

Local

Sam-O Swim committee tours pool

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In June the City Council chose members to serve on a committee to oversee and prioritize the need of certain repairs at Sam-O-Swim Center.

The pool is City owned but managed by the YMCA.

Citizens Rustin Smith, Jason Bybee, Andrew Bryan, Jerri Wickert and Noel Scott were appointed to the Committee with Ben Merrill serving as the City Council representative while Keith Magnuson and Michelle Owen attended the meeting as city employee representatives. Paula Moe, aquatics director for Sam-O-Swim was also in attendance, as was Rob Heeb, President of the Baker City YMCA.

In a previous meeting Andrew Bryan was elected chair while Jerri Wickert was elected vice-chair.

Monday evening the committee met to tour the facility and observe the proposed improvements.

Those improvements include replacing the sand filters currently in use, replacing the boiler system in the facility, resurfacing both the full-size pool and the baby pool and the replacement of showers in both the men's and women's locker rooms.

The Committee first met in the maintenance room at the pool to observe the sand filters and the boiler.

Although it was very loud in the room, Michelle Owen and Keith Magnuson and Paula Moe all explained about the systems.

Michelle Owen pointed out a patch on the side of the sand filter as she told the committee that the filter systems ran around \$20,000 - \$21,000 to replace with the usual life expectancy of about 20 years.

Budgeted money for this task is \$20,000.

"We are surprised it has made it this long," Owen said.

The filter, like all the items on the list, is about 35 years-old.

She then moved on to address the boiler project. "The boiler, also original, heats the building and can heat the water if necessary but that is not what it is used for."

Councilor Merrill asked "What condition is this in?"

Magnuson replied, "Terrible."

Owen briefed the committee on a proposal to replace and automate the system at a cost of \$190,000, the budgeted amount was \$75,000.

The committee asked questions about refurbishing rather than replacing. Owen mentioned that by replacing this system, savings could potentially be between \$16,000-\$18,000 in utility costs and the facility would be eligible for an Energy Trust credit of \$23,000.

Bryan said, "So we are basically \$89,000 short of doing that. What if we were to borrow that \$89,000 from the League of Oregon Cities? At like ¾ of 1%, you're basically borrowing for nothing. Mike Kee (Baker City Manager) suggested, we just borrow from an internal fund, like the golf course has done. I think it's fair to make comparable asset judgements there. Mike then got back to me and said that since it wasn't budgeted it might not be possible to go down that route. I don't know if he is thinking because the budget season has finished but City Councils can actually go back and of course override budget board decisions when they feel it's important."

Owen replied, "They can do that by 10% in a fund and that is what tweaks us in this fund. It's not very big. 10% does not quite get us there. But you could potentially do a supplemental budget. It would just require new hearings etc. and is kind of a pain. Even borrowing from the equipment fund or the Silvers Tree fund where its money the city holds in trust and it pays it back with the interest it would be earning if it was just sitting in the bank. Is an alternative."

The committee moved to the pool deck and turned their attention to the resurfacing project.

Moe explained that she would really like to see tile placed on the strips at the bottom of the pool as it would be much easier to maintain and keep looking nice.

She stated, "We re-painted in 2012, brand new sparkly, wonderful blue."

Currently the bottom of the pool surface cracks and paint on the bottom surface peels off.

"As you can see it comes loose. It comes off in big chunks. You see them all day every day in the pool," Moe said—thus creating a safety risk for swimmers by having extremely rough surfaces that can cause injury and pose a liability for the City.

She pointed out large unattractive black areas that paint simply would no longer stick to as paint quality and requirements have changed over the years.

Owen agreed, stating that paint she was required to use in the public works department to repaint curbs and sidewalks for example just simply didn't stick like the older paint they were able to use causing them to be constantly repainted, which is also expensive.

Owen explained the plan to resurface the pool and that there had been an early approximate estimate of \$60,000 to complete the project "the quote actually came back at 69,000 but of course we would go out to bid for something like that but we will be somewhere in that range."

The idea is to sandblast all of the pool, which is not included in the \$69,000 quote, however as Moe and Owen both mentioned could be done by staff to save costs.

"Only \$60,000 was placed in the budget for this project. Also in the plan is to add tile to the strips so they no longer need to be painted," she said.

Bryan commented that "part of what happened in the beginning was budget related. Originally this was a seven-lane pool, but when you run into budget problems you start cutting corners, like painting instead of tiling. That's part of what we're making up for."

The committee also toured the locker room showers that as Moe said, "have been repaired and repaired" and simply no longer are functioning as needed.

"We took out the mechanism that turns them off.



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Paula Moe discusses the state of the pool in the Sam-O Swim Center.

We had to do that because they no longer make the mechanism that turns them off. They no longer turn off automatically," Moe said she often enters the locker rooms to find the showers empty yet running because swimmers assume they turn off automatically. New units would offer that option again.

According to Owen, her staff from the public works department work on them often and explained, "They've certainly been maintained over the years but again, you're talking about something that is 35 years-old. It doesn't fix the same way that it used to, it's not just a matter of a washer here or there anymore it's beyond that."

Moe agreed. "They are old, it just happens that things wear out," she said.

Quotes for replacing the showers in both locker rooms is in the \$10,000 range which is what was placed in the budget.

After the tour the committee met outside the facility to discuss plans and options.

The Committee chose the resurfacing of the pool and the replacement of the sand filters as their top priorities.

The pool resurfacing is going to be more expensive than originally thought and the committee talked about taking money from the replacement of the showers leaving that task to go undone for now.

Andrew Bryan said, "I pitched a public relations idea to Mike Kee about the showers that maybe the swimming world locally could do a crowd funding

campaign and maybe come up with the shower money. Shift the budget on the showers and see if the 200 or 300 of us that are involved, there are plenty of people and there are those that are not as active as they were 30 years ago but still feel that there is a legacy here to support. What if we just did it all? What if we got it all done and we secured the pool for 10, 12, 15 years?"

Bryan pointed out that the incentives for replacing the boiler and the savings in energy costs made that project very appealing to him but the Committee also felt that the replacement of the boiler could wait until the next fiscal year if necessary.

Owen did advise she is working on additional grants, she has already secured three, that could help with that and can foresee the possibility of accomplishing that task sooner should more grant money be obtained.

Owen advised that a supplemental budget request must be approved by council and there are certain requirements that must be met when asking for a supplemental budget. Notifications must be made twice within 14 days so that will affect timeframe for the committee as well.

"We could go to council and get a consensus that they want us to move forward with this at the next meeting so we can start advertising and such," Owen explained. "I will know tomorrow when I speak to Jeanie Dexter (The City Finance Manager) what budget law says, if it's

even possible."

Bryan also said "I think it is important for Council to be made aware that the Y has had representation at each meeting."

Owen agreed.

Noel Scott said, "So we propose to do it all but if we can't get the money in a supplemental budget then we look at doing the sand filters and the resurfacing, that would fit within the money that is currently budgeted. Postpone the boiler until next year and crowdfund the roughly \$10,000 to do the showers. I think the swimming community could come up with that ten grand."

There was some concern as to whether or not the community would donate to a project in a City owned building but Bryan spoke up quickly and said, "I'll donate \$250."

Owen commented, "Again this is where the partnership with the Y, (comes into play) people like to give to the Y and so you leverage the relationship there."

That was the motion that was voted on and unanimously passed by all.

Bids for resurfacing of the pool and replacing the sand filters will be opening soon so Owen can try to coordinate those two projects. "I do feel that since we were using the money differently than what we said we were going to, we need to tell the council 'here's what we plan to do' and that can be done at the next City Council meeting."

All agreed. The next meeting of the Sam-O Committee was set for August 24 at 5:30 p.m.

New Eastern Oregon University scholarship offered

Eastern Oregon University is offering a new scholarship funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation's S-STEM program.

It's called Advancing Science and Technology in Eastern Oregon, or ASTEO for short, and biology, chemistry-biochemistry, computer science and mathematics majors are invited to apply.

In the first year of the grant, five scholarships for freshmen and three scholarships for transfers will be available beginning fall 2016. Additional ASTEO scholars will be recruited each year following.

Eligible students may receive up to \$7,500 annually for tuition and fees, depending on their unmet need. Preference will be given to applicants dem-

onstrating both academic potential or ability and financial need.

The first round of applications will be accepted October 1, 2015 through February 1, 2016.

Students can also combine awards from the federal Pell program, Oregon Opportunity Grant, university fee remissions and other funding sources with the ASTEO scholarship for additional financial assistance.

Anna Cavinato, professor of chemistry, is the principal investigator for the grant. She is excited about the new opportunities the scholarship will bring.n.

"This is the first time for EOU to receive an S-STEM grant, and it's quite an achievement," she said. "I believe we are now the only other university

in Oregon besides OSU to offer this scholarship. We really hope it will make a difference for those students with strong academic abilities who want to pursue their education in the sciences or math but are financially disadvantaged."

Co-investigators include Colin Andrew in chemistry and biochemistry, Shaun Cain in biology, Richard Croft in computer science, and Amy Yielding in mathematics.

Cavinato and other EOU faculty regularly involve undergraduates with their research as interns, giving them the opportunity to contribute to larger projects and get comfortable with state-of-the-art tools in the university science center.

Students in their second or subsequent years of the

award will play a critical role in mentoring and recruiting new scholars through a STEM Ambassadors program intended to engage ASTEO students throughout their educational journey.

These efforts align with the National Science Foundation's goal to support students intending to join industry or attend graduate school after finishing their undergraduate degrees.

EOU consistently sees high rates of success for students in its science, math and technology programs, with 100-percent completing research projects before they graduate.

Many regularly share their findings at national conventions and publish work in the Eastern Oregon Science Journal, which holds distinction as

the first student-published, undergraduate scientific research journal in Oregon produced by the university.

The Chemistry Club, Girls in Science and Saturday Science programs, Intel Oregon First Lego League Tournament and Regional High School Mathematics Competition all focus on community engagement and offer even more ways for students to get involved.

For a complete list of eligibility requirements and how to apply, contact Cavinato at acavinat@eou.edu.

A website is also being developed and will be available soon with additional information.

To learn more about EOU's science and math programs, visit www.eou.edu/cas/smt.

State says be prepared, not scared

A recent article in the "New Yorker" called "The Really Big One" has drawn attention to the damage a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami will cause, and emergency planners are raising awareness about how individuals can prepare, and how the region and Oregon is also continuing to prepare and mitigate for the looming threat.

"We want Oregonians to be prepared not scared," said Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Director Andrew Phelps. "What we do now to prepare will save lives and property during any disaster."

Families are encouraged to put together emergency plans and kits.