



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: October 13, 2006 REPORT NO: 06-152
ATTENTION: City Council
Agenda of October 17, 2006
SUBJECT: Blue Level Swim Program
REFERENCE:

REQUESTED ACTION: INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. No action is required by City Council

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: None.

SUMMARY:

Background

On September 18, 2006, the Park and Recreation Department issued a letter to the 41 participants in the Blue Level Swim Program notifying them of the administrative decision to discontinue the program effective December 4, 2006. On September 27, 2006, Councilmember Donna Frye requested the item be brought before City Council for discussion.

Discussion

The Park and Recreation Department's General Fund FY 2007 budget is organized into seven divisions, each with its own structure and accounting numbers, totaling \$84,140,357. Each division has organizational groups budgeted for their major sections. For instance, the Community Parks Division II \$19,147,357 budget is divided into sections such as Park Landscaping, Recreation Center Operations, and Swimming Pool Operations.

Just as in years past, the Department's management is responsible for providing these general core services within the overall budget allocated. The Municipal Code Section 25.1502 states: *The Park and Recreation Director shall be responsible for the control and management of the parks, parkways, plazas, beaches, cemeteries, street trees, landscaping of city-owned property, golf courses, playgrounds, recreation centers, recreation camps, and recreation activities held on any city playgrounds, parks, beaches and piers which may be owned, controlled or operated by the City.* There are some items which are clearly discussed during the budget process as core services and responsibilities. Examples include recreation centers operating at a minimum of 40 hours per week and specific pool closures.

The FY07 budget included nine pool closures for 3.5 months. However, the determination of what time frame each pool would close and the specific hours of the pools remaining open are determined by the Department to set administratively.

In addition, budget adjustments are made throughout the year not only via the organizational structure, but also within the structure.

The Park and Recreation Department's adopted FY07 General Fund budget includes specific dollar amounts within various "non-personnel" categories. These categories include such items as equipment outlay, supplies and services, and utilities. In order to cover overages in a specific category, department management may substitute funds budgeted in one category for another. This is a typical budget adjustment during the year, especially with continued under-funding for such items as equipment and utilities.

With the adopted budget, the Park and Recreation Department operates a diverse range of recreational programs throughout the city; including, but not limited to: baseball, softball, basketball, dance, swim, karate, ceramics, and arts and crafts. Changes to these programs are made administratively throughout the year for various reasons such as decreased enrollment, limited recreation leader availability. For example, some sites may operate a crafts class one year and determine not to offer at a specific site during the following year. These detailed operational issues have never been brought forth for City Council action, but are done administratively by the Department at all levels, including the recreation center director and pool manager.

Specifically, the Department's aquatics recreational programs include: year-round youth swim and water polo, as well as pool guard job training. Changes to these programs occur throughout the year. For example, the Department provided a competitive club USA Water Polo Program which was discontinued several years ago due declining enrollment. At the time the program was discontinued there were less than 20 enrolled participants.

The Department's youth swim program operates year-round. There are currently three levels Blue, Silver, and White. Of the three levels two levels, White and Silver, are recreationally-based and are offered at all 13 city pools. The White Level practices an average of 3 hours per week and the Silver Level practices an average of 7.5 hours a week. There are nearly 1,000 children registered in these two swim programs and approximately 500 of these participants are actively participating year-round. Of these participants approximate 20% are on a low-income fee waiver. These programs offer special competitions and events throughout the year including: two traditional meets, four fun-style meets and ten league competitions for a total of 16 meets annually.

The Blue Level Swim Team is a competitive "club" program which operates under the rules and regulations of USA Swimming via the San Diego-Imperial Counties USA Swimming Local Swim Committee (LSC) Office. USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming. They administer competitive swimming in accordance with the Amateur Sports Act. The national program is administered at the local (LSC), state and national level. Each club registered under USA Swimming is required to have an "official coordinator", a non-athlete safety coordinator (City of San Diego Swim League (CSDS) Program Coordinator), and at least

one registered Swim Coach. Per the USA Swimming 2006 Rules and Regulations it states that swimmers registered via the USA Swimming must be coached by USA registered coaches; thus, the City requires all Blue Level coaches to be registered as CSDS Coaches and the City pays for their individual registration.

Such a high-level and competitive program can be compared to other sports that operate at an advanced level such as "club" soccer, baseball, and softball. The Department does not operate or pay staff to coach any of these "club" sports since they are above and beyond core recreational programs.

Of the 41 participants registered in the program at the time the decision was made to discontinue it, approximately 38% were on low-income fee waivers. The Blue Level is operated at only four pools: City Heights, Memorial, Ned Baumer, and Vista Terrace.

Blue Level swimmers practice an average of 10 hours a week and compete year-round in San Diego County meets with participants from the other clubs. There are currently 20 clubs throughout the County, many of them with hundreds of members. Unlike the other clubs at this level, the Blue Level does not compete outside of San Diego County or at all County competitions. Many of the other clubs travel to other western regional meets, including Las Vegas and Irvine.

The cost to operate this program is extremely high. Based upon the general labor costs alone and not the associated non-personnel costs, the cost is approximately \$150,000 which includes the cost of weekly coaching, general administration, and participation in the meets. Again, this does not include the associated non-personnel costs such as membership fees, registration for officials, and computer software.

To put this in perspective with other recreational programs currently offered by the Community Parks II Division the White and Silver Level labor costs for coaching, general administration, and participation in internal city meets is approximately \$290,000 for 1,000 registered children. The division also provides recreational-based athletic youth programs for the following sports: football/cheer, baseball/softball, basketball and soccer costs. The associated labor costs for all of these sports, each operating between 10 and 14 week sessions, is approximately \$200,000 for more than 1,800 children participating.

The adopted fee for the swim program is referenced in the Fiscal Year 2007 Park and Recreation Department Fee Schedule. The fee was officially adopted during the FY 2001 budget process and has not increased since that time. The participants pay \$1.10 per hour for coaching and meets. The monthly fee is provided to parents in advance for each month which varies depending upon the season. Typically the monthly rate is \$35 to \$40 per month.

The hourly cost recovery rate for a Pool Guard II classification who typically coaches the Blue Level is \$22.25. In order to be cost-recoverable just for this cost of one staff person and does not include all other associated costs there would need to be a minimum of 20 swimmers enrolled at each Blue Level site. As of early September one of the pool sites has only 4 registered Blue Level swimmers.

As mentioned previously, the cost for the program is not only the coach, but also includes a pool guard who must be on the deck along with the coach, and other associated costs.

In closing the Community Parks II Division is responsible for funding this and other programs. In FY 2005 the amount budgeted for the entire aquatics program's direct costs was \$2,546,233, while the actual cost was \$3,561,015. This additional cost was absorbed by the department's overall budget. In FY 2006 the total cost budgeted for the aquatics program direct costs were \$2,677,519 and the total cost was \$3,120,591, again absorbed by the Department's overall budget.

Based upon the availability of outside private clubs to perform this service, the lack of budget to operate any new programs or initiatives, the need for resources to create a viable and competitive program, and the program's costs once developed and analyzed, could be higher than what the private clubs can offer a participant, the department should not continue this program.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTION: None.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: None.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: The Blue Level Swim Program is offered at 4 of the 13 pools in the City's park system. The sites are: City Heights (Council District 3), Memorial (Council District 8), Ned Baumer (Council District 5), and Vista Terrace (Council District 8)


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