

**AQUATICS WORKING GROUP**  
**MEETING NOTES**  
**April 8, 2025**

**Location: Belle Haven Pool**

The April 8 session focused on the value and importance of various programs offered at Belle Haven Pool, the lower-than-hoped attendance at Belle Haven Pool, and the fee increases to be proposed to City Council April 15.

Participants offered the following feedback:

- Comments on the efficacy of survey methods and other forms of soliciting community feedback;
- Comments on the importance of youth swim lessons and teams to teach water safety and build generational interest and participation in swimming;
- Ideas for outreach and promoting attendance at Belle Haven Pool by the local community;
- Stories of how participants first heard about and became engaged in Belle Haven Pool programs;
- Discussion about the importance and value of swim lesson scholarships through nonprofits such as BBAF;
- Ideas for holding family swim events and other community swim events to attract new visitors to the pool;
- Suggestions to use technology such as text messages and phone calls to expand outreach;
- Suggestions that promotions emphasize that hyperlocal and swim lesson fees are relatively low and a good value, and in particular to present the swim lesson scholarships in a way that avoids creating any stigma or feeling of being socioeconomically “less than”;
- Compliments on the physical accessibility of Belle Haven Pool such as the long entry ramp and chair lifts;
- Suggestions for adjusting water exercise times to facilitate a smoother transition to other programs at Menlo Park Senior Center;
- Suggestion to work with local schools to make attendance at Menlo Park swim centers a requirement and/or credit in the school curriculum;
- Observation that Belle Haven Pool and Burgess Pool are different sizes and have different numbers of lanes so attendance comparisons are not exactly apples-to-apples;

- Observation that some Belle Haven neighborhood residents report that they continue to use Burgess Pool out of familiarity and force of habit;
- Comments that a new business can't be expected to operate at 100% capacity right away;
- Discussion about the proposed fee increases, including appreciation that fees would not increase for hyperlocal, senior, child and family residents, but concern that increasing non-resident fees too much could drive a needed revenue source away to other pools in the region;
- Consensus that some modest fee increases are appropriate due to increasing costs;
- Acknowledgments that the pool operator needs to achieve a break-even financial condition in order to continue;
- Concern that Burgess Pool is already operating at near-maximum capacity and that high attendance there cannot fully offset low attendance at Belle Haven Pool;
- Concerns that reduced hours at Belle Haven Pool during the off-season could result in lower attendance overall and in the long term;
- Concern that mechanical issues at Belle Haven Pool disrupt efforts to increase attendance;
- Comments that local community members, community-based organizations and word-of-mouth will be essential to encourage strong usage of Belle Haven Pool in the upcoming summer peak season.