Wood River Aquatics Center to keep doors closed in 2018

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER - The Wood River Aquatics Center will not open in 2018.

A decision was made due to safety concerns and multiple repairs needed that it would be best to not open the pool this year. Several Wood River officials gathered on Friday to talk about the pool's future. Mayor Cheryl Maguire and City Manager Jim Schneider were present with Finance Director Tracy Kennett and other council members for the decision.

Wood River Park and Recreation Director Jason Woody provided an elaborate presentation about the pool and repairs needed to keep the pool going.

“We are definitely not opening the doors this year,” Woody said.

Woody said it is likely the city pool will be closed forever, but his hope is with council approval and a referendum a new pool that is bigger and better could be built.

Wood River Mayor Cheryl Maguire said not opening the Aquatic Center for the 2018 season was a unanimous decision of the city council.

“It was a difficult choice but the responsible thing to do because of safety concerns and cost estimates to open this season,” she said. “There is a laundry list of needed repairs but the pump room electrical panels pose the most dire need, along with the slide filtration system and the federally mandated drain replacements.

“The council understands how important the pool is for the quality of life of the Wood River residents. It was going to be too much money to get it up and running to open this season, so much it would have exceeded its value to the city.”

Maguire said each year there are pool maintenance costs that are supplemented by the city budget.

“The pool facility has long outlived its expected life span but the time has come to face the challenge and make a decision about its future,” Maguire said.

These are repairs Maguire provided that are needed for the pool:

$40,000 - Electrical Main Replacement
$15,000 - Slide Pool Filtration System
$13,350 - Main Pool Drains
$23,788 - Diving Board Tower replacement
$11,372 - 4-Lifeguard stands
$ 2,000 - Engineer Slide Inspection
$105,510 - Total

Woody said the $105,000 in costs may not include other repairs that may be needed after an inspection to open the facility this year.

“Most of those repairs are still a band-aid fix, so to speak,” he said. “One of the main issues not addressed is the slide structure. The slide itself opened in 1984 and I looked at

others like ours and they are closed. Each year we have to have an operating structural engineer to sign off on repairs needed. The city is now in a worse place financially and to continue to throw money at the pool for band-aid fixes is not fiscally smart for the city to do at this point."

For Woody, not opening is very painful because he has been personally affiliated with it for several years not only as a supervisor, but also swam there as a child.

"I told the council this morning: the pool and the kids that it has employed for the last nine years is something I deeply care about" he said. "Many kids depend on having birthday parties there and it is also affiliated with the Wood River Triathlon, the ice cream social and so many different events. It is a huge part of people's lives. Anybody my age can remember growing up and going there. This is not easy for me, either."