

Notes of the Aquatic Working Group (AWG) Meeting

Tuesday, January 20, 2009
YMCA, 20 Grosvenor St., Toronto

These notes were drafted by Nicole Swerhun, Meeting Facilitator. Questions, comments, and results of discussion are integrated throughout the Notes. Appendix A includes the Meeting Agenda, and Appendix B the Participant List.

1. UPDATE BRIEFING PART I – Operating and Capital Costs

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on work completed since the last AWG meeting (Dec 9/08), and to seek feedback and advice on that work. Key items reviewed by Karen Pitre are listed below, followed by a bulleted list of questions, comments, and responses.

i. Operating Costs - Update.

- The TDSB calculates pool costs based on square footage. We still need to validate our numbers with the TDSB, but at the moment it looks like in at least 16 of the 39 pools the square footage used to calculate costs may have been overestimated (based on 2002 pool audit). There could be a number of reasons for this (e.g. during amalgamation 5 different school boards came together and each could have attributed costs using different approaches).
- If the lower square footage numbers are used, then the operating costs for the 39 pools go down by about \$1 million from approx \$5.7 million to approx \$4.7 million.
- We also know that there are energy efficiency opportunities (e.g. heat savers over pool, solar/thermal) – those savings have not been included here, though they would also decrease operating costs.
- What drives costs of pool is primarily the size of the tank (heating, chemicals required), though the size of the pool deck is also relevant.
- \$4.7 million divided by 39 pools means the annual operating costs per pool are about \$120,000, though costs would vary depending on the size of the tank. This does not include aquatic instructors.
- In order to determine potential permit revenue, we looked at dividing operating costs by the number of hours pools are used. If the pools are fully booked (50 weeks a year, 6-10pm, 9am-5pm weekends – with the TDSB using all hours during the school day use and the community using the rest of the hours) then permit costs would range from \$15-40/hr depending on

the size of the pool. We've also conducted a sensitivity analysis to see what the permit revenue/costs would be if the pools had no TDSB use and only 50% community use.

- ii. **Capital Costs - Update.** Each pool will have a report that shows the 5 year capital plan, including the extent of work that has been done since 2002 and any immediate capital investments required. With the exception of 2 pools (Kensington and Riverdale – which are in great shape), most pools require about \$500,000-700,000 work over the next 5 years, or about \$100k/year.

Discussion

- Just want to confirm that the operating costs don't include instructors, but do include maintenance? *Yes.*
 - Grouping the pools into small, medium and large tank sizes makes sense. Looks reasonable to me.
 - It might be helpful to split out the variable and fixed operating costs.
 - Shouldn't we include staff costs? *We're treating that as a TDSB decision. Right now permit holders bring their own staff. If the pool remains open we'd strongly recommend the TDSB find a way to provide aquatic instruction.*
 - If the school isn't using the pool some will shut it down and turn it into a gym. It's probably cheaper to hire aquatic instructors then convert pools into gyms. I also wonder if the TDSB has looked at the costs of supervision/teaching to replace time that students would otherwise be spending in the pool.
 - Where did the numbers come from? *The maintenance number and pool supplies costs are from the TDSB.*
 - Looking at your estimates of permit costs, based on today's use, is it reasonable to assume the pool will be used every hour of every day? *No, right now it's probably less than 50% in many cases. There is a more detailed analysis we need to do on each pool to better understand this number. The exercise we want to get to is have a much clearer understanding of where we are in terms of community capacity and use of pools.*
 - I think this analysis is a really good start.
- iii. **Funding opportunities.** We still want to find out if there are corporate sponsors interested in participating in the program, and we need to get these opportunities to the point where they're real. Some interest has been expressed. Other community funding/partnership/programming opportunities are being explored, including Canadian Tire (Jump Start) and others that could increase the number of people using pools, which in turn increases revenues.

2. UPDATE BRIEFING PART II – Approach to Analysis

- **Lenses:** We've been looking at each pool through three lenses: costs (operating and capital), community use, and equity. We would like our final report to include a pool-by-pool analysis that gives us a clear profile of each pool.
- **3 Categories of pools:** Our initial analysis suggests that we'll have 3 categories of pools. **Red** pools would be those that few that are not in great shape, and the community is not using. **Green** pools are those where the community is programming the pool, there is clearly a demand, that demand cannot be accommodated anywhere else. The rest of the pools would be in the **Yellow** category – these are pools that may have significant school use and may be well loved, but they do not have significant community use, are not in bad shape, but don't have the business case to really stand on their own. These are the pools that will need a creative solution. We don't have funding beyond this year, so we need to make the case that these Green/Yellow pools are important and provide advice on how to keep them. How we ultimately communicate/use these 3 categories of pools (Red, Green, Yellow) will be an important communications task for the public as well as for our conversations with other levels of government.
- **Special considerations.** In addition to the cost, community use, and equity lenses, we think there may well be other special reasons why a pool would end up in one category or another, and that at the end of the day we may need to make a judgment based on information that's either tangible or intangible. We're going to rely on you to tell us what the special considerations might be for your pool. Our hope is that by exposing the data, the future of each pool should be almost self-evident.
- **Number of pools:** Right now we have 39 pools, but in the end we're dealing with only 38 because North Toronto is closing.
- **Equity:** It's been suggested that we consider looking at the Learning Opportunity Index to identify what schools need assistance. Another consideration is gender equity – there are a number of schools where girls won't swim unless it's an all female environment.

Discussion

- I think you've done a great job. I understand trying to do a profile of each pool.
- **Impact of marketing and promotion:** A lot of the information we have on each pool is based on a snapshot of who's using it now. I'm sure there are school pools that aren't being used 100% for a combination of reasons. For example in some cases there may be a waiting list of community groups that don't realize there are 2 other pools that could be used in the area. We should remember that with some promotion and a marketing plan the community use could increase. *That's consistent with an example I heard about the other day about a pool that is not well used and isn't generating a lot of interest – though turns out that if it had time for an all-girls swim, potentially combined with use of the library, then it may generate a lot of interest. I think you're right*

and we need to be clear that these results present a snapshot of today, but that keeping the pool open could lead to a very different picture tomorrow.

- We could do a video to introduce people to the pools – some students have done videos and put them on YouTube. Another way to get the message out is to have an open house/open swim to get friends and neighbours introduced to pools.
- For Yellow pools we should have a good understanding of what's happening in the community, and especially the growth in the area.
- Parks & Recreation may report that they have unfilled spots in their swimming lessons, but what's important to know is that many of those spots are in the afternoon. There are many fewer spots (if any) in the evening when parents want to take kids.
- The Red/Yellow/Green groups are good because using the extremes helps to explain the Yellow. It's also good because the analysis is not so emotionally based.
- **We should look at the schools that are well used and figure out why, and then create those conditions at other pools.** For example, North York is packed. Some factors influencing pool use include:
 - A. too hard to get a permit
 - B. too hard to find out if/when there's space at a pool
 - C. water temperature too low
 - D. permit cost too high
 - E. school won't open pool in the early morning before school starts
 - F. need to explain that water in pool is circulated and cleaned (some think its standing water)
- **Look at approach used for fields:** In some areas having a pool compensates for a lack of field space. There are minimum field space requirements for students, and it may be helpful to pull on this analysis and/or do similar analysis to show how closing a pool is equivalent to removing a certain number of square feet of field space per student.
- We also need to take into consideration the fact that many of our schools may be re-purposed for other users in the community.

3. UPDATE BRIEFING PART IV – Governance, Programming, Communications

Governance – David Crombie

- **Short term solution:** The Governance Sub-Committee has been doing a lot of work. I think the Objectives are what most people had in mind, and the long term governance model is well thought out. I'd like to offer the following point of view on governance. I think that whatever we do with governance, its better to do at the end of this process because then we'll know what we're recommending and the players we need to make it work. If we make decision too early, it may mean that we inadvertently focus on things that are not central to delivering the recommendations, and/or excluding things that become central to success.

At the moment I would suggest focusing on a short term solution since we don't yet know how the City of Toronto or TDSB would like to be involved. My suggestion would be to approach the Board of the TLC and suggest that that we continue to do what we're doing – have this process, with the Aquatics Working Group, continue in a short term arrangement to move through the process we've outlined. This would give us time to continue working with people like the Province of Ontario, the Toronto City Summit Alliance, the Board of Trade and others to explore ways to make this work. I would reserve all other considerations for governance till a final time.

- **Community hubs:** It's likely that part of the conclusion for governance will be tied to community hubs. The TDSB has an excellent history of using schools for other community purposes. We're on the cusp of an historic discussion in this city about community hubs, and our work here can help create the conditions to support this debate – and governance should be tied to this.
- **New CEO of TLC:** Shirley Hoy is now the CEO and President of TLC which will help move the debate in a number of directions. As a reminder, the TLC is an arms length corporation from the TDSB and it's job is to deal with the surplus properties of TDSB. The process is pretty simple – the TDSB Board identifies properties that are surplus, and then works with TLC to agree on parameters that would be used to dispose of the properties. The TDSB is the TLC's only shareholder, but the decision making process is defined so that the TLC can respectfully carry out its responsibilities. For the purposes of this process, the TDSB turned the pools over to the TLC for consideration for their future use. There are 6 non-trustee board members (people involved in community development but also understand real estate) and 4 trustees (chosen by the TDSB). Part of the TLC's mandate is to manage disposal of the properties, and property management of leased schools. TLC is responsible for maximizing the value of properties and engaging in community development.
- **What about ownership?** We have no intention at the TLC of getting into a discussion on ownership. From my experience a lot of things are possible when talking about management and responsibilities, but as soon as you talk about ownership things are much more difficult.

Communications (Heidi Wilson) & Programming (Jeff Carmichael)

- Heidi and Jeff reviewed the work of their Sub-Committees as captured in the minutes from the previous AWG meeting.

Discussion

- We keep talking about priority neighbourhoods as though they coincided with the needs of the City – but they were based on poverty and lack of services. Unless we superimpose the learning index on the priority neighbourhoods we won't get an accurate picture.

- Learning how not to drown is 4 or 5 lessons (Swim to Survive). Right now the way its marketed it builds expectations that it teaches people to swim but in fact they really only learn to tread water. Swim to Survive shouldn't replace aquatic programming. *The program is not intended to replace swimming lessons. For many children they have nothing, its an affordable way to give them something. Not all children passed, but most have come a significant way after 3 lessons.*
- Instead of one school's kids getting 7 years of swimming lessons, why not give kids only a couple of years of lessons and then bring in kids from other schools?
- The Governance Sub-Committee was really concerned that the lifesaving program wasn't the benchmark of what we want to achieve. *We also live in certification driven world – for kids it may be only certification they'll ever get – the reason we're here is not so kids can learn not to drown.*
- We would be remiss to not take advantage of programs that will put more kids in pools.
- We need to look at safety (learn not to drown and help others), health (cardiovascular, other), and community (fun, recreational, competitive, gender neutral).

4. NEXT STEPS

The next AWG meeting will be held on Tuesday February 10th at the YMCA (20 Grosvenor St.), for 2 hours (from 12:00 – 2:00 pm) on the third floor.

Appendix A. AGENDA

Toronto Lands Company
Aquatic Working Group
PROPOSED AGENDA
Meeting 4
Metro Central YMCA, 20 Grosvenor
Tuesday, January 20, 2009

- 11:00 am** **Welcome**
David Crombie
- 11:05** **Agenda Review**
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator
- 11:10** **Update Briefing – Part I**
Karen Pitre
- Results of Capital Cost work
 - Results of Operating Cost work
- 11:30 Discussion
- 12:30 pm** **Update Briefing – Part II**
David Crombie/Karen Pitre
- Updated proposed approach to analysis
- 12:45 Discussion
- 1:30** **Update Briefing – Part III**
- Governance
 - Program
 - Communications
- 1:55** **Next Steps and Next Meeting**
- 2:00** **Adjourn**

Appendix B. PARTICIPANTS

Aquatic Sport Council	Heather Johnston
City of Toronto	Anne Jackson
Danforth SC	Annette Wilde
David Crombie Associates	Robin Crombie
Earl Grey SPS	Janet Dabrus
Etobicoke Swim Club	Steve Goodwin
Facilitator	Nicole Swerhun
Fairfields	Catherine Splet
Let's Make Waves	Laura Pereverzoff
Let's Make Waves	Heidi Wilson
LPCI/AH LMWS	Livia Hunter
Lifesaving society	Barbara Byers
Ministry of Education	Abby Doush
MPP Mike Colle	Vittoria Maggisano
NYAC	Leon Goren
NYMAC	Sandra Oliver
Scarborough Swim Club	Chris Smelt
S DFA City of Toronto	Ed Reed
Swimming Dragon	Yang Gao
TDSB	George Kourtis
TDSB	Barbara Langenberger
Toronto Lands Corporation	David Crombie
Toronto Lands Corporation	Karen Pitre
Toronto Sports Council	Jeff Carmichael
Toronto Swim Club	Derby Crewe
Toronto Swim Club	Laura Pratt
YMCA	Erin Beresford