

Warwick Pool renovation begins in earnest

Closed to the public for two years work on the pool began last week
 BY JAMES CULLUM

The demolition and reconstruction of Warwick Pool is officially underway, and city officials are still planning to open the new pool and bath house to the public by July. The timeline is optimistic, and if it isn't met, plans are in the works to make up for lost time by extending the season for the community pool past Labor Day, which is usually the last day of the outdoor swimming season in Alexandria.

"The pool got to the point where it was more cost effective to shut down the pool and replace it. We're in the demolition process now. If the weather holds then we should have that aspect finished by the end of this week," said Jack Browand, a division chief in the Department of Parks,

"A [July completion] is still a tight schedule if the weather cooperates. Clearly getting the pool open is great for the city. This pool has always been an important resource for this neighborhood for kids without access to pools elsewhere."

- Justin Wilson, City councilor

Recreation and Cultural Activities. "If we find that there are delays in opening the pool, we have discussed potentially adjusting the schedule in September."

The 25-yard long, 5,500 square foot Pool, two-story bathhouse and picnic area at 3301 Landover St. opened to the public in 1958. It closed in

2014 after years of neglect, and neighborhood children have been provided with free bus rides to the Old Town Pool for the last two years. The city has approximately 25 years left on its lease of the property from its owner, the Virginia Theological Seminary, and has operated the pool since 1978.

The Alexandria City Council

approved the \$2.1 million renovation last May. The project includes demolishing the 5,500 square foot swimming pool, two-story bathhouse and 42-inch kiddie pool and the construction of a 4,100 square foot swimming pool and one-story bathhouse.

"A [July completion] is still a tight schedule if the weather

cooperates," said City Councilor Justin Wilson. "Clearly getting the pool open is great for the city. This pool has always been an important resource for this neighborhood for kids without access to pools elsewhere."

Bill Rivers, the chair-

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COURTESY PHOTO
Bryon Dorr breaks down the back deck roll during a Potomac River Outfitters Exploring Elements lesson at Chinquapin Rec Center.

“This survey demonstrates that Alexandria strongly supports our local leaders committing to the construction of a new pool at Chinquapin. ... an investment in a healthy and safe future. Approximately 7,500 children in Alexandria do not know how to swim, and we need to ensure that our community affords everyone an opportunity to learn a skill that can save their life.”

- Carolyn Griglione, Member, AAA Board of Directors.

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man of Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics, said he will be pleasantly surprised if the pool opens according to schedule.

“Starting construction in March seems like a very narrow timeframe to get it done by the summer,” he said. “Being a little more skeptical, it could be done by August at least... The new pool will have some swimming lanes, a walk-in ramp and, while it won’t be able to host swimming competitions, we’re very happy that the project has started.”

That sentiment is seconded by the Warwick Village Citizens Association. Tom Williamson, President of the association, states, “We’re very happy about it. The neighborhood overwhelmingly supports the pools reopening, and we have been communicating that to the city council, and despite tough financial times they ap-

proved the project,” he said. “It’s an aggressive timeline to open this summer. I’m not holding my breath, and even if it opens next year I’ll still be happy.”

THE RIXSE POOL AT CHINQUAPIN

In December, Alexandria City Manager Mark Jinks put a hold on the \$4.5 million previously approved plan to update the Chinquapin Recreation Center with the construction of an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics, which last year signed a formal partnership with the city to coordinate public-private efforts to improve the city’s aquatics facilities, recently commissioned a survey showing that city residents favor construction of the Chinquapin pool. The survey, conducted by Hudson Pacific and based on results of ques-

tions to 300 Alexandria adults, showed that 60 percent support the construction of the pool and city investment of \$20 million.

“This survey demonstrates that Alexandria strongly supports our local leaders committing to the construction of a new pool at Chinquapin,” said

Carolyn Griglione, a member of the AAA Board of Directors. “I know there are many competing priorities in the upcoming budget but a new pool at Chinquapin is an investment in a healthy and safe future. Approximately 7,500 children in Alexandria do not know how to swim, and we need to ensure that our com-

munity affords everyone an opportunity to learn a skill that can save their life.”

Alexandria is also home to the Memorial Pool at the Charles Houston Recreation Center at 901 Wythe Street and the Old Town Pool at 1690 Cameron Street.

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