

**AQUATICS WORKING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
JUNE 17, 2025**

Location: Belle Haven Pool

The June 17 session was attended by approximately 19 participants, most of whom had attended previous sessions.

The June 17 agenda (Attachment A) was primarily focused on:

- 1. Reviewing responses to the feedback from the May 20 session prepared by city staff and the aquatics operator (see below table)
- 2. Reviewing current efforts to promote the aquatics program
- 3. Organizing Belle Haven neighborhood volunteers to assist with a hyperlocal word-of-mouth campaign to promote aquatics.

Over the course of the session, participants’ comments were captured on a poster board (Attachment B).

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
1	Beautiful facility	Thank you!
2	Need to consult the community about classes, times	Thank you for your comment. Community input is welcomed and sought on a continuous basis. Staff and the operator are excited to work with neighborhood groups and CBOs on a word-of-mouth promotional effort. The annual citywide aquatics survey was conducted in November 2024. Two aquatics open houses were held in early 2025. The aquatics working group was formed and has met four times in 2025. Visitors are encouraged to offer feedback in the suggestion boxes located at both pools. The Parks and Recreation Commission held a public meetings about the aquatics program most

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		<p>recently in January. City Council has held multiple public meetings about the aquatics program most recently on Feb. 11, Apr. 15, and May 13.</p>
3	<p>Where are nearby residents? Need more outreach – neighborhood groups are happy to help!</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. It is hoped that the aquatics working group and engaged community members to identify and coordinate with neighborhood groups on a word-of-mouth effort. In addition, a citywide mailer promoting the pools will be delivered to every Menlo Park household this week.</p>
4	<p>Need more offerings for students in local schools</p>	<p>Menlo Swim and Sport has partnerships with Beechwood School, Ravenswood City School District, and Menlo Park City School District to promote City pools and make swimming part of their respective summer programs.</p>
5	<p>Hours are too short; pool closes too early in the evening for working adults</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. It would be ideal to keep the pool open later in the evenings, and it is hoped that attendance will increase over the summer to support later hours. (Belle Haven Pool is currently open until 7pm weekdays and 5pm weekends)</p>
6	<p>Swim pass should have reciprocity between Belle Haven Pool and Burgess Pool</p>	<p>Swim passes are reciprocal and work at both pools.</p>

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7	Advertise youth swim more, for example in the City's activity guide	Swimming is advertised in the City's activity guide, as well as in City newsletters, on banners, and on flyers and video screens at City facilities.
8	Instructors who speak Spanish	Menlo Swim and Sport employs instructors who speak Spanish, and is actively seeking more through hiring/training incentives like on-the-job training and lifeguard certification classes.
9	The Belle Haven Swim Team has been doing outreach to local schools, churches	Thank you for your comment.
10	Adjacent communities like Redwood City don't have pools – do outreach there	Non-residents are very welcome to visit City of Menlo Park pools. The City's primary focus is to encourage Menlo Park residents to use Belle Haven Pool, especially residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the pool.
11	Questions – who is responsible for outreach, the City or the Operator?	Thank you for your comment. All parties have a role to play in outreach to ensure the pools' success -- City, pool operator and community.
12	Outreach to Kelly Park users (soccer teams, etc.)	Thank you for the suggestion.

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
13	Traffic varies by time of day – hard to get here; timing of classes is important	Thank you for your comment. The operator tries to take the traffic into account when creating swim schedules.
14	Sign on fence, “Public Pool” multilingual	This has been completed.
15	“Dollar Day” swim event	Thank you for the suggestion. A flyer with an offer for one free swim at Belle Haven Pool has been mailed to every Menlo Park household and will be delivered the week of June 16-19
16	Aqua fit class is impactful, add more at reduced price	Thank you for the suggestion. The operator is currently focused on filling the two classes currently being offered, then expanding to additional classes.
17	Residents in other communities need pool access, including East Palo Alto who also receive BBAF scholarships	Belle Haven Pool is open to the public and residents of East Palo Alto and other communities are welcomed.
18	Why are there no City Council members present?	The aquatics working group is intended to be a community-based forum for community members to engage directly with City staff and the aquatics operator. It is not intended as a formal public meeting, and City Councilmembers generally do

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		not attend, in accordance with Brown Act requirements that discussions and/or decisions that involve a quorum of the City Council be made only during a formal, public, noticed meeting.
19	Can't make people do something they don't want to do (i.e. come to the pool) – subsidize the pool to encourage participation	Thank you for your comment.
20	All Menlo Park residents are residents of the City, and Belle Haven neighborhood residents have unique/ different needs	Thank you for your comment. Yes, the work of the aquatics working group, the upcoming citywide mailer and promotional offer, and the planned word-of-mouth effort are focused on Belle Haven Pool in recognition of the unique needs of Belle Haven neighborhood residents.
21	Partner with schools for outreach	Menlo Swim and Sport has partnerships with Beechwood School, Ravenswood City School District, and Menlo Park City School District to promote City pools and make swimming part of their respective summer programs.
22	Disappointed that Aquafit paused; please bring it back	The Aquafit classes will restart on June 17.

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23	Traffic from Palo Alto to Belle Haven Pool is hard. Focus on people who live nearby	Thank you for your comment. The operator tries to take the traffic into account when creating swim schedules. The primary focus of Belle Haven Pool is to serve residents who live nearby.
24	“Reality check” – need to subsidize the pool operations, hours and access	Thank you for your comment.
25	Gym user: Is price a factor preventing more use?	A general rule of thumb is that the lower the price, the more use will result. Fee revenues are the primary means of covering the high costs of the aquatics operation, and so the challenge is to find the right balance between keeping fees low and the need to generate revenue to adequately cover operating costs.
26	Need to do footwork to reach low-income residents	Thank you for your comment. Staff and the operator are excited to work with neighborhood groups and CBOs on a word-of-mouth promotional effort, in addition to a bilingual mailer/ promotional offer and other efforts.
27	Some parents don’t speak English, need other methods	The City and operator strive to provide marketing materials in English and Spanish.

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
28	Send a card or activity guide by mail	A flyer with a promotional offer for one free swim at Belle Haven Pool has been mailed to every Menlo Park household and should arrive in mailboxes the week of June 16-19
29	Swimming is time and money; not all have it, Communicate that there are scholarships, low rates	Thank you for your comment. Scholarships and hyperlocal discounts are featured aspects of the overall promotional strategy.
30	Swimmers often grow up "in the water" and carry forward as adults, pass it on to children	Thank you for your comment. Yes, it takes consistent effort over many years to build a community of intergenerational repeat swimmers
31	Belle Haven Swim Team prioritizes getting kids into the water through access, low price, equipment, meet fees	Thank you for your comment.
32	Survey Belle Haven Pool users about preferred days/times	Thank you for your comment. The aquatics survey results, combined with attendance data led to focusing on afternoon hours over early morning.
33	Don't overlook adults	What is it that adults of the BH are most interested in?

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
34	Swimming is part of a swimmer's life	Thank you for your comment. Yes, for many swimmers, it is a lifestyle.
35	Word of mouth is important, effective	Thank you for your comment. It is hoped that the aquatics working group will help lead the way to inspire CBOs and neighborhood groups to engage with a neighborhood word-of-mouth effort.
36	Grassroots community engagement to help people feel like the pool is theirs	Thank you for your comment. It is hoped that the aquatics working group will help lead the way to inspire CBOs and neighborhood groups to engage with a neighborhood word-of-mouth effort.
37	Can there be evening Aquafit?	Thank you for the question. The operator is currently focused on filling the two classes currently being offered, then expanding to additional classes such as evening classes.
38	(In Spanish) (Translation) Unclear what is available for seniors. I went to the pool; it was closed due to a breakdown, I had a pass from a different pool, and couldn't get help/information—it was confusing	Seniors are welcome to the pool and there are several programs that are tailored to seniors. We apologize for any confusion about the services available, and for the unfortunate mechanical issues that closed the pool a few times during its first summer of operation. The Operator has reached out to this commenter to learn more about their experience at the pool.

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
39	Discount rate for East Palo Alto residents?	Aquatic fees are set by the City Council through the Master Fee Schedule. The vast majority of recreational fees only provide discounts to Menlo Park residents. The reason is that only Menlo Park residents pay the local taxes that support the recreational facilities and services.
40	Menlo Park is effectively two communities, but only one can easily access Belle Haven Pool – it was built for them, focus on Belle Haven neighborhood residents	Yes, the primary focus for Belle Haven Pool is to encourage use by neighborhood residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the pool.
41	All kids love to swim, if given the chance	Thank you for your comment.
	Strategies for increasing attendance	Response
42	Afterschool swim programs in coordination w/ schools	Menlo Swim and Sport has partnerships with Beechwood School, Ravenswood City School District, and Menlo Park City School District to promote City pools and make swimming part of their respective summer programs.
43	Repeated, direct outreach to local schools	Menlo Swim and Sport has partnerships with Beechwood School, Ravenswood City School District, and Menlo Park City School District to

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		<p>promote City pools and make swimming part of their respective summer programs.</p>
44	<p>Social media, local "influencers" as inspiration/examples</p>	<p>Thank you for the suggestions. It would be helpful to hear ideas about specific people who could serve as "influencers"</p>
45	<p>Special education students – dedicated/special participation times</p>	<p>Thank you for the suggestion.</p>
46	<p>Analysis of root causes of low attendance; focus groups and surveys?</p>	<p>The City Council staff report April 15, 2025 included a root cause analysis that identified a number of factors that appears to be affecting attendance, including but not limited to: It takes time to build a community of repeat users; maintenance issues during the opening summer hindered attendance; configuration of major transportation corridors and location of pool at far edge of the city boundaries result in a somewhat limited audience of users in the immediate vicinity of the pool.</p>
47	<p>There's no lack of interest or good ideas – now mobilization is needed</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. It is hoped that the aquatics working group will help lead the way on a neighborhood word-of-mouth effort.</p>
48	<p>Who is responsible for success? City did a good</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. All parties have a role to play in the pool's success -- City, pool</p>

Ref #	Feedback from participants at the May 20 session	Responses by city staff and aquatics operator
	job building the pool, but is not investing in its ongoing success	operator and community. The City currently contributes over \$1 million per year to maintain the pool facilities, and provides advertising and promotional support.
49	Disappointed none of the City Council members are here	The aquatics working group is intended to be a community-based forum for community members to engage directly with City staff and the aquatics operator. It is not intended as a formal public meeting, and City Councilmembers generally do not attend, in accordance with Brown Act requirements that discussions and/or decisions that involve a quorum of the City Council be made only during a formal, public, noticed meeting.
50	Show up to the City Council meeting, Parks and Recreation Commission meetings	Thank you for your comment. Meetings of the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission are open to the public and public comments are welcomed.
51	Can't expect any business to run at a loss	Thank you for your comment.

**AGENDA
AQUATICS WORKING GROUP
JUNE 17, 2025**

6:00 Introductions

- Sign-in sheet
- Refreshments
- Agenda review
- Feedback board for capturing comments

6:05 Go around the room - sharing

- Briefly introduce yourself and share what brought you to today's working group
- Share one good thing you hope for the aquatics program in Menlo Park

6:25 Feedback and responses from the May 20 session

- Review feedback matrix
- Discussion/ comments / new feedback

6:55 Review of current marketing efforts to promote aquatics

- Review summary list
- New flyer/mailer and promotional offer
- Discussion/ comments / feedback

7:05 Word-of-mouth promotional campaign

- Identify CBO's, neighborhood groups, locations
- Confirm/ assign volunteers from aquatics working group
- Organize flyers, talking points
- Reporting back, coordination
- Q-and-A

7:25 Wrap-up

- Sign-in sheet reminder
- Feedback board and notes to be distributed and posted to website
- Thank you!

Marketing efforts to promote aquatics

June 17, 2025

Here is a summary of marketing and outreach efforts Menlo Swim and Sport (MSS) is undertaking in partnership with City of Menlo Park (City) to promote attendance at the pools.

Community-based organizations (CBO's) and schools:

- Partnering with Beechwood School for their 2025 summer camp students to take swim lessons at Belle Haven Pool this summer
- In discussions with Boys and Girls Club for a similar partnership for 2025 summer
- Coordinating with City of Menlo Park to connect with Belle Haven neighborhood groups and the Aquatics working group to support a word-of-mouth campaign to promote swim center attendance by the community
- Partnered with Ravenswood School District to distribute a promotional flyer focused on youth and family swim programs to the school community before the summer break
- Partnered with Menlo Park City School District to distribute a promotional flyer focused on youth and family swim programs to the school community before the summer break

Printed items/direct mail:

- Banner advertising pool hours, "open to the public" is in production and will be placed on the fence at Belle Haven Pool
- Coordinating with City of Menlo Park to promote the pools on a citywide direct mail piece to all city and unincorporated addresses to be delivered to mailboxes the week of June 16. (Includes a coupon for 1 free lap/drop-in swim at Belle Haven Pool, good through August 10 and promotes the City recreation programs, summer camps and activity guide)
- A follow up handbill (for hand-to-hand distribution) is planned, possibly will include additional incentives for Belle Haven Pool visits

Digital:

- Email campaigns to Menlo Swim and Sport's list of over 20,000 subscribers once per week
- Paid Instagram advertising
- Google Adwords placements
- Places ads and listings in local camp lists/blogs
- Ongoing coordination with City of Menlo Park to include aquatics promotion in LCS newsletter to 35,000 subscribers once per week, and on City video monitors

Aquatics working group
Feedback and responses
May 20, 2025

Ref #	General feedback	Response
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**Aquatics working group
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48	Who is responsible for success? City did a good job building the pool, but is not investing in its ongoing success	Thank you for your comment. All parties have a role to play in the pool's success -- City, pool operator and community. The City currently contributes over \$1 million per year to maintain the pool facilities, and provides advertising and promotional support.
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AQUATICS WORKING GP. 6/17/2025

Sharing - what brought you?
one good thing to share?

- desire to spread interest in swimming
- fitness instructor - 25 years
- Swim team coach BH. want lots of kids at pool
- Swimmer, local, want everyone in neighborhood to benefit.
- Local, access for all
- Believe that all ages should swim
- want to hear the feedback, hope the local neighborhood gets excited about pool
- Lifelong swimmer - want to understand financial challenges, share ideas,
- BH local, swimmer, BNNA president, want community to know about / use BH pool

2

- 2 want to dispel perception that
BH residents "don't want to swim,"
they just need access, means to do
- concerned about financial issues,
seek solutions
 - water exercise user, Hope for
sponsors for BH swim team,
funding for free/subsidized activities
 - PA res. - MP swimmer,
supporter of swim team, want
to see more kids at BH pool
from local schools, community
 - BH resident - Happy to see mailer
and coupon - more of that?
 - Daughter on swim team - like the
mailer/coupon
-

③ matrix of feedback / responses

Staff reviewed select responses
#2, #6, #8, #15, #18, #21,
#22, #30, #46, #47

Feedback

- Need Spanish speakers to help get info at Aquafit, other classes
- How has summer break attendance been?
[It has picked up w/ summer break and summer programs.]
- Why isn't BIG club at PH Pool?
They are going to other location for summer. Outreach to those programs.
- City contributes \$1 m to the pool / year -
at what point would the pool close for lack of funds?
- What does the maint. costs entail?
Who is paying? [City]
[operator pays for day-to-day operations]
- Why were Burgess hours reduced?
[control labor costs]

④

- Can we get financial information about pool operations, shortfall.
- Pool is built by the City, Operator runs it.
- Facebook made gift contingent on their employees having access? [No] [focus is on hyperlocal residents, there is no special access for FB employees.]
- Bilingual lifeguards? [Yes, and working to hire more.] [Not always on deck, yet.]
- Swim team eventually can lead to youth lifeguards. [Certifications are earned as well.] [MSS is a competitive employer - large team, strong recruiting capacity.]
- Which schools are target for lifeguard recruiting? [Mostly M.A] but others too

⑤

- Red cross website has info where youth can get lifeguard training.

[MSS offers w/o lifeguard classes/year, in-house trainers]

- BBAF also give scholarships for lifeguard training? [Majority of MSS new hires are local]

- Water polo used to be robust; status update?
Could expand reach, bring revenue.

[Olt Pool is designed to support water polo in the future]

- Second comment / testimonial about the former water polo program & coach @ BH
Comment on stigma / different response by residents not from BH about BH

⑥

Marketing efforts in progress

[in agenda packet]

[distributed flyer/mailed]

aquafit instructor
- outreached
to senior
center program

~~WORD OF MOUTH PLANNING~~

(2)

Feedback / suggestions

- Food trucks
@ pool?

Local stores

- Bday party rentals?

public transit ads

- @ @ family
celebrations

BHCD

Senior center

(WATER SAFETY MESSAGE)

Segmented marketing, targets

Talking points, tailored

Target meta employees in morning? lunch?
and other employers

+ PRESCHOOLS

⑦ WORD OF MOUTH MOBILIZATION

LIAISON / VOLUNTEER	GROUP	# FLYERS
Eduardo H.	CRC	
	Nuestra Casa	
Miyko	BH empowered	
Miyko	BHNA BHCDF	
Miyko	BH Action P. Bridge	
Miyko +	Local (BH) retail Schools	
Arlene / alexia	Summer camp Girls 2 women	~25
Lalo	Ravenswood Health	
Rochelle	B & G club EPA food boxes - 2nd Harvest other AID's	