

Council opts to fill in 50-year-old facility Outdoor pool 'has lived its life'

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Staff Writer

It's not easy pulling the plug on a part of your town's history, but Halton Hills councillors, saying they had no choice, did it anyways.

The Dick Licata Outdoor Pool, a part of children's summers in Georgetown for half a century, will be drained permanently and re-filled with fill and sod.

Instead, the Town will spend \$600,000 to build a splash pad to be located in Dominion Gardens Park. It's hoped the splash pad will be ready for the summer 2008 season.

Council gave its unanimous approval at a special council meeting Monday.

"I'm extremely upset that the Dick Licata Pool has failed. I know that it has lived its life," said Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson. "I think it did perform a valuable service to the citizens of Halton Hills and in particular young people, who used it in the summertime when it was hot and they wanted to cool off. So it is distressing that we have lost it very suddenly."

Recreation and Parks recommended the permanent closure due to:

- deteriorating structure conditions requiring its replacement. This includes crumbling pool walls, leaking pipes, and an aging filtration system that no longer met Ontario Building Code standards. The engineer hired to evaluate the pool said it was uncommon for an outdoor pool to have a lifespan longer than 35-40 years.
- declining participation levels, resulting from the proliferation of backyard pools, the opening the Gellert Centre's splash pad and the popularity of its recreational pool, changing demographics, health concerns over exposure to sun and the unpredictability of the weather
- higher operating costs (\$66,830 per year).

It costs about \$31,500 a year to operate a splash pad.

The Town will spend \$70,000 to remove the pool and replace it with fill and sod.

The Dick Licata Pool was built 51 years ago as a result of a community fundraising program, and Johnson wondered if there was a will in the community to do the same for another outdoor pool.

But Alyman said no one has come forward since the pool's closure in June to indicate their willingness to spearhead a drive.

The Dick Licata Outdoor Pool, located behind Memorial Arena and the Georgetown Lions Club hall, was named after a well-known Lions Club member who was instrumental in its construction. In 2006, the community celebrated the 50th anniversary of the pool. Lion past president Jim Wilson said, "Fifty years of continuous swimming opportunities for residents is indeed a great milestone to have been a part of."

Sometime in the future the Town will study the redevelopment of the Lions/Memorial Arena site.

"There's still an opportunity to look at an outdoor pool again at that site ...but I just want to go on record— don't forget to call me when you're at that phase," said Johnson.

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville remembers as a child playing in the Acton Wading Pool in Prospect Park and wondered whether a similar fate will occur there.

Manager of facilities Paul Stover agreed, "Its age is an issue as well," noting the number of repairs that have been done over the past few years. Its replacement with a splash pad is tentatively included in the 2008 Recreation and Parks capital budget program.

(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

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