

## **Arlington Aquatics Committee 2020 Activities<sup>1</sup>**

### Purpose

The Arlington Aquatics Committee (AC) is a joint committee of the Arlington County Board and the School Board. The AC is charged with ensuring community engagement in the operation and use of the Arlington indoor swimming pools located within the three high schools (hereafter known as the “pools”) and with making recommendations, as needed, on behalf of users to the County Board, through the Sports Commission (SC), and to the School Board.

### Structure and Membership

The AC is comprised of ten members (five appointed by the County Board and five appointed by the School Board). The AC County Board Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) staff liaison is Maija Paegle. The Arlington Public School Board (SB) staff liaison is Helena Machado.

As the year opened, the County Board members of the Committee included Marilyn Judson (Vice-Chair), Janet Eichers, Carla Fletcher, and a vacancy (Mladenovic). The School Board members were Cynthia Hilton (Chair), Guy Land, MacKenzie Kearney, Kristi Sawert, and Ron Kampeas. In January, the Eichers’ term ended and Judson resigned. These three County Board-appointed vacancies were filled, in July, by Trish Madden (vice Judson) and David Pilch (vice Mladenovic), and in August, by Jennifer Connor (vice Eichers). Subsequently, David Pilch moved out of the County. In December, Edwin Allen replaced Pilch. Due to term limits, one School Board seat became vacant in October and three others in November. In December, these four members were replaced Kathleen Brueger (vice Hilton), Brian Miles (vice Kampeas), Paul Palazzola (vice Lund), and Shannel Shorter (vice Kearney). Additionally, Seamens announced that he would be leaving his position at the end of January 2021. In December, the County Board also named Bonnie Stroup to replace Seamens.

### Meetings

The AC met eight times in 2020. The AC began the continued practice of rotating meetings between the County’s three high school-based pools and the APS Syphax facility. However due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, beginning in June the meetings were held virtually and continue to be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

During these meetings, public comment was received and was exclusively on issues related to Covid safety protocols and complimenting the pool staff for reopening under such constraints.

### FY 2021 Work Plan

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by the AC February 16, 2021.

The AC adopted a work plan to coincide with the 2020-21 school year. The elements of the work plan follow:

- Memorandum of Agreement Revision – MOA defines the working relationship between DPR and APS on the operation and management of Arlington’s APS pools. Revisions were put on hold since the pandemic delayed the opening of the Long Bridge Park (LBP) aquatics center.
- Budget – The AC continued to support parity of Operation and Management fees charged to community users of Arlington’s public pools. The AC supported a proposal, that ultimately was implemented, allowing for APS to charge the standard admission fee to participants of DPR programs as they would be charged if they were attending for recreational swim. This is in line with all members of the community paying their fair share of the admission and cost.
- SC/AC Relationship – Both the SC and AC revised their respective charters during the year and submitted them for approval. The AC expressed concern over language proposed by the SC that the SC “oversees” the AC and that the SC is the “conduit” between the AC and County Board. The AC continues to endorse and, in fact, proposes in its charter revisions that all aquatic issues in the County be delegated to the AC, with a direct report to the County Board through the Board’s member liaison and notice to the SC. This structure aligns with other joint committees and would avoid public confusion about which advisory committee was tasked to represent and address these concerns, particularly in view of the FY 2021 opening of the LBP facility.
- Parking Deficiencies – The AC was in discussions with the Department of Environmental Services (DES) to reverse the decision to remove 23 parking spaces on the westside of Quincy St adjacent to the WL campus. The decision was put on hold due to the delay in construction caused by the pandemic.
- Board Swimming Pool Policies/MOA Revision - Both the M-15 & APS Policy Implementation Plan M-15-1 are up for revision. The AC has a subcommittee dedicated to working with APS and providing comment at every stage of this revision. The subcommittee has met three times and provided comments for review and will continue to do so throughout the revision process.

#### Participation in Work Groups, Committees, and Other Processes

Sports Commission: Ms. Sawert serves as the liaison for the SC and regularly reports to the AC on aquatics-related matters before the SC. As noted above, the AC and SC are considering changes to their charters to facilitate communications with the Board. Other areas of collaboration have included parking concerns.

Facilities: Ms. Hilton is the liaison between the AC and the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission. She continues to report to the AC on issues relevant to aquatics and will monitor the Ed Center as it relates to dedicated parking for use by aquatics, fields and planetarium patrons. She will further keep the AC apprised of movement at the Career Center site if/when plans to develop that site as a high school resume.

Budget Process: The APS Budget Advisory Committee, in response to the budget gap, requested members to take a liaison role with committees that impact the APS budget. The objective is to

understand and explore how each activity impacts the budget; to encourage consideration of measures to narrow the gap; and to provide two-way communication about any budget-impacting items. Katherine Christiansen is the AC liaison. She ensures that the Aquatics Committee is fully aware of its budget impacts. She has reported back to BAC on the gap size, and about options to close it. I also raised with BAC about the issue for capital budgeting as all the "new" pools are starting to need major maintenance.

Long Bridge Park Aquatics Center (LBP): The AC has no official advisory role for the LBP. A presentation was made to the AC in October 2020 that included a virtual walk through and explanation of the construction progress and operational plan. The AC maintains its interest in taking on advisory functions for the aquatics uses of the LBP facilities. The Committee believes that the County’s aquatics community will be best served by one advisory committee facilitating communications and working to harmonize aquatics policy with the County and School Boards.

Other Issues Addressed in 2020

Covid protocols – a large majority of AC discussions in 2020 concerned ongoing Covid safety protocols and how APS is initiating and implementing policies that will keep the pools open and swimmers safe. The vast majority of both public and committee feedback has been positive regarding steps taken thus far.

Improving Communications: The AC is charged with being a conduit between Arlington aquatic users and the County and School Boards. The AC has struggled to ensure that the County’s swimmers are aware of AC activities, including the fact that one of the primary functions of the AC is to serve as a forum for the community to voice opinions and concerns. While listservs are maintained by DPR and APS for program purposes, the AC does not have access to these listservs. The AC launched a listserv in the fall of 2019 and continues to encourage swimmers to join and actively participate.

2019 Communications to the Boards<sup>2</sup>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Statement/Letter</b>	<b>Date</b>
Response to Sports Commission Concerns	County Board	Letter	2/11/2020
Revisions to School Board Policy	School Board	Letter	2/24/2020
Leadership Appointment	County Board	Letter	3/5/2020
Proposed Capital Improvement Plan	County Board/School Board	Letter	3/9/2020
User Fees, APS Management of Pools, and Career Center Expansion	School Board	Statement	3/25/2020
User Fees/Tax Payer Parity	School Board	Statement	4/21/2020

<sup>2</sup> AC Letters to the County Board are submitted to the Sports Commission for distribution.

User Fees/Tax Payer Parity	County Board	Statement	4/23/2020
User Fees/Tax Payer Parity	School Board	Statement	5/5/2020
Continuity of Government Ordinance Revision	County Board	Letter	5/18/2020
Virtual Meeting Letter	County Board	Letter	6/9/2020
Leadership Appointments	County Board/School Board	Letter	9/16/2020
Charter Proposed Revisions	County Board/School Board	Letter	10/16/2020
Leadership Appointment Update	County Board/School Board	Letter	10/24/2020
Projected Budget Shortfall	School Board	Letter	11/2/2020
Response to Sports Commissions Concerns	County Board	Letter	11/24/2020