



# City of Grand Island

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

Study Session

## Item -1

### Presentation of Aquatic Study

Staff Contact: Steve Paustian

# **Council Agenda Memo**

**From:** Steve Paustian, Parks and Recreation Director

**Meeting:** November 16, 2004

**Subject:** Aquatic Study Report

**Item #'s:** 1

**Presenter(s):** Steve Paustian, Parks and Recreation Director  
Calvin T. Brannon, Aquatic Consultant

## **Background**

For the last few months the City has been involved with C.T. Brannon Corporation to analyze aquatic facilities in Grand Island. The study was conducted to attempt to bring the most efficient and effective aquatics program available to the citizens of Grand Island.

## **Discussion**

Calvin T. Brannon of C.T. Brannon Corporation will be on hand at the Study Session to walk through his final aquatic facility study. Attached is an Executive Summary of the final report for Council review. The entire report will be available for the Council and the public during the Study Session.

## **Conclusion**

This item is presented to the City Council in a Study Session to allow for any questions to be answered and to create a greater understanding of the issue at hand.

It is the intent of City Administration to bring this issue to a future council meeting for council approval to establish a road map for the development of aquatic facilities for the community.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June, 2004 the city council authorized the staff to enter into agreement with **The C.T. Brannon Corporation** to prepare a study of aquatic facilities in Grand Island with respect to their condition, their best utilization, eventual disposition and adequacy to meet current and future needs in the city.

Brannon has completed that study and reports now the findings of the study group. The team involved aquatic specialists, personnel and business specialists, architects and engineers.

The project was broken down into:

- **FACILITY INVENTORY**
- **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- **ANALYSIS OF NEEDS**
- **METHODS OF MEETING THOSE NEEDS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION**
- **NONE CONSTRUCTION METHODS**

The study is not intended to provide the city with floor plans, site plans, or detailed specifications. Those items will come later with the participation of design professionals who will 'program' the various projects with the staff, city council and end users to best fit the sites and the intended uses of each facility.

The plan encompasses recommendations that we believe will take some ten years to fully develop, mostly limited by the city's willingness or ability to raise finances and budget for some very costly expansion projects in the face of other community priorities. We find there are usually some needs that are more urgent than others when we prepare studies such as this one. We usually recommend that **life safety** issues be handled first. Fortunately, we did not observe substantive life safety issues at Grand Island pools. For the most part, they are code compliant with the new 2004 Nebraska Health and Human Services Requirements for Constructing and Operating Swimming Pools and the few non-conforming issues are grand-fathered or waived. These items were mostly mechanical issues and not safety concerns.

There are some specific needs however.

**Lincoln Pool.** Lincoln Pool is obsolete in its design and, although poorly attended, it has broad community support in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. We are a strong advocate of neighborhood pools and are recommending in this study a complete demolition and reconstruction of a more modern pool with more amenities. The purpose is two-fold: 1) meet the needs of the neighborhood for a locally accessible aquatic site, and 2) increase attendance and therefore revenues at Lincoln Pool. We do not believe that Lincoln Pool will "pay its own way" even if our recommendations are fully implemented but it will come closer to a break-even situation.

We know of few neighborhood pools that do pay their way but then neither do tennis courts, most ball diamonds, and city streets. It is for exactly those reasons that cities choose to provide these facilities because the citizens demand them and the private sector will not provide them.

Water parks and neighborhood swimming pools are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, do not compete with each other. There are different community roles for both and we do not recommend putting the city's proverbial eggs in one basket.

**Island Oasis.** We are recommending an ambitious ten year plan for Island Oasis to keep it the premier water park in Nebraska and the "biggest water park between Des Moines and Denver" as the website says. In order to keep its position at the top of the market place, Island Oasis must add new features, remove outdated features, and expand. The park is wonderfully popular, well designed, and something of which the community is extremely proud and rightfully so.

The expansion ideas we present include addition of a children's water park with children's themes to enhance the park for infants, toddlers and small children up to second grade as well as their parents and grand parents. We are recommending in early years of the plan to add a thrill ride called a Master Blaster, a roller coaster tube slide for two persons at a time which we believe alone will add twenty five percent or more to the paid attendance at Island Oasis. We think it will justify higher admission charges as well.

In later years, we are recommending building additional restroom facilities to 'up' the plumbing fixture counts that will, by code, restrict attendance at the park. We are recommending addition of a large group pavilion to attract large parties, catered events and business groups, and which allows live or recorded music confined to one area of the park.

Further, we are recommending construction of a lagoon pool suitable for median to older adults in a more quiescent setting with activities these age groups prefer.

**Capital Heights.** We are recommending immediate creation of a joint facilities committee to be comprised of YMCA, school districts, and city officials to advance the idea of a common facility for housing recreation needs in addition to therapeutic, leisure, and competition aquatics. We recommend they be empowered to hire consultants such as architects, engineers, and recreational and aquatic consultants to create *preliminary* plans and budgets for a facility. It is only with those realistic budgets in hand that the city can determine its financing options. And, we recommend that the middle school site on west 13<sup>th</sup> Street west of U.S. 281 be considered as a primary location for a joint use facility.

We believe strong public support exists for such a structure in this neighborhood and that early and very, very preliminary discussions indicate a willingness from the school to consider providing the site, the YMCA to operate and market the facility, and the city might have the financial wherewithal to provide initial capital for its construction.

We recommend the facility be furnished with two or more indoor pools sized appropriately and heated to appropriate temperatures to meet the warm and cool water needs of the community, namely therapy, lessons, training and competition. Further we believe the facility should be built with an outdoor leisure pool along the lines of the suggested Lincoln replacement pool to provide the residents of Capital Heights and the western half of Grand Island with summer recreation.

This outdoor pool properly designed and properly structured could operate as any other city pool with season passes and gate admission without the need for a YMCA membership.

We do not see any intrinsic value in the Capital Heights neighborhood pool as it presently sits on Vermont Street and recommend the city not involve itself with the pool.

**L. E. Ray Lake.** With respect to L.E. Ray Lake, we can find no substantial public demand for continued swimming at the lake. In light of drownings which have occurred there, the real possibility of algae toxins like cyanobacteria, and the conflicts between boaters and swimmers, we recommend swimming be suspended from L.E. Ray Lake and that the facility be developed as a recreational area with possibly RV camping, pad camping, picnicking, walking trails, and fishing and boating.

We recommend boating be restricted to no more than 5 miles per hour, no wake, and electric motors only and to paddle boats, row boats, or canoes or other manually powered boats.

For this purpose we recommend construction of an improved boat ramp and parking area for vehicles with boat trailers.

**Pier Park, Grace Abbott Park, Stolley Park and Lincoln Park.** We recommend, with the exception of Lincoln Park which is addressed separately, that the city, as the splash pools age over the next ten years gradually convert the shallow, splash-wading pools to non-ponded splash play-grounds with appropriate interactive fountains and play platforms.

**Non-Structural Issues.** In addition to the hardware recommendations requiring new construction, this study report contains recommendations to the staff on day-to-day management of the pools, especially with regard to marketing.

We believe the charge laid out to us to seek out the public's demands and recommend ideas for meeting that demand have now been fulfilled. We thank you for the opportunity to serve Grand Island and hope there will be other opportunities to work with you again in the future.

For the Study Team,

Calvin T. Brannon  
Aquatic Consultant, Project Manager and Team Leader