask for assistance from the management team. With the Tukwila registration format, the information desk employees must communicate effectively with the caregiver or the person completing the registration.

The alternative system to this style would be a published list of dates and time for each lesson during each session. This can take 2 or 3 pages in a program guide and may include lesson codes for registering. A deadline is created and all registrations and wait lists done before a certain time (for instance, Friday at 3pm) will be accommodated for the next session. This system can become labor intensive, since staff must cancel or combine classes with low enrollment and add classes with a waitlist (pending pool space and instructing staff). Either system has its pro's and con's.

The printed information states that “during the school year, swim lessons are offered every half hour.” This may be accurate for the traditional group lessons, but we find it hard to believe that a caregiver could enroll in the Parent Tot program whenever they wanted to. The same difficulty would arise with adult lessons or some of the other very specialized programs. While the program guide can be considered a “teaser” to future information, you are making the buyer seek out additional information. If I was an adult considering enrolling myself or my tot into a class, I would like to know the days and times of the program without calling the information desk. This information should be readily available to a future student.

At this moment, on-line registration does not exist. The pool staff confirmed that most of the transactions are completed using cash and thus, in person. If payment methods were to change, we would recommend considering an on-line registration system.

#### *Length of Classes and Sessions:*

Twice a week lessons (MW and TR) give students the ability to practice and master the skills without the instructor needing to consistently reteach them. Saturday only classes have always been a unique group of students. These students typically do not have the ability to attend during the week due to other programs or childcare limitations. As a result, the students may not progress as fast as their weekday (and twice a week) counterparts.

All classes are currently 30 minutes in back to back format. This is easy from a scheduling and accommodating format, but may not be the best for learning skills in the upper levels. Providing daily feedback to the caregivers at the end of every class may be needed. We were told there is a communication barrier with many of the caregivers, so providing this service may not be easy. In addition, locker rooms typically see an influx on the ½ hour, thus making showering and changing a time consuming effort.

Our recommendation include staggering the start and end time plus lengthening the class as student's progress. For instance PC and Level 1 & 2 should be 25 – 35 minutes, Level 3 & 4 should be 35 – 45 minutes and pre-competition should be 45 – 55 minutes. This format will reduce locker room congestion, and give the instructors “wiggle room” in their lesson plan. Plus instructors will be able to provide feedback and start their classes on time, every time. Caregivers may not have every child at the exact time, but the current system of accommodations should still work within every hour. As stated earlier, random start times (5:05 and 5:10) create a feeling of urgency and students are less likely to be late.

When determining session length (how many classes in how many weeks), a consideration must also be given to the extended cost of the program. The current system of 4 or 5 weeks per session seems to meet the price point and quantity of classes adequately. The MW or TR sessions include a maximum of 10 classes. This is average for the instructor to cover the material, provide progression, observe the individual students skills and provide feedback. The class dynamic can be developed for student progress. Alternatively, Saturdays are divided monthly and can have a minimum of 3 classes (10/28 – 11/20/2013). This is not enough time for the instructor to develop a lesson plan and adequately provide skill assessment to each child. Plus there will be additional chaos due to the session starting and ending within 3 class periods. Our recommendation is to adjust Saturdays to be a consistent number of classes (6 or 8) and offer them as their own sessions.

#### *Skills and Progression:*

Swim lessons must include water safety skills. Lessons offer parents life assurance and teach children a valuable skill that can be used throughout their whole life. The safety and swim skills that children learn will be used at other pools, lakes and waterfronts for

many years to come. Teaching swimming in a comfort controlled environment ensures success over time. Unfortunately the reality of the cold water in our recreational environments cannot be easily simulated during lessons. Thus, the need to teach the safety skills for hypothermia, lifejackets, and boating are crucial components of any good learn to swim program. While reviewing the program guide and skill sheets, there is no obvious reference to safety skills being taught in the LTS progression.

In the activities guide it states that “children need to be acclimated to the water” to participate in swim lessons. When asked about that, the employees will encourage a caregiver to bring the child to open recreational times and play with them. If a caregiver has reservations about getting into a pool or swimming, this requirement will perpetuate non swimming into a family culture. Instead, beginning level instructors should be prepared to handle children with little or no water experience.

The skill progression for stroke development is excellent. We definitely believe that there is a need to teach and have students master front, back and side skills (body position with floating, streamline, and kick). In addition to the competitive strokes it was obvious that students are learning the safety strokes (elementary back stroke and side stroke). The published level descriptions do not emphasize that these safety strokes are taught.

#### *Student Teacher Ratio:*

We would recommend no more than 5 students per instructor in the beginning levels (Minnow 1 & 2, Shark 1 & 2) and with the younger children (Minnow 3 & 4) for safety reasons. If possible, offering these classes with as few as 3 students provides for more attention per child. The Shark 3 & 4, because of age and ability of the children could be up to 8 students per instructor if the class length was adjusted. If the length stays at 30 minutes, it would not be wise to increase the ratio beyond 6 students. Caregivers need to perceive value and students need to learn.

During our observation, there were a few classes that had students who were clearly at different levels. This may be a result of combining levels due to low enrollment and / or the need to accommodate the caregiver and students. If a combination level class is being taught, the instructor must be capable of handling the different skills at each level, while still giving the students equal time. If the disparity is a result of the caregiver enrolling the child in the wrong level, the management staff should have the ability to move the child to another class. If an alternative does not exist, the caregivers need to know that their money will be refunded if a child is not enrolled correctly. The children who are enrolled correctly should not be penalized by having children in class with inappropriate skills.

#### *Use of space for lessons:*

Even in an ideally designed pool, depth and space may be a challenge. If the students can touch the bottom (or stand on a dock), that is a great place to start learning skills. As the student’s skills progress, they need a greater distance to travel and more depth. It is a disservice to a student to consistently teach them where they can touch the

bottom, since it can act as a crutch during their learning. The advanced Minnow and Shark classes should be consistently taught in the lanes, where the students will be challenged to swim a distance without the ability to touch the bottom. Having access to available space in the shallow end for the limited times when the students are learning a basic skill where consistent touching of the bottom is needed would be ideal, but not necessary.

As we observed lessons, it was clear that not all instructors had designated spaces where they consistently taught. We would recommend that lane and space dividers be used for all programs (swim lessons, wex, specialty classes, etc). Students and instructors need a designated home for their class, and recreational participants (not involved in programs) need to know what space is reserved for facility use. If the students know where to meet their teacher for class and the instructor knows where to stage his/her class the flow of the programs will transition better and limit the chaos.

#### *Need for Instructor Development:*

While watching lessons it was obvious that some instructors had more experience with teaching and class room management than others. This is a normal part of a swim program, but caregivers do not want to feel cheated by having a less qualified instructor. Some simple things can be done to give the observer a sense of equality between the instructors and provide for a better learning experience for the students.

- At a minimum all classes should be starting and ending on time with the equipment and class supplies readily available.
- Some general class guidelines need to be in place.
  - There should be a distinct beginning and ending to class, with the instructor picking up and delivering the students back to their caregiver.
  - Each instructor should know where they are teaching and which space is theirs.
  - Spaces should be clearly divided (length, width or section)
  - Students should not be touching their “neighbors”, as in, the other children in class.
  - Students should receive equal time from the instructor
  - Students should not be wearing masks, since it blocks their ability to exhale through their nose. Goggles are an excellent choice for learning.
- Depth of the water used for each level should reflect the skills being taught and the height of the students.
  - Adults need to learn where they can barely touch, but not where they must bend over to get into position.
  - Young children need to be challenged, but the shallow depth should not be a crutch where they can put down their legs.
  - Very young children (preschool) may need to be on a tot dock or the access stairs to provide safety and security as they begin their swim lesson journey.
- Equipment choices need to be appropriate for the skills being taught and the age of the user.
  - Kickboards are very difficult to control and balance for beginning students.

- Barbells assist in balance and can be used by all levels of swimmers, especially beginners.
- Instructors need to understand “why” they teach things is just as important as “how” they are teaching and “how” the student is doing.
  - The instructor’s body needs to be low in the water, facing the student, and making eye contact at all times. Hovering over them from behind is not as effective.
  - In general, an instructor should be engaged in a monologue constantly talking and offering feedback and instruction.
  - Instructors must touch the students and guide them through the skills. It is almost impossible to effectively teach swimming without “holding” a student and supporting them.
  - The energy and instructor gives will come back to them. Most instructors need to “amp up” the energy level with the students. Although a rowdy class can be subdued by a mellow instructor’s style.
- Appropriate progressions and skills need to be taught.
  - Climbing out is a skill that needs to be learned from an early age, instructors should limit assistance out of the pool
  - Face in the water, blowing bubbles
  - Floating, gliding, and kicking
  - Front, back, and side skills
  - Short distances done correctly make for successful practices
- Some skills can be time wasters instead of skill builders
  - How much jumping into the water is too much? Once or twice per student per class is enough
  - Swimming laps for “warm up”. Perfect practice makes perfect skills. Short distances, consistently done will help a child learn faster.

*Additional Program Ideas to Consider:*

Dividing Minnows into a *Preschool and Kinder* aged program may further accommodate age, body size and skills. While skills being taught may be the same, the dynamics of different sized children with different learning styles may be difficult for an instructor if there are 3 and 6 year olds in the same classes. Dividing based on age and skill of what is currently called Minnow 1 and 2 into beginning Preschool with ages of 3, 4 (and 5) and beginning Kinder age 5 and 6. Minnow 3 and 4 could be divided into Advanced Kinder age 5 and 6. There is not a need to change the names of the levels, but rather the age requirements with the skill levels.

Add in *Family & Friends (FF) Lessons*. This program is a customized class where a coordinating caregiver recruits the students to fill the class. The caregiver determines the instructor requested and the date(s) and times the students will meet. Tukwila can use this to fill off peak times and create a customized program. Pricing is more that group lessons, but less that private lessons. Classes have a minimum of 3 students creating a small group program priced less than private lessons.

*Importance of a strong Parent Child program:*

The PC program should be a well formulated and enticing program for caregivers of young children (age 6 months to 3 years). A charismatic instructor who is engaging and exciting will keep the caregivers returning with their young children. Much like a great WEX instructor is to a water fitness program, the PC instructor can generate a following for their levels. If a caregiver is “hooked” when their child is young, they will continue to participate and anxiously await their child’s “graduation” to the traditional learn to swim levels.

*Expansion of lesson program days and times:*

In reality, employees can make or break a successful lesson program. A strong PC instructor can get caregivers hooked and excited for their child’s learn to swim years. Teaching PS levels is quite a bit different than teaching level progression to an elementary school child. The instructors chosen to teach PS and beginning levels need to understand the FUNdamental skills as well as how young children learn. The mentoring leader needs to be able to critique how skills are taught, but also be able to demonstrate how children of different ages learn and therefore need to be taught.

We believe that the school year morning and early afternoon lessons could be expanded. PS levels and Home School lessons can be offered from 9:00 – 11:00am and 1:00 – 3:00pm and expanded as the program grows. Marketing these off peak times with program will add revenue to space that is available and un-used. In essence, by adding an instructor and using 1 shallow water space a new set of classes can be added.

We were also surprised that Saturday lessons were offered late in the morning (11am - 1pm). Our experiences at busy facilities with strong lesson programs are that lessons may be offered at any time between 8am and 2pm. We’ve seen these programs start with a few instructors teaching between 9am and 11am (plus a minimum of 1 lap lane for swimmers). As the program grew, classes filled, and wait lists needed to be accommodated, instructors were added at the same time. When these 2 hours were consistently filled, time was added in both directions. Ultimately, we have seen successful Saturday programs that had 6 instructors consistently teaching from 8am until 2pm. Of course, one group of instructors taught for the first 3 hours and near 11am a new group of employees came in to finish the second half of the program, so up to 12 qualified and competent instructors were needed.

Private, semi private, and FF lessons can fill any of the voids where space is available. It may be necessary to offer rewards and incentives to the employees who are available to teach these classes. Commonly we have seen a pay adjustment to equate to 1.5 times their hourly rate. The nature of customization may mean that these programs are not offered during the traditional group lesson time. As such, an instructor may be hopping in and out of the water with random breaks in their schedule. An organized and wise scheduler will do their best to keep lessons back to back for ease of transition with the instructor. In addition to Monday through Friday daytimes, both weekend days can be great for offering customized programs to the members and students.

*Best use of time and talent:*

Full time staff should not be assigned as regular instructors, unless specifically hired into that role. They should be part of the mentoring process until seasoned and qualified instructor(s) are developed within the current staff. Their role on the pool deck during programs should be to interact with the caregivers, provide an additional level of safety, trouble shoot unplanned problems and observe the classes. Again, they are orchestrating the process, but not directly involved with teaching the classes.

The current full time staff are great instructors with passion and expertise in their field. They should be mentoring and teaching the newer employees as well as, “passing the torch” of knowledge and skills, but in reality, they are expensive instructors from a program budget perspective. If they are teaching a repeatable and consistent process to new employees, it is worth having them as mentors, since they are growing the next generation of facility instructors.

*Safety concerns and spectators*

We observed the facility during their summer program, a time that may be busier than the rest of the year in regards to quantity of students and instructing staff. There was an adequate lifeguard ratio for the quantity of people in the pool, but we would recommend adding one more for additional safety. With 4 or more instructors, wex and lap swimming all going on at the same time it was busy for one guard. The instructors are typically responsible for their class, but realistically are focused on the individual student they are working with. Thus, many of the students are minimally attended to during lessons.

Students who were arriving for the next class or had a sibling currently taking class were not directed to a location off the deck edge. It was slightly nerve racking to observe little kids leaning over the edge and playing in the water while they waited. We don't know if the caregivers were watching and do not expect the lifeguards to be babysitters as part of their on deck rotation.

Spectators should not be on the deck during programs. There is a large gallery that will adequately provide seating and a view to all of the programs being offered. In addition, by removing all non-participants from the deck level, safety will be improved. Instructors should start and end their class at the gallery entrance, clearly signaling that they are in charge of the student's safety until the student is returned to the caregiver.

**LTS Recommendations:**

- Consider on-line registration (Rec1.com) when upgrading the current registration system.
- Adjust minutes of class based on skills and levels
  - PC 25 – 35 minutes
  - Adult 25 – 35 minutes
  - Beginning levels (Level 1 & 2) 25 – 35 minutes
  - Middle levels (Level 3 & 4) 35 – 45 minutes
  - Advanced levels and specialty 45 – 55 minutes

- Make Saturday sessions a minimum of 6 classes.
  - Have Saturdays on a unique session schedule
  - Or have 1 Saturday session per 2 MW or TR sessions
  - Or have Saturday sessions that overlap (every 4 weeks a new session starts, but the previous one has not ended.) This will require good calendar management.
- Review dividing Minnows into PS and Kinder ages
- Add in Family & Friends Lessons
- Publish dates and times of specialty classes (PC, Adult, etc.)
- Add the safety topics covered in each level to their class description in the program guide.
- Assign each instructor a specific teaching space per lesson
  - Move Shark 3 & 4 to lanes
  - Utilize lane and space dividers during programs
  - Reserve end lanes for lessons (middle lanes for laps or teams)
- Continue the strong mentoring program with the FT staff in the lead role. Utilize senior staff to continue the momentum and level of employees who have taught consistently and have the ability and desire to be mentors.
- Provide an additional lifeguard when 4 or more classes are being taught simultaneously
- Remove the benches on the pool deck parallel to the WLR, thus eliminating spectator space at deck level
- Have instructor's start and end classes near the gallery entrance
- Provide instructor development (see WSI section)
- Remove the requirement for comfort in the water in order to participate in swim lessons.
- Purchase a tot dock for preschool lessons.
- Create a formal swim screening process to ensure children are enrolled in the correct class.
  - Provide refunds to children not enrolled correctly who cannot be accommodated in another class
- Create an evaluation system for caregivers to evaluate their child's instructor.
  - Utilize e-readers and translation technology to overcome the language and communication barrier.
- When reporting attendance for swim lessons and other programs, one participant should be counted as if s/he had attended every class offered for that session. For instances, if a student is going to attend 8 Saturday classes, they would be counted 8 times.

## **Special Programs and Partnerships**

Special Programs are those programs and activities that do not fit within the traditional categories of swim lessons, water fitness, and life safety training but have an ongoing presence within the schedule. At Tukwila, some examples would be the single gender swims, High School PE program, and Teen night. Each of these target markets to a specific group. The advantage of target marketing is that it can be a useful way of filling slower times, marketing to a group that may otherwise not consider using the facility, and become a fabulous method of word of mouth advertising to generate program and membership growth.

Looking at the three programs listed above, it is clear that each is very unique. The single gender swim (discussed previously) markets to a specific group that may include people with social and religious customs, body image issues or personal preference. The Teen night program is a fabulous way to meet the programming needs of the “Tweeners” in the community. Recreational professionals have long been challenged with providing a service to this age group while having adequate attendance to justify keeping the program. The High School PE program can be a unique way to draw in this age group. The class itself can give students an alternative to traditional PE programs, plus it can set the stage for a healthy active lifestyle. The students have the exposure that the pool is not only for lap swimming, but rather recreation as well. The instructors can recruit future employees for the facility, and the students have a preview of what employment would be like at the facility.

Other special programs that may be offered include Scuba, boating safety, kayaking, and diving. In addition, partnerships do exist with camps, foundations, and special interests. Unless a specialty instructor exists on staff, these become partnership opportunities for the agency. The unique benefit of a partnership is that associated agencies typically provide the advertising and marketing to their members, while offering their services to the facility and its’ members. Tukwila’s members will benefit from the services provided through these partnerships.

One consideration with partnership, specialty programs and special interest rentals is the amount of pool space needed and when it is needed. Utilizing a partnership and having it infringe of valuable pool space may not be the wisest use of public funds and buildings. On the contrary, if a program can be offered during a low peak time, filling the space and offering the service through a partnership is a wise choice.

Partnership opportunities can be developed with preschool and children’s groups for lessons or PE style programs. Networking with the Home School parents, Parent’s Day Out programs, and local childcares may offer a way to develop and fill the lesson program during off peak times. The current partnership with the school district is setting a nationwide example. Having a grant writer within the management team is nearly unheard of in the aquatics industry. The programs being implemented with the grant and the additional funding source are precedent setting.

On the opposite end of the age spectrum is marketing and partnering with the retirement and active adult communities. Determining when classes can be offered or communicating when pool space is available may be all their recreation programmer needs to partner with Tukwila. Many active adult agencies have the ability to bring to student to a program. Partnering with them and offering water time (fitness classes or exercise space) may help both the Tukwila pool and their agency.

As stated above, the pool management team must be able to balance the needs of the members, students and guests, with the goals of the agency, all while being a prudent steward of the tax payer's dollars. This delicate balance is ever present with partner situations. Both partner's needs are weighed and balanced with the members, students and guests desires.

### **Special Programs and Partnership Recommendations:**

- Continue current special programs
- Target market and advertise special program
- Cross market special programs
  - Parent's Night Out is in the rec section of brochure, but not the pool section (p 10 winter brochure)
  - List the Pool Teen nights in the teen section of brochure
- Utilize off peak times and continue to partner with specialty programs
  - Wounded Warrior
  - Summer Camps
- Adjust pool space use to limit partner and specialty programs
  - Ensure 1 lane is available for lap swimming and/or vertical exercise
  - Ensure space is available for shallow water fitness
- Verify rental fees for pool space covers cost (see space hour cost)
  - adjust rental fees if needed
  - determine if long term contracts with discounted fees is appropriate

## **Special Events**

Special Events (SE) can be something out of the ordinary schedule, a significant event at the facility, or the beginning of an ongoing program. Depending upon the event itself, there may be associated costs that are not recouped and the event may be offered as a public service or community event. All events, no matter how big or small, require adequate planning, staffing, supplies, and evaluation. In a membership based facility, free (or reduced fee) special events are typically a perk of being a member. We recommend a minimum of one major family event per quarter and monthly themed events around holidays and seasonal activities.

In addition to having water based activities, this is an excellent time to hand out educational material around a theme (not necessarily water related) to caregivers and guests. Utilizing other facility space (deck, bleachers, lobby, offices) for dry land stations can keep participants engaged without needing to be in the water for the entire event. Dry activity stations we've observed during SE at other facilities have included coloring and/or art activities, bean bag toss or similar carnival activities, snacks, reading stories, related videos, and face painting.

SE can have a higher entrance fee than regular daily attendance, but the expectation of the participant is that these events will be more than an Open Recreation activity. When starting SE, it is imperative to make them repeatable, even if the intent of the event is that it is only happening one time. Having organized files and paper / computer trails for event planning will make another event that much easier. Each event should be well organized and have enough details that a person who had not attended the event in the past could execute it in the future. The idea behind complete organization is that successful SE should be repeated and unsuccessful ones should be evaluated to improve it in the future.

Marketing and advertising for these events needs to be multi layered. When possible, we recommend a radio blitz for all major events. At a minimum, SE need to be published in the Activity Guide and flyers need to be posted around the facility. All current members, guests and students need to be aware of the events. In addition, mini flyers (4 to a page) should be produced for all program participants and be available at the information desk. When possible, partnering agencies should be assisting with advertising as well. Target marketing should be evaluated for each event.

SE can be offered as partnerships with other agencies. For instance, college students may need service learning credits and can plan, participate or facilitate parts of the event. Businesses may want branding or sponsorship opportunities and can offer an effective partnership during the planning and execution of the event. Service groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc) may find that partnering with the SE is a fabulous way to create name recognition for both agencies in the community. To gain a sponsor, you must articulate the specific benefits that the sponsor will see from the partnership.

### *Current SE at Tukwila:*

- April Pool's Day and Ribbon Cutting Event
- Splash Into Summer – \$1 kick off to the summer (June 22)
  - A great way to educate the guests about summer plans and programs
  - Discounted admission will entice people to try out the pool
- Scout Swim Day - \$5 fee to work on merit badges or insignia (July 20)
  - This is a fantastic idea and event that had a beautiful flyer
  - We've presumed that the local BSA and GSUSA councils were contacted to cross advertise this program
  - We've presumed that summer camp dates were checked to ensure that it was not a conflict for the majority of units
- Floating Movie Night - \$2 fee (August 31)
  - Great price point per individual
- Teen Late Night – Fridays (repeat)
  - Coordination with TCC and van rides should encourage Teens to participate
- 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash – October 19
  - Activity Guide only has the date with no additional information (cost, time, activities at the event). The W's are not included in the print material
- Pumpkin Plunge – \$5 and you keep a pumpkin (October 25)
  - What other activities are included?

### **Special Event Recommendations:**

- Minimum of 1 major family event per quarter
  - Spooky Splash / Pumpkin Plunge
  - In the Water Egg Hunt
  - April Pool's Day
- Monthly and holiday theme activities (For example....)
  - Polar Plunge
  - Heart Healthy
  - Tools for Schools (school supplies for entry)
  - Soggy Doggy Days
  - Lazy Laps B4 Naps
  - Canned Swim (bring cans for the food bank instead of entry fee)
  - Turkey Trot
  - Snowball Fight
- Marketing and advertising to the community (beyond internal)

## **Teams and Special Interest Rentals**

In general, swim teams demand a high number of lanes during primary and peak times. This can be a very good way to make a pool look filled and busy, but may be detrimental to the other activities that could be filling the same time at a higher rate of return. It is important to consider what other activities can be filling the space and how much revenue those other activities will provide. On the contrary, based on the pool schedules provided to us, special interest rentals may be utilizing off peak and under-utilized times.

Contract limitations may prohibit other activities from taking place during team meets, and it may be wise to limit program overlap. During regular practices the pool should still offer 1 lap lane for swimming. If possible 1 lane should be available for vertical exercise, although looking at past and perceived future use may be a consideration when reducing the lane rentals. The pools shallow section can remain available for lessons and open recreation.

The pool is entirely blocked for special interest rentals from 1pm – 3pm (M-F) and 8am – 11am (Sa – Su). In addition, 3pm – 7pm is primarily blocked with team practice. A few lanes are reserved for swim lessons. This seems like an excessive amount of space being given to special interest groups. A detailed review of the needs and the wants of these groups is necessary. They may want 4 to 6 lanes, but need only 3 or 4. It is imperative that discussions happen to maintain a positive partnership, without infringing upon the members, guests and students use of the pool.

### **Rental Recommendations:**

- Maximize rental and special use during off peak times
  - early mornings
  - late evenings
  - early afternoon
- Verify lane use needs for all rentals
  - How many participants per lane
  - Level of skill per group
- Provide a minimum of 1 lane for lap swimming
- If possible, add 1 lane for vertical exercise
- Provide a minimum of 1 shallow space for water fitness
- Create a priority of use statements
  - Prioritize space for members
  - Prioritize space for Tukwila programs

## **Recommendations: Facility Layout and Changes**

Remove the benches from the wall adjacent to the WLR

- Move all spectators to the gallery
- Have all lessons instructors start and end class near the gallery where they can pick up / drop off their students

Move all instructional equipment to the wall adjacent to the WLR

- Currently it is limiting the walkway and blocking the mural
- Equipment storage is also blocking the depth markers

Rearrange the classroom / storage / break room and Amy's office

- Build higher shelves above head height to store items not commonly needed
- Get as much "stuff" off the floor and lower walls as possible
- Maximize storage to provide as much table space and work space for employees
- Maximize space in Amy's office
  - Add above head height shelves for storage of items not commonly used
  - Provide more work space and office space / maximize office space

Folding table in the wheelchair space on the gallery floor needs to be bungeed to the wall or moved where it cannot fall over

Lane lines needed to be tighter (for safety)

Equipment Purchases

- Fanny packs and supplies for all lifeguards
- Provide lane speed signs to indicate slow, medium, fast (see below for coloring and branding)
- Elevated Guard Stand (minimum of 6 foot for chair height)
  - We recommend one for each long side of the pool
- Purchase and install more sound panels
  - Can be aesthetically pleasing by using the new branding colors
  - Can be larger sized panels as well

Limit Foot traffic on the pool deck:

- Create a spectator area
- Swim lesson caregivers should observe from the gallery
- If necessary during open recreation, caregivers may be on the pool deck with no street shoes
- Partition a dry pathway (with shoes) to and from the gallery
  - Mark it with shoe prints painted on the pathway
- Partition a wet pathway to and from the pool and locker rooms
  - Mark it with foot prints painted on the pathways

## **Recommendations: Marketing, Branding & Advertising**

### Develop and Implement a Marketing and Advertising Plan

- Review the cost of hiring a marketing person / firm
  - Create a RFQ
  - Create a metric for evaluation of successful marketing
  - Market and advertise the pool as if it was a private company
- Create target marketing
  - Special events
  - Special programs
  - Memberships and membership promotions
  - You are in the business of saving lives. Your focus is on water education that leads to recreation. How can this be communicated to the public?
  - Promote wellness for all ages
- Become a visible presence at all community events
  - Pass out free passes
  - Public expects to see you at events
- Utilize TPAC and STP members
  - promote scholarship program
  - fundraise for scholarship program
  - Be the positive voice for the pool

### Continue to Brand the Metropolitan Parks District

- Color scheme of lobby at Tukwila Pool has been redone. Some signage has been replaced. As the pool equipment needs to be replaced, change the colors to match the new brand.
  - Current colors on the pool deck reflect the teams that practice at pool. Not the Tukwila MPD
- Create a Pool Mascot
  - Purchase the water costume so the Mascot can be in the pool at SE
  - Mascot can be “the face” of Tukwila MPD at marketing events
  - Pay the employees double time to be in the Mascot (it is not an easy job!)

## **Recommendations: Employees, Guests and Members**

Provide wi-fi in the facility (gallery and lobby)

Ensure that the guard rotation back and forth to the front desk includes going through the locker room

- Even if the same gendered employee just walked through on their way from the desk, it is wise to have the lifeguard re-walk through on their way back to the desk
- Check for safety hazards (first aid emergencies, guest problems)
- Check for custodial issues
  - Paper towel dispenser
  - Toilet paper dispenser
  - Hair in the sink
  - Gunk in the drains
  - Toilets that need to be flushed
  - Broom brigade on deck consistently
- Provide disposable gloves and racks in bath rooms and locker rooms
  - Hang on wall near / above the sinks
  - When lifeguards rotate through, they can glove up and clean the “gunk” without needing to go to the custodial storage area.

Create an evaluations system for members, guests, and students

- Continue to utilize the Comment Box
  - Publish commonly asked questions, answers, and comments
  - Place issues and staff responses in a visible location (clipboard near the comment box)
- Create a program evaluation form for LTS, WEX, and specialty programs
  - Utilize a translation system (e-reader) to ensure language barrier is surpassed

Fill the vacant ¾ time position.

- Head Lifeguard or Lead Manager
- Weekend and evening responsibilities
- Can be mentored into more responsibilities

Accurately document time associated with MPD projects and requests. These time logs can be used for matching grants. In addition, those requesting information need to know how much time was needed to obtain information and meet the request.

- Employees need to document time associated with public request for information and approximate value of the request
- Board members should be documenting time associated with service
- Volunteers need to document service and time dedicated to projects

Consider hiring a custodial maintenance position

## **Review of Job Descriptions for Employees**

The job descriptions we reviewed for the employees were acceptable and meet national standards. We have a few suggestions to make them even better. Adding specific references to the Washington Administrative Code and adding the specific WAC citation would strengthen the pool's job descriptions. This tactic could be done for the lifeguards, pool operators and management staff at the pool. A couple of examples for citing the code in the job descriptions follow.

### For Lifeguards:

- WAC 246-260-131 (7 (b)) requires a lifeguard to guard assigned pool users and provide a rescue response time of thirty seconds or less.
- WAC 246-260-131 (7 (f)) requires a lifeguard to wear a distinguishing suit/uniform and carry a whistle or equivalent signaling device.

### For Pump Room Operators:

- WAC 246-260-131 (7(e)) the pool operators shall assure the water treatment components of each WRF are functioning to protect health, safety and water quality.

### For Pool Managers:

- WAC 246-260-131 (9(a)) The pool manager shall ensure that pool personnel required by subsection (6) of this section have skills necessary for their duties, obtained by training and certification specified in Table 131.1 in Appendix B, or equivalent.
- WAC 246-260-131 (9(b)) The pool manager shall keep a copy at the WRF of each currently valid certification required for pool personnel.
- WAC 246-260-131 (9 (c)) The pool manager shall ensure safety-monitoring personnel obtain continuing education needed to maintain lifeguarding skills and maintain valid certifications required by this subsection.

These examples are not complete. They were meant to provide an example for you to look closely at the code and see what items should be captured for each job description. Amending the job descriptions to include the codes that specifically apply to these employees would provide a strong tie to the standard of care that is required by the state and could provide you with a better defense if a law suit is filed against the city or the MPD.

## **Cost Review to Privatize Services for Current Support Services**

The Parks & Recreation department has put forth a tremendous effort to document the necessary City support services that are utilized to operate the pool for the MPD. These support services include Recreation and Aquatic Support Services, Financial Management, Human Resources, Administrative Services, Information Technology, and Pool Maintenance Operations as outlined in the Pool Operations 101 document prepared by Rick Still.

Are the support services provided by the City worth the \$79.2K budgeted for 2014? Given the extensive outline in the Pool Operations 101 document, you may be hard pressed to equate the true value using private services. It is presumed that contracting for these services would require different companies for each category. Is it realistic to expect a competent pool management company to provide complete IT, phone and technology services? Along the same lines, is it possible for a custodial maintenance service to adequately provide human resource, payroll and accounting services?

Given the City's decade of experience operating the pool and the associated support services being provided, the task of privatizing all of the support services is unrealistic. The City provides a unified government approach with combined services. Multiple private firms providing support services may not understand the big picture including the requirements that City services are already aware of, like public disclosure and public records requests. The facility manager would ultimately be tasked with ensuring that the negotiated contracts are being executed correctly.

## **4P's of Marketing**

Our recommendations include implementing a comprehensive marketing plan that specifically focuses on the 4P's of marketing: product, place, price, & promotion. There are a few of these that are not going to change. Place is here to stay. Since the MPD made the decision to renovate, maintain and improve the facility, there is no need to look at relocating services. As far as product goes, there can be some changes to meet the changing needs of the community, but in general your product will remain the same. The message is clear, pools provides a community with a healthy choice –water safety, swim lessons, exercise and recreation.

Our review of price leads us to believe that your basic pricing structure is adequate. We definitely recommend a membership promotion with a price point that causes people to think you are crazy! If the first time works well, implementing an annual discount month would be wise. Reviewing the rental schedules and rental fee would be one area to address regarding price. Does the fee cover the expense? If it does, could you change your revenue source by adjusting team and special use rentals?

We suggest using an enterprise fund to create better budget incentives that will allow for a greater focus on revenue generation and cost controls. The advertising formula we recommend is from national conferences and the commercial recreation literature. It states that 10-30% of the facilities projected revenue should be spent on marketing, promotion and advertising. For instance, if you plan on making \$100,000 in revenue you should be allocating up to \$30,000 for marketing and advertising. A budget item for marketing and advertising needs to be approved. Spending money on multimedia advertising (radio, print, and web) and evaluating a return on investment from this effort should be quantified so you can gauge your successes and identify any failures. Putting more effort in selling memberships at a drastically reduced price during specific sales campaigns would create the best return for the operation.

## **Metropolitan Parks District Model of Governance Comparison**

### **Definition of Governance Styles**

There are three types and a combination of governance styles: Public, non-profit and for-profit operations or a combination of these in the form of a public-private partnership. These three types all deliver recreational services, but vary based on their philosophical orientation.

Publicly operated parks and recreation services are based on providing these services for all citizens for the benefit of the community as a whole and in the interest of the public good. Historically, swimming pools operated by the public sector are typically subsidized at fifty percent of their operational budget, through the municipal government's general fund. In reality, it is a swinging pendulum of support between forty and sixty percent. The subsidy is justified by the governing body (1) by ensuring that prices are accessible for most of the citizens, (2) to specifically provide needed services for the disadvantage in terms of income, ethnicity, age (youth & elderly) and for individuals with disabilities at reduced rates and (3) through societal values in terms of increased public safety through learn to swim programs and their direct and indirect abilities to reduce drowning rates within a community. The greatest advantage of publicly operated swimming pools is the commitment by the public sector to provide the services to all for the common good. The fact that the citizens share some of the burden of the costs associated with its operation validates this purpose further. Publicly operated pools maintain a high standard of care in terms of water quality and code compliance, crucial to the health and safety of an aquatic operation.

Non-profits have a similar purpose related to the common good, although not for an entire community, but for the good of the individuals that are attracted to the non-profits altruistic purposes. "The exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3) are charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, and preventing cruelty to children or animals (IRS, retrieved Sept 9, 2013, <http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations/Exempt-Purposes-Internal-Revenue-Code-Section-501%28c%29%283%29>)." Stevens (2010) describes non-profits as "community based organizations that provide recreation services, mainly for children and youth. Founded as private, non-profit organizations beginning around the mid- 1800's to meet social service needs. Social services are activities and programs designed to promote people's social well-being, and they are provided by philanthropic organizations (p 30)."

A for-profit or commercial recreation business is defined in the textbook Introduction to Commercial Recreation and Tourism as "The provision of recreation related products or services by private enterprises for a fee, with the long term intent of being profitable (Crossley, Jamieson & Brayley, 2007, p 8)." Privately owned for-profit businesses make money by specifically catering their recreation goods and services to a target market that has the ability to pay fair market prices in a competitive system (Stevens, 2010).

In the recent past, there has been a movement to commercialized public recreation. There are very few examples of successful aquatic operations in this region under this philosophical orientation. The two closest aquatic venues which have consistently shown promise as commercialized public recreation operations are The Sequim Aquatic Recreation Center and Renton's Henry Moses Aquatic Center.

The Sequim Aquatic Recreation Center, ran by the Clallam County Park and Recreation District, has been one of the few year-round indoor aquatic operations to run without any public subsidy for their complete operations. The building was originally built with a \$2.8 million general obligation bond and was subsidized seven of its first eight years of operation before becoming a complete tax free operation. Today, the 30,000 square foot multipurpose aquatic recreation center generates approximately \$900K per year from both admissions/memberships and per capita spending.

Renton built the Henry Moses Aquatic Center as a full scale community based outdoor waterpark with a general obligation bond that funded its construction. Over the past decade, it has been able to generate the necessary revenue to covers it seasonal operation costs.

A number of things combine to make both these aquatic operations profitable:

- their physical location in their communities
- the specific demographics of the community, which are significant factors of the people buying the services
- large regional draw to their facilities
- the uniqueness of their offerings
- membership based with higher than average prices and affluent users
- extensive marketing efforts over time

Public-private partnerships have been used to operate a number of pools in the region. The private partner could be a for-profit commercial recreation business or a non-profit entity. There are a few examples of public-private partnerships in this region that municipal governments have used to operate the swimming pools within their community. A couple of examples are:

- the non-profit Northwest Center operated Mercer Island's Mary Waite Pool
- the Aquatic Management Group's operation of Mount Rainer Pool in partnership with the Des Moines Pool Metro Park District and the Kent Meridian Pool in partnership with the City of Kent.

There are examples of municipal pools being operated by the local YMCA under a partnership agreement in the Northwest, but none that we are familiar with in the King County area. The Eastmont Pool in Wenatchee, WA, the Twin Falls, Idaho and the West Boise YMCA are all municipally owned aquatic facilities that are operated by the YMCA. The West Boise YMCA pool-wise is equal in size to the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center and the Y does an exceptional job of operating the venue.

## **Advantages & Disadvantages of Each Style**

The advantages of an aquatic facility being operated under the public recreation philosophical orientation is that a community pool should be committed to serve the public good and to ensure that services are accessible to everyone in the community. Public recreation services and facilities, in general:

- reduce juvenile delinquency
- build community
- reduce crime rates
- increase property values
- attract residence and businesses
- provide physical, social and psychological benefits to individual community members that choose to use the services

All of these taken as a whole add to the quality of life within a community, important to the common good. Most municipal governments are financially stable and are the revenue source that provides the needed funds to keep the operation viable.

When a public agency provides a pool to serve all citizens for the common good it typically chooses to subsidize the operation through the collection of tax revenue. It then ensures that fees are set at a level that the public has the ability to pay. Obviously there will be a tax burden on the owners of property within the district. The mill rate established for the Tukwila MPD is 15 cents per \$1000, which is a very reasonable burden on the property owners within the district, given the pool's current level of service. The mill rate is less compared to the other MPD rates we have recently reviewed.

Tukwila has 24.3% of the population below the poverty line (STP via QuickFacts). Some consideration should be given to the agency offering additional free or reduced price programming based on income levels, age (youth & seniors) or other demographic factors. Tukwila should continue to expand the scholarship program to show good will, given this level of poverty and the lower income levels within the community. When the Sequim Aquatic Recreation Center initially opened they offered three hours a week of free swims for those in the community who may not have the ability to pay admission rates. This is typically something private firms would not consider doing. Addressing the financially disadvantaged in a community would be more readily embraced by municipal services or a non-profit's mission than a for-profit commercial entity.

Government entities are not known for their efficiencies. The salaries and benefits paid to their employees may be more than a non-profit or for-profit entity. Unionized municipal employees have bargaining units that create financial obligations that can be higher than their non-unionized counterparts in other agencies or companies. The non-profit and for-profit entities that don't have union obligations are more mobile and typically have less labor costs per hour of their operational budget.

Government budgeting can come with restrictions. Starting new programs that were not planned in the current fiscal year may be deferred until the following year as a result of needing proper line item allocation. In essence, requests for new revenue generating

programming cannot be started until they are adequately budgeted and properly accounted for. Although, government budgeting has started to change to allow for new kinds of accounts. The use of enterprise funds provides good accountability but encourages more entrepreneurial efforts and looks at a return on investment similar to the private sector.

Government entities typically spend every dime provided the unit by line item during a fiscal year, particularly where an ending fund balance is not allowed to roll forward to become the starting balance. There is no incentive to create savings per line item or little incentive to increase revenue to off-set expenses. Allowing ending fund balances to roll forward to be added to beginning balances creates greater incentives for the budget to be managed in a way that address this common pitfall of traditional government financial management.

Taking financial risks is not looked upon as a wise decision in municipal government operations for good reason. Should public employees gamble with the tax payer's money? Most would say yes only if the gamble was guaranteed to pay off every time. But, what happens if it doesn't? The loss of the public's trust is so critical that government employees make conservative decisions that have little to no risk. Add to the conservatism with the attitudes of "we have always done it this way" and "if it's not broken, don't fix it". This combination is more prevalent in government settings, consistently setting them up to limit change.

There are a number of non-profits that have rich backgrounds in running swimming pools for their constituents. The Salvation Army, YMCA and YWCA have operated swimming pools for decades in their associations. The YMCA operates more swimming pools and aquatic facilities than any other single entity in the United States. The Y has their own national aquatic certification programs: lifeguarding, learn to swim and pool operations (Pool Operator on Location). Their certification programs are recognized by most state aquatic codes and are less expensive in terms of cost of certification to the participant and the organizations sponsoring the trainings. As with any large organization there is a spectrum of quality within the operations. We have seen exceptionally operated aquatic programs and horribly managed aquatic venues within the YMCA.

### **Comparison of Parallel Communities with Each Style**

This section of the report provides a comparison of how some of the forward thrust pools have been operated since they were transferred from King County to the adjacent communities. It may be helpful to understand the various routes that have been taken and the successes and failures along the way, particularly if the MPD plans on making a change in how the pools are operated.

Mount Rainer Pool was operated initially by the City of Des Moines after the transfer from King County. They provided minimal upgrades during the time they initially operated it. City staff managed the operation and day to day supervision responsibilities. Aquatic Management Group was contracted by the City to operate the

pool until the time the City decided to step away financially. With voter approval the pool is now supported by the Des Moines Pool MPD. Through the MPD, financial support has been provided to continue to operate the pool and AMG has maintained the contract. Although the pool has remained open, we are directly aware that the pool has been operated or maintained below the standard of care in the aquatic industry. Various operators of this pool have failed to meet both federal and state codes in a number of ways. This fact is one of the reasons we would caution the MPD commissioners when considering an alternative contract to operate the Tukwila Pool.

Mary Waite Pool on Mercer Island has been operated by both non-profit and for-profit entities with an annual financial subsidy of \$100,000 from the City of Mercer Island. This subsidy ensures that the pool continued to provide services after the transfer from King County to the School District. The city has provided no policy or management oversight in the pool's operation, only the financial assistance since the transfer. We have done three separate studies over the past decade for the City of Mercer Island, are familiar with the pool, and know at least two of the previous operators. With over 50 competitive events a year scheduled at Mary Waite prior to the transfer, we are not surprised that a privately held competitive swim club is operating this pool today. Mary Waite as it is currently operated is more of a competitive venue than a community pool.

Affluent communities tend to have more success with private-public partnerships. This may be one reason why a private competitive club is successfully operating the pool on Mercer Island. The mean income in Mercer Island is over twice the state's mean and the poverty level is 2.7% of the city's population (STP QuickFacts). There has been a change of pool operators twice in ten years. Each time generating news articles surrounding the pool's uncertain future. If the pool was being operated by an MPD or some form of municipal government this press would have been directed to a board of commissioners. Tukwila's commissioners should note that finding long-term committed third party operators may be a challenge.

Kent's forward thrust pool functions similar to Mercer Island's. The City of Kent provides \$100,000 or more as a subsidy to the pool operator. AMG operates both Des Moines' and Kent's pools. We are not familiar with the operation at Kent, but we are with Mount Rainer Pool. We would expect to find similar issues and concerns to those we found in Des Moines.

A private for-profit service that would contract to operate the pool may choose not to incur all of the fixed and variable costs to operate, and in some cases may even side step the essential support services to save costs. If a private firm needed essential services, they may be able to obtain them through outsourcing. Financially this may provide some savings, but it is hard to quantify. If something essential was by-passed to save money, it could create a greater exposure in terms of risk for the MPD.

Let's set a possible scenario of a private firm operating the pool and creating a contractual savings for the MPD of \$200K annually. We would recommend looking closely at the level of service and the support services. It is important to analyze what

would be reduced for cost saving in the short run and if it is possible to maintain that reduction over the long term. This may become short term savings for a limited time. During the pre-contract analysis, it is imperative that future services be parallel to the services currently provided, if that is the expectation of the MPD. Asking some hard questions of the potential private operator should include:

- If the information desk is staffed during all hours of operation?
- What level of programming is provided?
- What is the level of lifeguard services during all times of use?
- Will there be a reduction in hours of operation or services that is not in the best interest of the community?

You should scrutinize the pools that are ran by a private for-profit company because you may be making compromises to safety or the level of service that is counter to the role of the MPD. Professionally, we haven't seen a commercial firm locally that would ensure excellent customer service, great aquatic programming and safe-code compliant aquatic operations. We do not know of a single commercial firm that we would highly recommend as a pool operator in this region. It should be noted that the private management companies operating Kent, Mt. Rainer and Mary Waite pools are paying the least amount per hour for the lifeguards that are employed by them, ultimately creating a significant savings over the 12 months of the operations.

## **Executive Director**

### **The Role of an Executive Director**

We feel that an Executive Director would be essential if the MPD wasn't currently tied to the City as the operator. S/he would interface between the MPD board and the pool's operator or would directly operate the pool if it were independently run by the district. "Doing the bidding of the MPD board" was mentioned several times to us during our visit as the Executive Director's purpose and primary role. Specifically, the Executive Director would be preparing the budget for the commissioner's approval. S/he would serve as a resource to the Park Board while implementing its policies and managing the daily operations of the District. The Executive Director also provides leadership to the operation, its associated employees and/or contractors.

### **Job Description of ED**

Two examples of job descriptions for parks and recreation executive directors were reviewed, from separate departments. Vernon Hills Park District and Champaign Park District have been visible in the Parks and Recreation Management Textbooks used in accredit Recreation degree programs. They have been inserted for your consideration. The indented text is from the current post for an executive director for the Champaign Park District (Illinois):

The Executive Director serves as a resource to the Park Board while implementing its policies and managing the daily operations of the District. The Executive Director also provides leadership to 70 full-time and over 400 part-time and/or seasonal employees.

After soliciting input from community representatives, affiliates, staff and the community at large, the Board is seeking a visionary executive who will lead the district into the future. Further information will be available on the website of the district.

Candidates should possess a Bachelor's Degree in Parks and Recreation, Business, Public Administration or a related field. A Master's Degree in Public or Business Administration, Park and Recreation Administration or related advanced degree is preferred. In addition, a minimum of 10 years of experience in progressively responsible supervisory positions is desired.

The salary, based on qualifications and experience, will be in the \$115,000 to \$125,000 range.

Interested parties are encouraged to apply online at <http://www.ecragroup.com/active-searches>, the website for Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA).

Questions should be directed to HYA at [hya@ecragroup.com](mailto:hya@ecragroup.com) or by calling 847-318-0072.

The Champaign Park District is an equal opportunity employer.

(Acquired 9/28/2013 from  
<http://careercenter.nrpa.org/jobs/?keywords=Executive+Director#/detail/5707106/1,false>  
)

The complete job description for the Vernon Hills Park District is attached for your review as well. (Acquired 9/29/2013 from  
<http://www.vhparkdistrict.org/general/documents/ExecutiveDirector.pdf>)

## **VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT Job Description**

**Title: Executive Director**

**FLSA Classification: Exempt**

**Immediate Supervisor: Board of Commissioners**

### **SUMMARY**

The Executive Director of the Park District (Director) is appointed by the Board of Park Commissioners (Board) and is responsible for carrying out policies adopted by the Board. The Director is the medium of communication between the employees and the Board. The Director is responsible for monitoring financial administration, new and ongoing programming, planning and development and community relations.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

Candidate must be a graduate from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor's Degree in Parks and Recreation, Leisure Studies, Administration or a related field. A Master's Degree is preferred. Minimum ten years of administrative experience within the parks and recreation environment is required. Professional certification (CPRP) is required.

### **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Essential Job Functions**

1. Agency Administration
  - a. Implement Board decisions and policies.
  - b. Communicate with Board members regularly on District matters.
  - c. Establish and maintain relationships with other agencies and District employees.
  - d. Serve as Board Secretary and the Local Election Official
2. Financial Administration
  - a. Maintain fiscal control of the District's finances.
  - b. Coordinate the preparation of the annual budget and levy.
3. Personnel Management
  - a. Recruit, employ and aid in the training and evaluation of all full time employees.
  - b. Revise personnel policies and job descriptions as needed.
  - c. Promote and provide staff training.
4. Public Relations
  - a. Coordinate and direct the District's public relations program.
  - b. Ensure that participants' concerns and inquires are handled appropriately.
  - c. Act as representative for the Park District as needed.

- d. Develop and maintain effective relationships with internal and external customers through oral and written communications. Respond to internal and external phone calls, e-mails, comments and suggestions in a timely manner. Promote District to patrons, guests and staff.
- 5. Parks and Facility Planning and Development
  - a. Initiate and oversee the execution of the District's Park and Recreation Master Plan.
  - b. Work with architects, landscape architects, and planners as necessary.
  - c. Coordinate plan approvals with the Village of Vernon Hills.
  - d. Prepare bid documents as necessary.
  - e. Oversee parks and facility construction/renovations.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 1. Must work closely with Park Board Commissioners, co-workers, other governmental representatives, and the general public.
- 2. Experiences ongoing concerns for all safety and liability issues.
- 3. Required to work occasional evenings and weekends.
- 4. Work with other people under stressful situations from time to time.
- 5. May feel added pressure from being held responsible for the quality of programs and services.
- 6. If offered the position, the applicant will be required to complete the District's Employment Application and successfully pass a physical examination, drug screening and criminal conviction background check.

**PHYSIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 1. Work is mostly sedentary and at a desk or at computer terminal. Lifting is occasional, usually 30 pounds or less.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 1. Most work is performed indoors in an office environment, but may be exposed to the elements when working with contractors at construction sites, driving to meetings or when assisting with outdoor functions or programs.

**COGNITIVE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 1. Must be aware of the safety and liability considerations of the District operations. **This is not necessarily an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, skills, duties, requirements and working conditions associated with the job. While this is intended to be an accurate reflection of the current job, management reserves the right to revise the job when circumstances change; e.g., emergencies, deadlines, personnel changes, workload and technological development, etc.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature Date  
03/08

## **Qualifications of an Ideal Candidate for ED**

We believe that the qualifications for the ideal candidate should be the following:

- A degree in Parks and Recreation from a program accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association. A graduate degree in Recreation, Business or Public Administration would be highly desirable.
- Currently certified as a Park and Recreation Professional through the National Recreation and Park Association
- In the capacity for the role specifically related to swimming pools, the individual should be certified as an Aquatic Facility Operator from the National Recreation and Park Association.
- Minimum of ten years of progressive experience that relates to the operations of a special district.
- Knowledge of public budgeting and financing
- Successful operational experience in commercialized public recreation would be essential. The ideal candidate would have a grasp of the four P's of marketing and how to effectively apply them in a public recreation setting. He or she would have examples of developing a marketing plan, implementing it and be able to demonstrate how to measure its success and failures.

## The MPD Commissioners

We do recognize that the MPD is a governmental body distinct from the City. The role of the MPD commission should only be policy and budget in the current system. The day to day operations should be the pool operator's concern, in this case the city's P&R Department. The City has operated the pool since its transfer from King County prior to the existence of the MPD.

We did receive feedback that the Commissioners should have a more active role and not just blanket approve the budget submitted by the P&R staff. However, we don't believe that the Commission is blanketly approving the budget. As the money source and purse string holders, the commissioners need to ensure that they remain great stewards of public funds while engaging fiscally concerned citizens. Along the same lines, similar feedback was that the Commissioners will listen to the operators, but not the citizens. More transparency and engaging the public further is necessary given these issues.

Other MPD boards exist that have the dual role of being both a city council and an MPD board of commissioners. Particularly here in Pullman, it has never been an issue or under consideration that an Executive Director was needed. Pullman has a committed City parks & recreation staff operating the pool while being funded by the district. It has not been a discussion since the formation of the joint council / commission of the Pullman MPD. Maybe there is just more trust and good will on the part of the citizenry being serviced. In fact, the formation of the Pullman MPD was entirely meant to be a funding source so the MPD only meets a couple times a year with agendas that are solely about the approval of the budget presented by the City Parks & Recreation Superintendents to the dual role MPD commissioners.

Our **recommendation** over the next two years is to re-evaluate an independent MPD Board of Commissioners who do not have the dual role of City Council persons. Ideally the candidates that run and are elected will be passionate about their role as public servants. They will be a dedicated group elected to continue to guide the MPD in a policy and budgetary manners. The role of the commissioners should not be to micro manage the operator, its employees or the budget. As a separate commission they can determine the best use of the MPD resources.

Once a new board is in place, they can review the contract of the operator and create an appropriate RFQ for operation and/or ED. At that point a discussion could begin regarding pursuing a different operational model. It is imperative that the City P&R department have at least 2 years to implement our suggestions, specifically marketing and advertising the facility.

## **Recommendations for Efficiency in Operations**

In this particular operation and after looking through the various budgets and revenue sources, we feel that a focus on Commercialized Public Recreation would serve the MPD well. The current operation has over 73% of its budget coming from tax support to the district. By focusing on the revenues side of the budget, this metric of efficiency could be reduced to a more common level at a public pool.

We would consider the bond payment to be a capital expense. As such, it should be separated out of the annual operating expenses when reporting the budget. This makes the percentage of subsidy closer to 65% coming from the tax base. By substantially generating more revenue without reducing the current level of funding, this metric would be more in line with other pools in terms of percentages of subsidy. Capital budgets should be separate from the operational budget. That is good practice from a municipal budgeting perspective.

### **Labor Costs**

Salary, wages and benefits are the single largest group of expenses in pool operations. Spending a quarter of a million dollars in labor costs is not that uncommon at a year-round swimming pool. The salaries, particularly for the Aquatic Program Coordinator are at the top of the scale. Amending this pay rate is not something that should be adjusted until the current director leaves his position (i.e., retires). If and when he retires, advertising the open position with a salary in the \$50-60K range should create enough interest to obtain a qualified candidate and ensure longevity in retention for the position. Realize that reducing the salary to this level only saves your operational budget approximately 4% annually as reflected in the past and projected annual expenditures.

Salary information from one of the advisory groups states “The Federal Wage Determination for a Swimming Pool Operator and Recreation Specialist in King County was set at \$22.29/hour and \$19.12/hour respectively (06/25/2013).” Federal classifications do not necessarily paint a comparable picture in terms of the requirements and responsibilities of a person’s classification and level; meaning that it may not be equivalent to the current Tukwila positions with similar names. The pool managers related job descriptions, responsibilities, educational requirements or levels of supervision are known, but the comparable position in the Federal Wage Determination is not.

The 2010 Salary Data – Cities & Towns was provided to us by Washington Recreation and Parks Association (WRPA). This data, compiled by the Washington Associations of Cities, may provide a better comparison for consideration. Amy’s position falls under Recreation Program Leader/Coordinator with the job code of 615. The average high step for cities with populations of 15,000 to 29,999 is \$4894 per month and her pay compared to this survey is below the mean. Malcom’s position falls under the category of Recreation Manager/Supervisor with the job code of 607. The average high step for

cities with populations similar to Tukwila is \$6290 per month and his pay is above this survey's mean.

Paying people well and providing excellent benefits is a staple of good management and administrations; doing so is the prerogative of the City as the operator. Recognizing how the pay of the Aquatics Program Coordinator reached its present level would be helpful for the commissioners to understand. The original salary was based upon the starting salary of a pool manager for King County when the City took over the operation of the pool. With five pay steps and the ongoing cost of living increase commonly provided to City employees, it is easy to see how his salary was raised to its current level.

Lifeguard, swim lesson and water fitness instructors are underpaid compared to the greater Seattle pools. Tukwila lifeguard wages are currently at \$10.60 - \$12.20, neighboring pools range from \$9.25 - \$14.69. The mean salary from the material we have reviewed for lifeguards was \$10.90. To ensure the retention of the aquatic part-time staff at the pool, wages need to be increased.

With the neighboring community of SeaTac having the "Living Wage" initiative on the November ballot, ultimately raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, wage increases will have to be a strong consideration for the MPD and the pool's operator. A wage increase that is competitive within the region should keep the lifeguards and aquatic instructors at the Tukwila pool. This increase needs to be highly considered and planned for in the near future.

Some work related efficiency could be gained by using programs like [www.whentowork.com](http://www.whentowork.com) to assist the fulltime staff in managing the part time employees and their associated schedules, payroll and inner department communication. This program is worth investing in since it will be utilize often by your aquatic staff and professionals.

### **Utilities**

Outside of labor costs, utilities are typically the second largest expense at a pool. The focus here should be on energy savings with new pumps and motors, variable frequency drives, efficient heating units and energy efficient lights. The pool should be operating as efficiently as possible in terms of utilities.

Utilizing the pool covers is a must. Evaporation is expensive due to heating and treating the replacement water. Pool covers prevent evaporation, so their consistent use has a large return. The savings is threefold - a reduction of energy for heating, replacement of water lost and the cost of pool chemicals to treat the water. Every hour the pool is closed and the pool covers are used will reduce your utility costs.

## **Replacement Equipment Fund**

Having a replacement equipment schedule that details the actual costs per year to ensure the pool is adequately maintained is a must. With the renovations completed most systems are in top form. The pool and its equipment need constant care and maintenance for longevity.

For example, when the Sequim Aquatic Recreation Center opened, a lifecycle cost for every surface and component in the building was determined. Specifically, the main circulations pump cost \$10,000 and has an assigned life of 20 years therefore the district has a revolving account to save \$500 per year. There is a spread sheet with hundreds of items accounted for. Money for the replacement of all the buildings systems, equipment, light bulbs and painted surfaces is readily available in a separate long term account. The pool is still seeing the benefits of this forward approach to municipal maintenance. If an item had an accelerated life expectancy, the funds existed to address the needs of the building. If an item had a longer life expectancy than predicted, the savings would help offset the costs of an item with an accelerated life. The staff and commissioners are praised for their stewardship by taking this approach.

The Tukwila MPD may need to set aside \$100,000 or more per year to handle this future amortized maintenance, major capital, and minor capital expense. We did review the long term CIP Equipment Replacement Plan prepared by the City for the pool. It should be finalized with projected amortized cost set aside per year to ensure greater stewardship.

## **Other**

Reducing expenses doesn't seem realistic unless there is a change from the City operating the pool to another entity. Even then the saving would be minimal if they were going to continue to maintain or expand the level of services. A potential savings would be achieved by reducing the salary levels and associated benefits. A private or non-profit may have lower direct and indirect costs compared to the expenses charged by the City. As stated earlier, the integrated government model is effective for these additional services. From a municipal accounting perspective, this type of detailed accounting would make the operational budget unlike most other pools. Many times these direct and indirect costs of pool operations are not charged against the pool's specific budget.

## **Governance: Summary & Recommendations**

More MPD's are ran by independent boards than joint governance. With that being said, if the model continues and stays the same then we would recommend the current P&R administration continue operating the pool. Simply stating that the City is operating the pool for the MPD and stepping away from the "3<sup>rd</sup> party operator" vernacular is recommended. While we were told "it is an honor to carry the 3<sup>rd</sup> party contract", we felt it was used in a derogatory manner with a negative connotation.

There are a number of ways to measure the success of the governance of the organization. A few of these include:

- the benefits to the user, community & citizens
- the levels of participation
- the numbers & demographic of users
- whether you are meeting budget parameters

The MPD is successful in these metrics but should continue to improve the operation.

In relationship to the Executive Director, we recommend that you study the ED option for the next two years before acting on hiring for the position. This action would allow the City as the current operator, working with a renovated facility to address our recommendations. In addition, this would taking away the unpredictable future in the short run while easing the anxiety associated with the ED and potential changes to the operation. Another consideration could be to hire the current City Parks and Recreation Director (Rick Still) as the interim ED and petition a portion of this City's salary for his specific role working with the commission. It would appear he has played that role already.

One of the regular guests stated to us during our interviews that he would not swim at privately ran public pool. He further stated that he suspected that corners would be cut to save a dollar and that would ultimately compromise the safety and water quality so important to an aquatic operation. We don't know how prevalent this opinion is but felt it was worth noting. Another individual stated to us that if the governance changes: "I hope they lock the front doors to the building to keep the quality staff here." He was speaking to the full time staff particularly.

We hope that you find our report and recommendations helpful for improvements to the Tukwila Pool operation. These guidelines can be used to create a successful model of governance for the MPD. From an operations and programming perspective, the guidelines are meant to assist you in meeting the needs of the community while providing for safety in and around the water.

Yours In Aquatic Safety,

Kevin & Karen Johnston

## **Appendix**

**Cost per Lane Hour**

<b>Yearly Comparison Budget Line Items Average</b>	Public Utility Services	\$ 117,013.64
	Chemicals	\$ 4,465.62
	Communication	\$ 3,238.43
	Repairs and Maintenance	\$ 16,104.17
<b>2013 Budgeted</b>	AP Coordinator	\$ 116,969.00
	AP Specialist	\$ 83,313.00
	School Lease	\$ 10,950.00
	WCIA Insurance	\$ 9,912.00
	Contracted City Services	\$ 90,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 451,965.86</b>

Total / 365 days / 24 hours	<b>Per Hour Cost of Pool</b>	<b>\$ 51.59</b>
Total / 365 days / 24 hours / 10 sections	<b>10 sections of the pool</b>	<b>\$ 5.16</b>

## Tukwila Pool Program Costs

### Presumptions:

- Pool Space is \$51.60 for entire pool or \$5.16 per lane (cost)
- All employees are calculated at step 5, then 1.5 times hourly rate to account for training, uniforms, L&I, etc
  - Lifeguard / Desk = \$12.20 x 1.5 = \$18.30
  - Swim Instructor = \$13.45 x 1.5 = \$20.18
  - Wex = \$14.90 x 1.5 = \$22.35

### 1 Guards Rental:

Pool Space	10	x	\$5.16	=	\$51.60
Guard	1	x	\$18.30	=	\$18.30
<b>TOTAL PER HOUR</b>				<b>=</b>	<b>\$69.90</b>

- The pool rental fee (teams) should be a minimum of \$70 / hour for programs that provide the additional backup guard. If it is a private rental and public access is not permitted, the lifeguard should remain on deck at all times.

### 2 Guards Recreation:

Pool Space	10	x	\$5.16	=	\$51.60
Guard	2	x	\$18.30	=	\$36.60
<b>TOTAL PER HOUR</b>				<b>=</b>	<b>\$88.20</b>

- The pool rental fee should be a minimum of \$89 / hour for programs that have less than 50 people. Use of the slide or diving boards may deem the need for additional guards. If the rental is private with no public access, both guards should be on the deck.
- All operating hours (with no programs) cost \$89 / hour

### 3 Guards Recreation:

Pool Space	10	x	\$5.16	=	\$51.60
Guard	3	x	\$18.30	=	\$54.90
<b>TOTAL PER HOUR</b>				<b>=</b>	<b>\$106.50</b>

- The pool rental fee should be a minimum of \$107 / hour for programs that have less than 100 people. Use of the slide or diving boards may deem the need for additional guards. If the rental is private with no public access, all guards should be on the deck.
- All operating hours at peak times, when 3 guards are needed cost \$107 / hour

### Group Lessons / Private Lessons

Pool Space	1	x	\$5.16	=	\$ 5.16
Instructor	1	x	\$20.18	=	\$20.18
2 Lifeguard / 3 activities	x		\$18.30	=	\$12.20
<b>TOTAL PER HOUR PER LESSON</b>				<b>=</b>	<b>\$37.54</b>

- During general operations, there are 2 guards observing multiple activities. We've made the assumption that 3 activities are going on at all times (lap swimming, recreational time, and 1 lesson)
- This is a total cost of \$37.54 per lesson hour, then divided to be 30 minutes
  - 6 students = \$3.13
  - 5 students = \$3.75
  - 4 students = \$4.69
  - 3 students = \$6.26

**WEX**

Pool Space	2	x	\$5.16	=	\$10.32
Instructor	1	x	\$22.35	=	\$22.35
2 Lifeguard / 3 activities	x		\$18.30	=	\$12.20
<b>TOTAL PER HOUR PER LESSON</b>				<b>=</b>	<b>\$44.87</b>

- During general operations, there are 2 guards observing multiple activities. We've made the assumption that 3 activities are going on at all times (lap swimming, recreational time, and 1 class)
- Depending upon the amount of students, the breakeven for covering costs may be readily attainable
  - 5 students = \$8.97
  - 7 students = \$6.41
  - 10 students = \$4.49
  - 12 students = \$3.74

# Tukwila Pool

## Facility Use Schedule Analysis and Scheduling Matrix

### Typical Weekday and Weekend

Fall/Winter/Spring Schedule													
Time	Weekday Lanes						Shallow End						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	S1	S2	S3	S4			
5:00 AM													
5:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
6:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
6:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
7:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
7:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
8:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
8:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
9:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	WX	WX	WX	WW			
9:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	WX	WX	WX	WW			
10:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	OR	OR	WW			
10:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	OR	OR	WW			
11:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
11:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
NOON	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
12:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
1:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
1:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
2:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
2:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
3:00 PM	LS	VE	ST	ST	ST	ST	R	R	R	WW			
3:30 PM	LS	VE	ST	ST	ST	ST	R	R	R	WW			
4:00 PM	LS	VE	ST	ST	ST	ST	SL	SL	SL	WW			
4:30 PM	LS	VE	ST	ST	ST	ST	SL	SL	SL	WW			
5:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	SL			
5:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	SL			
6:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	WX	WX			
6:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	R	SL	SL	SL	SL	WX	WX			
7:00 PM	LS	VE	LS	R	R	SL	SL	OR	OR	WW			
7:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	SL	OR	OR	OR	WW			
8:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R			
8:30 PM													

Weekend													
Time	Lanes						Shallow End						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	S1	S2	S3	S4			
5:00 AM													
5:30 AM													
6:00 AM													
6:30 AM													
7:00 AM													
7:30 AM													
8:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
8:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
9:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
9:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
10:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
10:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
11:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	OR	WW		
11:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	OR	WW		
NOON	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	OR	WW		
12:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	OR	WW		
1:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
1:30 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
2:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
2:30 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
3:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
3:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
5:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
5:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
6:00 PM													
6:30 PM													
7:00 PM													
7:30 PM													
8:00 PM													
8:30 PM													

**KEY**

- LS Lap Swims
- OR Open Recreation
- R Rental
- SL Swims Lessons
- ST Swims Teams
- VE Vertical Exercise
- WW Water Walking
- WX Water Aerobics
- TREN Late Night TREN (not shown)
- FS Family Swims (eliminated)
- OS Open Swims (vacant)

Summer Schedule													
Time	Weekday Lanes						Shallow End						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	S1	S2	S3	S4			
5:00 AM													
5:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
6:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
6:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
7:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
7:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
8:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	WX	WX	WX	WW			
8:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	WX	WX	WX	WW			
9:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
9:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
10:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
10:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
11:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
11:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
NOON	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
12:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
1:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
1:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
2:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
2:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	WW			
3:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
3:30 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
4:00 PM	LS	ST	ST	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
4:30 PM	LS	ST	ST	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	SL	WW			
5:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	SL			
5:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	SL			
6:00 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	SL	SL	SL	WX	WX			
6:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	R	R	SL	SL	SL	WX	WX			
7:00 PM	LS	VE	LS	R	R	SL	SL	OR	OR	WW			
7:30 PM	LS	VE	R	R	R	SL	SL	OR	OR	WW			
8:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R			
8:30 PM													

Weekend													
Time	Lanes						Shallow End						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	S1	S2	S3	S4			
5:00 AM													
5:30 AM													
6:00 AM													
6:30 AM													
7:00 AM													
7:30 AM													
8:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
8:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
9:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
9:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
10:00 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
10:30 AM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
11:00 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
11:30 AM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
NOON	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
12:30 PM	LS	VE	LS	LS	LS	LS	OR	OR	OR	WW			
1:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
1:30 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
2:00 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
2:30 PM	LS	VE	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	WW			
3:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
3:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
5:00 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
5:30 PM	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
6:00 PM													
6:30 PM													
7:00 PM													
7:30 PM													
8:00 PM													
8:30 PM													

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