

City staff presents plan to reopen municipal pool

October 12, 2020



City Councilors are encouraging city staff to get the ball rolling on as much of its plan to reopen Fred Endert Municipal Pool, rather than waiting to see if Measure S passes on election day Nov. 3.

Technically, the pool could reopen now with strict guidelines under the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy as Del Norte County is currently in the orange moderate tier.

Recreation Director Holly Wendt said in her presentation to the councilors Oct. 5 counties that are in the orange moderate and yellow minimal categories — the third and fourth tiers — can reopen indoor pools under tight regulations and restrictions.

“For us, the Fred Endert Municipal Pool can only be open when Del Norte is in the minimal yellow or in the moderate orange category,” Wendt said. “We’ve worked hard and done a lot of research and participated in a lot of meetings to come up with a reopening plan.”

However, the pool was kept closed as one of city's cost-cutting measures to address a projected \$800,000 loss for the 2020-21 fiscal year due to less revenue coming in during the pandemic. City Manager Eric Wier

explained the pool costs the city between \$220,000 to \$250,000 to keep open. He added a problem could arise if the county's position on the reopening tier changes for the worse, forcing another closure.

"To stay in the moderate, we have to estimate less than a case a day, or seven cases in a week," Wier said. "You know that we've been sort of right on the edge of this. We might have four cases in a week, we might have seven, we might have eight. There have been times we've gone over in the red, but you have to stay in red for two weeks in order to get classified as substantial. If we end up in red, the pool must close for a minimum of two weeks."

Wier asked Councilors to consider the costs of re-shutting down the pool in that scenario and urged them to wait until staff could present a proposed amendment to the city's budget in November after voters weighed in on the proposed 1 percent sales tax increase under Measure S.

"If we push it back to that Nov. 16 meeting for that decision, we would reopen some time maybe mid January if the numbers and scenario looks like that is the best course to take," Wier said.

In response, Mayor Blake Inscore said he believes staff can get reopening plans in motion without waiting for Council approval to begin.

"If we can do some free work on this, maybe we can set the first of the year, not the middle of January," Inscore said. "When I hear the middle of January, I immediately say, 'Oh, it'll be February then.' Stuff just gets pushed."

Wendt outlined the reopening plan:

- Only 27 or fewer swimmers will be allowed in the facility at a time while maintaining social distancing, unless with family groups.
- Patrons will be asked to shower before coming to the pool since locker rooms and showers will be closed.
- Entry will be through the front entrance while wearing a face covering, and exit through the side door.
- The slide, sauna and spa will remain closed.
- Recreation and family swims will remain closed.
- Reservations will be needed for lap swimmers, one swimmer per lane.
- Two lap lanes will be reserved for swimmers with disabilities, needing physical therapy or for the elderly.
- Aerobics classes of only 10 at a time will be offered with instructors teaching from the deck. Patrons must bring their own equipment.
- Youth swim lessons will also be offered with instructors teaching from the deck. Children under a blue swim school level will be required to have a parent in the water with them, to maintain social distancing for instructors. Those at higher levels can swim without a parent.

To reopen, Wendt said the number of lifeguards would need to be increased — a minimum of three during regular hours and more during lessons and activities. Lifeguards need to be re-certified and retrained under COVID-19 specific guidelines. This process should take six to eight weeks, Wendt said.

Inscore said after the presentation the city could raise its fees to cover operation costs, but that would price out many residents from using the pool. He added that's why he supports Measure S, which would generate funds to keep open the pool, in addition for Crescent City Fire & Rescue, the police department and road maintenance.

“We’re going to have to have a long term sustainable plan. Yes, we can generate more revenue by raising the costs. That’s what other communities and other municipal pools have done,” Inscore said. “The unfortunate thing, from my perspective, is raising the cost puts a disproportionate burden on the low-income community.”