

To: Mayor Jane Veron and Board of Trustees

From: Robert Cole, Village Manager

Date: December 01, 2022

Subject: Pool Complex Study Next Steps

MEMORANDUM
Village Manager's Office

This memo provides an update on the Village Board's Pool Complex Special Assignment Team's efforts to inform discussion of next steps in our pool complex study following the extensive public engagement effort undertaken as a keystone element of the Pool Complex Study. While it is clear there is broad community support for the continued availability of the pool complex as a treasured community asset, and it is equally clear that the existing pool complex aesthetic is desirable and should be maintained, public opinion is roughly equally divided on the question of whether the Village should develop a year-round facility or a seasonal facility. While we continue to work through this question, we must remain cognizant that our complex is already beyond its useful life and has been operating on borrowed time. To that point, and as but one of the most recent examples, the diving well presently has a leak and efforts to repair it are not only impeded by the age and condition of the pool, but also by a high water table, which forces water into the pool while staff endeavor to drain it.

Given the foregoing backdrop, and recognizing the substantial difference in planning level cost estimates for each alternative having arisen through the public engagement process, our Pool Special Assignment Team has undertaken efforts to further understand the viability and prudence of pursuing development of a year-round option. To that end, the team conducted interviews to understand how the Boston Sports Institute public private partnership between Edge Sports Group and the Town of Wellesley, MA, operates and whether the model may be of value to Scarsdale. We also interviewed the Greenwich YMCA regarding the indoor facility they constructed. The interviews focused on the experiences each had in developing, constructing, and operating their respective facility, and whether there were any lessons learned that would be of value to us in choosing our path forward.

The following bullets summarize key takeaways from these conversations:

- A year-round complex is expensive to construct and operate, and it is unlikely that a *viable* PPP could help to offset the financial burden on the pool enterprise fund and/or Scarsdale taxpayers while also providing the value Scarsdale residents expect from our esteemed facility.
- Along with higher construction and operating costs come greater risks if supporting assumptions are not realized and/or infrastructure does not perform as designed and constructed, resulting in what may be an unreasonable level of risk.
- A year-round facility operated as a PPP significantly reduces local control while also yielding sharply increased usage by non-residents, including associated parking and traffic considerations. These real changes in site utilization levels would likely be unacceptable to residents living nearest a year-round facility.

- The physical space required to accommodate a year-round facility suitable for team competitions, meets, and other such activities would likely result in substantial erosion of existing pool complex aesthetics, which is contrary to values expressed by the Scarsdale community.

Below are highlights from each of the interviews conducted in November 2022.

Boston Sports Institute

- Sports leagues use the Wellesley complex heavily, resulting in associated traffic and parking impacts. It is unlikely that residents most proximate to the facility would support this increased level of activity. Already, residents express concern about noise and traffic in association with such activities as Westchester County outdoor events at the golf course, the prospect of little league night baseball games on Crossway Field, and others.
- When entering into a PPP, the financial benefit realized through the arrangement is directly related to the amount of exclusive use and control of the facility enjoyed by the private partner. A substantial offset of local costs translates into a substantial loss of local control over when and under what conditions Scarsdale residents would have access to their facility. In the case of the Boston Sports Institute, it appears that the balance is so heavily weighted in favor of private use that the facility's connection between the Town of Wellesley and the PPP brand, as managed and operated by Edge Sports Group, is virtually lost; the Town website's recreation page doesn't list the pool as a Town amenity.
- The footprint of the indoor component of the Wellesley facility constitutes a substantial portion of the overall site, and a similarly sized structure would severely impact the Scarsdale Pool Complex aesthetic. The existing aesthetic is very important to Scarsdale residents, including those having expressed support for a year-round facility. While a smaller facility that is better integrated into the surroundings may be a way to navigate this issue, such a smaller facility would likely negate the option of a PPP to reduce our financial exposure to the costs of constructing and operating a year-round facility.

Greenwich YMCA Indoor Facility

- Potential construction challenges, particularly maintaining cost control and delivering a facility that operates as designed. Not only did Greenwich experience some substantial, unanticipated costs once the pool had opened, but other indoor facilities have, as well. To illustrate, on November 23, 2022, the New York Post published an article titled "NYC spent \$67M on a public pool that has been closed for three years and is falling apart." The article cited problems with the roof, HVAC, and dehumidification systems requiring over \$11M in renovation and reconstruction; the facility is roughly 14 years old and has been closed since 2019.
- Potential challenges with maintaining required staffing for a year-round facility. To that issue, it has been challenging for our staff to maintain lifeguard staffing through our entire pool season, a problem experienced by other pools, as well. For example, Westchester County employed large highway construction signs this year along the Bronx River Parkway in order to attract potential lifeguard candidates. Because staffing is a life safety matter and minimum staffing levels are prescribed by the County, we should be cognizant of potential problems finding adequate year-round staffing.

In addition to conducting interviews to learn about the Wellesley PPP and relatively recent construction and operating experience of the Greenwich YMCA complex, the Special Assignment Team also took a fresh look at the Indoor Pool and Community Center study, which was completed in June 2010. The study was completed by ikon.5 architects and evaluated a prospective 34,000 to 40,000 gross sf facility, a majority of which was proposed to be underground in order to protect the site's valued vistas and overall aesthetic. As we know, the project never matured beyond concept completion. Not including modifications or renovations to the existing facilities, though code compliance needs were referenced as requiring further evaluation and planning, the planning level cost estimate at the time was \$25.1M, with an assumed January 2012 start of construction; the cost estimate included a statement that, although they believed their estimates realistic, "...it is important to recognize that many items are very conceptual at this time." Considerations highlighted but not fully addressed in the plan included, among others, the need to reevaluate the design in order to avoid disruption and costs associated with replacement of the existing outdoor mechanical systems, and the presence of shallow bedrock and shallow groundwater, both requiring further investigation.

Finally, it should also be noted that if the Board's decision is to move forward with developing schematic designs (SD) for both a year-round and seasonal facility, the incremental cost incurred above SD for a seasonal complex, alone (\$261K), is approximately an additional \$200K; SD for the year-round alternative by itself would be approximately \$397.5K. Please also note that in terms of a design timeline, SD would come first. If two concepts are brought forward through SD, a decision on one or the other would be expected prior to the next stage of design, which would be Design Development, generally following this sequence: Schematic Design => Detailed Design Development => Construction Design => Bid => Construction Admin.