

## **A Little Bit of Swimming Pool History**

Leavenworth's first public pool was constructed in the mid-1950's and was opened for use in the spring of 1957. In 1997, after many, many years of regular and continuous use, the pool was showing its 40-year age. Due to construction flaws, the pool was progressively deteriorating – the concrete crumbling and leaking. The pool had other hurdles to consider as well. The pool dimensions no longer conformed with competitive swimming requirements, there was no shallow wading area for toddlers, a deep end not deep enough to allow for the use of a diving board, deck areas too small to meet demands, a too-small bath house very much in need of renovations, a dangerous highway location, and inadequate, unimproved parking. To address these issues, the mayor appointed a citizen committee consisting of 15 members who reflected a wide range of ages and interests and lived both inside and outside Leavenworth's city limits. The determination was made that the pool needed to be replaced.

The mayor's citizen committee determined that a Park and Recreation Service Area (PRSA), as provided for in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 36, was the preferred means of establishing a funding base for developing a replacement of the old pool. In order to form the PRSA, supporting signatures were gathered from within the subject boundaries (City of Leavenworth, Chumstick, Icicle, and Peshastin precincts) to validate a petition presented to the Chelan County Auditor's Office, making the PRSA formation proposal eligible to appear on the general election ballot. The PRSA formation process also included a requirement to perform a feasibility and cost study which would be made available to the County Commission prior to a County public hearing on whether or not to proceed with an election to form the PRSA. An Upper Valley Park and Recreation Service Area Project Feasibility Study was prepared by the City of Leavenworth to satisfy that requirement.

The feasibility and cost study addressed pool use patterns, revenue and expenditure patterns, and identified options for replacing or repairing the existing swimming pool. These options were: get out of the swimming pool business altogether, rehabilitate the existing pool, build a new conventional outdoor pool, build a new covered indoor pool, or build a new outdoor aquatic facility. The committee then had to address the operational costs of each of the options. The cumulative impact of the old pool's problems and the extent to which the swimming pool was used identified by the committee led to the decision that a completely new outdoor aquatic facility be built.

Once the project was agreed upon, funding options needed to be identified and addressed. These options included Park and Recreation grants, solicitation of donations, use of existing City assets, partnerships with other public agencies, sale of non-voted general obligation bonds, and a voter approved property tax. The committee determined that each individual funding option would not provide sufficient funds to finance the development of the project, and there was general concern about the burden that might be placed on taxpayers. Thus, a strategy that employed using a wide variety of funding options was formulated.

Because an aquatic center located in Leavenworth would have regional benefits, a regional tax base, in the form of the Parks and Recreation Service Area, was proposed. The Service Area represented an assessed valuation of \$320 million, more than twice the valuation of the city, which had a valuation of \$156 million at the time of the study. By employing the PRSA funding base, costs are distributed more equally among the users of the facility. The City pledged to operate and maintain the facility with its own staff and resources, and people who reside within the PRSA boundaries can use the pool at a lower cost because they live in the taxing districts that support the pool's operation.