

Building a pool not even on the Town's 'radar'

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anyone, we don't have a swimming pool and everything (they want to do) requires a drive out of town."

Town officials say there is no plan to build an outdoor municipal swimming pool in Halton Hills.

"This isn't an item that is even on our radar," Terry Alyman, Commissioner of Community & Corporate Services, says.

During a telephone interview, he adds that the town has not received any communication from citizens who want an outdoor community swimming pool in Halton Hills.

The former swimming pool was located behind the now demolished Memorial Arena, as part of Lions Park. After the Town sells the land to developers, the plan is to have high-density housing and a park on the 1.36 hectares (3.4 acres) of land, which connects with Mill St. and Dayfoot Dr. The last public meeting on this development was in May.

The pool opened in the 1950s after the Georgetown Lions Club raised most of the funds for the \$50,000 capital project and then handed the property over to the Town, according to a front page article in the *Georgetown Herald* in August 1956. It celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2006. This was also its last year open, with an operating budget of \$52,500 from the tax base.

In 1980, the outdoor pool was renamed the Dick Licata Memorial Swimming Pool in honour of the man who played a vital role in its planning and construction. Licata was a member of the Lions Club. A



Many parents are wondering why the Town doesn't have an outdoor pool. The closest public outdoor swimming pool to Georgetown is in Milton.

local grocer, he also served with the local chamber of commerce.

Alyman says his childhood memories of swimming outdoors happened around a lake— not a pool— but he can understand if some community members have sentimental yearnings for an outdoor public pool in their own town.

"Different people have different ideas of what's important," Alyman says.

Although capital spending on an outdoor community swimming pool is not included in the current strategic plan that expires in 2017, there's always the possibility that it could be considered for inclusion in the new 10-year plan if taxpayers demand it.

"We want to make sure to balance the cost of operating an out-

door pool with the demand for it. These are always the issues we look at when investing in public assets like that."

He says the trend across North America and the UK is to close aged public swimming pools. Reasons given for this include: costs being too high, the dangers of sun exposure, backyard swimming pools and water features becoming increasingly popular and affordable, and the fact that an indoor municipal pool allows access to swimming no matter what the temperature is outside. Outdoor municipal swimming pools are only open 10 weeks every year.

Georgetown resident Rob Ferrara, 48, has a backyard swimming pool. Still, he says he would pay more taxes to so everyone has ac-

cess to a municipal outdoor swimming pool.

"It would be a benefit to the community," Ferrara says. "There are a lot of people who would like to go to an outdoor pool. A lot of people avoid indoor swimming pools because they are sensitive to the smell of chlorine."

He says his relatives come over to enjoy their backyard swimming pool often but he's sure if they had the option they would enjoy a public community swimming pool too.

One could argue, there is free access to swimming at Fairy Lake in Acton, but Ferrara says that's another swimming experience altogether.

"There are bacteria issues (at beaches)," he says.

Around the same time that

Georgetown's swimming pool was closed about a decade ago, a community in Vancouver's New Westminster area lobbied to keep their outdoor watering hole from being decommissioned.

Dozens of adults and children visited city hall in their swimsuits demanding the old pool be refurbished or replaced. They got their wish at a cost of \$5 million to replace the pool in the Moody Park neighbourhood.

Here at home, splash pads are meant to replace the outdoor public pools, Alyman says.

"As we were decommissioning the Dick Licata pool we made sure the splash pad was up and running," Alyman says. The Gellert splash pad opened in 2000. The Town's goal is to have a splash pad for every 4,000 children up to age 14 in Halton Hills.

"There is an assumption that splash pads are for very small children but that is not true," he says. "We want to encourage all people to use it, especially in an extended heat alert. The water play features are designed for everyone to enjoy. It is fully universal. Even seniors can enjoy it."

"I haven't heard about any community that has constructed an outdoor pool recently. When you are investing in public infrastructure you need to look at the cost and overall benefit," Alyman says.

The closest public outdoor swimming pool to Georgetown is in Milton at The Rotary Park on 100 Garden Lane. But that facility will likely be part of local lore in years to come, replaced by more splash pads.

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