

Conway Swimming Pool Repairs Move Forward

The Conway Swimming Pool is owned and operated by Conway Community Swimming Pool, Inc., a private non-profit organization independent of the town, run entirely by volunteers and donations. The pool is one of the finest examples of community cooperation in the history of the town. It was built for residents of Conway in 1949 along Pumpkin Hollow brook by as many as fifty or sixty volunteers at a time and completed in less than two months. The cost, which would have been more than twenty-two thousand dollars if the work had been hired (1949), was less than forty-five hundred dollars. The pool was dedicated on July 4, 1950 and has been run entirely by volunteers and donations for the last 63 years.

It was the Fall of 2010 when the Conway Swimming Pool was officially closed after discovering significant bypass and sinkhole issues with the dam. Throughout 2011 local volunteers attempted to make low cost repairs and do long overdue dredging. It quickly became apparent that the days of annual volunteer labor and equipment donations would no longer keep the pool going. Increased government regulations would make the historical volunteer and low cost work impossible. In December of 2011, volunteers, both old and new, jumped head first into what would be a huge undertaking for so few people with essentially no funding. Annual donations had dropped off 75% in the last many years. The organization had a bank balance of less than three thousand dollars to cover annual operating costs usually under \$1000.

For the past 9 months the committee has been moving forward diligently, but carefully. While it is expected that actual construction will only take a few weeks, the engineering and permitting processes will likely take anywhere from eight months to a year. There are over six local, state, and federal agencies involved including the Department of Dam Safety, Army Corp of Engineers, Conservation Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, and each has one or more permitting requirements of which one may have a dependency on the other. Most people not are aware that the process of working to prepare documents and awaiting responses from these agencies can take weeks and months for each one alone.

The engineering firm to be selected would be responsible for all the civil engineering for the dam repairs, dredging, beach reclamation, settling pond, and general improvements. They would also be responsible for the permitting, environmental concerns, and preparing and overseeing construction. After many months of hard work, the committee has secured engineering services and funding to pay for those services. Acquiring and reviewing proposals from three different engineering firms was not easy and took many months. Conway Community Swimming Pool, Inc., chose to work with Fuss & O'Neill as they offered the most comprehensive and low-cost proposal. All of the engineering, permitting, and project management services are expected to cost approximately \$80,000. This does not include any of the actual construction costs.

Working on finances in parallel since January, the committee needed to quickly acquire funds for the environmental engineering and could not begin to think about the actual construction costs. A plan was

developed to request Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to purchase a Conservation Restriction on the property in order to prevent future development. Use of CPA funds was appropriate because, should pool repairs fail, the land was in danger of being sold as two possible building lots. The town voted in May to purchase a conservation restriction for the appraised value of the land in the amount of \$123,000. This was a win-win-win for the town, pool committee, and CPA initiatives. Not only would the land be preserved for years to come, but the pool committee would receive funds that they could put to use as they chose. In the majority of CPA acquired conservation restrictions, the money goes to private individuals, generally for their own personal benefit. In this unique situation, the funds will go into the organization's operating account and can be used consistent with the pool's purpose. The process of actually transferring funds is a long one, requiring grueling review of an 18 page conservation restriction by attorneys and the State of Massachusetts. Most paperwork is complete and is simply awaiting final reviews and filing and it appears the CPA funds should be transferred this month. This will allow the engineering and permitting to move forward quickly without any breaks in the project.

So, when will the pool once again be opened to residents of Conway? Fuss & O'Neill has already started environmental surveys and soil borings required for permitting. Soon they will begin engineering, reviewing permitting requirements, and submitting permits for approval. By the end of October we hope to have preliminary cost estimates for the actual construction costs associated with repairs. Then the next hurdle will begin. Fundraising, lots and lots of fundraising. Construction costs are not yet known, but could exceed \$250,000. Add to that the fact that annual maintenance costs will quadruple due to new regulations, the committee will be looking for a lot of donations in the coming months. Since last year, the committee has raised approximately \$8,000 through private donations made by residents, but is a long way from having funds required for construction.

IF all goes as planned, and IF permits are turned around quickly, and IF a contractor can be secured for spring, and IF the committee is able to raise the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary for construction, the pool is expected to be open to residents for the summer of 2013.

The committee wishes to thank the Conway Community Preservation Committee, Conway Conservation Commission, Conway Select Board, residents, volunteers, and donors who have kept the project moving forward and continue to showcase a community rich in local cooperation and support. Information on the pool and project can be found at www.ConwaySwimmingPool.org.