

Camas consultant: 'Pool is dying'

Options for saving historic Crown Park pool limited, pricey

By Kelly Moyer (/author/kmoyer) | November 23, 2017 5:30 am | [comments \(http://www.camaspostrecord.com/news/2017/nov/23/camas-consultant-pool-is-dying/\)](http://www.camaspostrecord.com/news/2017/nov/23/camas-consultant-pool-is-dying/)



(http://16750-presscdn-0-59.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1123_loc_CrownParkPool.jpg)

Families play at the Crown Park outdoor swimming pool in Camas. The historic pool, built in the 1950s, may need to be replaced, thanks to its age and ever-increasing maintenance costs. (Post-Record file photo)



(http://16750-presscdn-0-59.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1123_loc_Camas-pool-empty.jpg)

Camas leaders heard some bad news about their city's historic, much-loved Crown Park public swimming pool this week.

"The pool is dying," consultant Ben Johnson, with Greenworks, PC, told Camas City Council members and Camas Mayor Scott Higgins Monday night, at the council's Nov. 20 workshop. "We know this is not an easy decision because of the historic significance of the pool."

Although the outdoor pool, built by the Camas Lions Club and donated to the city in 1954, holds precious memories for many lifelong Camas residents, the pool's age and related expenses have forced city leaders to consider closing the pool and replacing it with a more modern pool or a less-expensive, interactive water feature.

In July, Randy Curtis, chair of the city's Parks and Recreation Commission, said the age and condition of the Crown Park pool have concerned city leaders for a while, but that the pool has cost the city more money in recent years.

This past summer, for instance, the city spent about \$75,000 to upgrade and repair the pool before it could open to the public in June.

And while the city does collect revenues from pool users, the pool is not self-supporting. In fact, the city often supplements the pool using general funds. In 2016, the pool brought in \$104,010 but cost the city \$162,164.

The older the pool gets, Curtis told The Post-Record last summer, the more problems it has and the more it costs to repair those problems.

The Camas Municipal Pool, freshly painted, sits empty in Crown Park, 120 N.E. 17th Ave., earlier this year. The historic pool has greeted generations of Camas-Washougal residents each summer, but is now costing the city of Camas more money to maintain than it brings in. (Post-Record file photo)



(http://16750-presscdn-0-59.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1123_loc_CrownParkPool_Option2.jpg)

This illustration depicts "Option 2," the recommended option, for replacing the swimming pool at Crown Park in Camas with a large, interactive water feature. The area circled in red, which includes the water feature, a nearby playground, new restroom and improved paths, could be a potential "phase one" of the entire project, if the city decides to move forward with the \$5.2 million option. (Contributed illustration, courtesy of city of Camas)

The committee had come up with two options: "Option 1" would have replaced the pool with a more modern outdoor swimming pool. In a survey that collected more than 1,400 responses, community members were divided almost evenly between "replace existing pool with new outdoor, family leisure pool" (38.07 percent) and "replace existing pool with a large, interactive water feature" (38.21 percent). About 10 percent of respondents said the city should renovate the historic pool and 13 percent wanted to replace the pool with a small, interactive water feature.

When the options came before the Parks Commission, Johnson said commissioners grappled with a difficult decision for hours, finally choosing the less-expensive Option 1, which is estimated to cost the city around \$5.2 million versus the \$10 million for Option 1, which would have build a new outdoor swimming pool.

"They had a very hard decision," Johnson said of the Parks Commission members.

Curtis said Parks Commission members recommended Option 2 with the caveat that the city pursue a year-round aquatic center — and possible community center.

"It was an emotional issue," Curtis said of the Parks Commission meeting to discuss the aging Crown Park pool. "But the reality is that ... making a \$400,000 investment this year just to open the pool next year is huge. And there's no guarantee that, one month in, it doesn't have another problem."

Curtis said the majority of the 1,429 people who responded to an online survey regarding the Crown Park master plan didn't want to lose the area's only public swimming pool option.

"It was clear that the community needs and wants a pool," Curtis said. "They would like to see a year-round aquatic center, so that means it would need to be covered."

Curtis said there are several partners, including the city of Washougal, the Port of Camas-Washougal, both area school districts and, most recently, the YMCA, that are interested in working with the city of Camas to develop a regional community center and possible year-round aquatic center.

The information presented on Monday night was not the last time Camas City Council members will discuss options for Crown Park and its failing pool.

"This was just a first brush," Mayor Higgins said. "We are not asking for a decision tonight. You will see this again ... tonight was to plant the seeds and to show the reality of (the Department of Public Health's) report and see the work that has been done so far."

To read more about the Crown Park assessment and master plan options, visit www.camaspstrecord.com and search for the article, "Community Weighs in on future of Camas Crown Park outdoor pool," published in the July 27, 2017 issue of The Post-Record. To view the entire exchange at Monday night's city council workshop, visit www.ci.camasa.wa.us/yourgovernment/minuteagendavideo.

"Every time there is a problem, we worry that it's something that might close the pool down (for the season)," Curtis said.

In February, a committee working on a Crown Park master plan started to ponder options for repairing, upgrading or replacing the aging pool.

Worse for people who had hoped the pool might be able to make it through a few more seasons, is new information from the state's Department of Public Health showing that the city would need to spend about \$400,000 to simply reopen the problematic pool for the 2018 summer season.

"Almost everything in the pool is failing," Johnson said Monday night.

Along with Camas Parks and Recreation Manager Jerry Acheson, Johnson presented city council members with a recommendation that took into account the concerns and wishes of more than 1,400 community members, as well as the entire Parks and Recreation Commission.

Instead of repairing the pool, the Parks and Recreation Commission has recommended that city leaders move forward with "Option 2," a plan that would replace the pool with an interactive water feature, build a restroom at the park, consolidate the two playgrounds at Crown Park into one main playground, keep the park's tennis courts, improve the trail system, build a multi-sport court where Scout Hall is currently located inside Crown Park and move the Scout Hall building into a more wooded area to give the structure a more rustic, "cabin feel."

Kelly Moyer ()

Post-Record staff writer

[Send an Email \(mailto:kelly.moyer@camaspstrecord.com\)](mailto:kelly.moyer@camaspstrecord.com)