



Westbrook Water Talk: Your Voice Matters!

Meeting Two - Craig's Notes

What Do We Value? What Should We Do?

6pm to 8pm, The Gym, Westbrook Community Center, 426 Bridge Street, Westbrook

About the Meeting

Context and Objectives

This was the second of three meetings to inform the public and collect public opinion about the future of our public outdoor aquatic amenities. The objective of the first meeting on August 15 was understanding why the Cornelia Warren Outdoor Pool was decommissioned in 2020 and the options and opportunities going forward.

The objectives of this second meeting were as follows:

- To review key themes from Meeting One
- To learn new information gathered as a result of Meeting One
- To discuss what Westbrook values in terms of outdoor water recreation
- To hear public input about how the City should proceed

Water Talk Public Engagement Process

Meeting One	August 15	Where We Are Now
Meeting Two	August 28	What Do You Think?
Survey	Aug 28 – Sep 29	What Do You Think?
Meeting Three	November 14	Leading Options Feedback

Agenda

6:00	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Westbrook's Assistant City Administrator Angela Holmes welcomes everyone and kick-off the meeting.• Facilitator Craig Freshley explains public input process and format for meeting.
6:05	Meeting One Themes and New Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Craig provides a brief recap of what was presented and heard in Meeting One.• Angela presents new information staff has learned in response to questions and requests from Meeting One.
6:20	What We Value

- Using a fun interactive technique, we will explore how Westbrook residents feel about the following:
 - Most preferred types of water-based recreation
 - Importance of water-based recreation vs. other types of recreation
 - Willingness to pay for water-based recreation
- We don't plan to come to agreements, but simply explore "where people stand" on some of these trade-offs.

7:00

Public Comment

- This is a chance for anyone to make a public comment.
- We want to hear how you think the City should proceed regarding the exploration and potential establishment of some sort of new water-based recreational amenity.

7:50

Next Steps and Final Comments

- Craig will explain the Public Input Survey and about our next public input meeting.
- Angela and others from the City will offer final comments and adjourn the meeting.

8:00

Adjourn

Ground Rules

- The first meeting is all about understanding. Opinions taken during second + third meetings.
- Let's assume best intentions and demonstrate respect.
- We want to hear all questions and all views.
- Please be recognized before speaking and honor the process.
- Neutral facilitation and notes.

Presentation

Westbrook's Assistant City Administrator and City Clerk Angela Holmes presented a slide show which provided answers to questions raised in Meeting One. See Angela's slides, provided separately.

Here are some highlights:

- **Is Tank 2.0 - a swimming pool in the river – possible?**
 - Standards today are very different than in the past
 - We are required to limit impact on the river
 - We need to coordinate with local shoreland zoning
 - We would start with a feasibility study
- **Can we look to other places for "In River Swimming" ideas?**
 - East River project in New York City – Planning stage
 - Swim park project in Boston - Seasonal, not designed yet
- **Would a splash pad be possible at the Warren Rec Area?**
 - It might require future soil remediation, special foundation considerations, etc.

- Ground improvements increase the cost of the project
 - Warren Rec Area is not only LWCF site in Westbrook
 - All LWCF sites have regulations and restrictions
- **Would River Bank Park have the same soil concerns as the Warren Center?**
 - Not entirely – every site is different
 - We would start with a feasibility study
 - Riverbank Park + Warren Rec were included in the 16 City-owned sites evaluated
 - A slide of all 16 locations was shown
- **What happened to the 3rd grade swimming program?**
 - It was suspended during COVID, primarily due to transportation issues
 - Planning to start 3rd grade swimming again this year
- **Can we coordinate our efforts with the schools on an aquatic amenity?**
 - Possibly – School Dept sets scope first, then we can explore collaboration
- **Does the Congin School proposed expansion conflict with an outdoor pool at the community center?**
 - No – see slide showing the proposed pool footprint in presentation
- **Does the current indoor pool have needs and/or upgrades to consider?**
 - Repairs will be required in the next 20 years
- **How much would the cost of an aquatic amenity impact tax bills?**
 - Given today's market, the median-sized home would experience a \$6.82 annual increase in the property tax bill for every \$1 million in project costs (if there are no other sources of support)
 - So a \$10 million project would increase the median tax bill by \$60.82 annually (if no other sources of support)
- **What's up with the Saco splash pad?**
 - Rotary has partnered with the City
 - About to go to the Planning Board

Public Comment

Following the presentation, Craig asked participants to “show where you stand” on three different spectrums, as follows:

- **Preference for type of water-based amenity**
 - Most people prefer a pool
 - Some prefer a splashpad
 - A few prefer swimming in the river
 - One person favors more boat access
 - A few people prefer no amenity of any type
- **Preference for a water-based amenity vs. another type of recreational amenity**
 - Most people prefer a water-based amenity
 - Some prefer another type of recreational amenity
 - Some prefer “none of the above”
- **Preference for high cost/high benefit vs. low cost/low benefit**
 - Most people prefer a high cost/high benefit amenity
 - A few people prefer a low cost/low benefit amenity
 - A few people prefer “none of the above”

Craig asked people to explain their preferences and make comments on any aspect of investing in a new outdoor water-based amenity.

Comments were as follows:

- **What are people's expectations for an aquatic amenity?**
 - Let's have a 4.5' deep swimming pool and a splash pad
 - Westbrook youth need to learn swimming
 - Swimming lessons are best done outdoors
 - A splash pad would be a draw for family activities
 - This could have an impact on tourism and commerce
- **Where would the people like the aquatic amenity to be located?**
 - The Community Center should have an outdoor pool
 - Kids should be able to walk to the pool
 - A pool would negatively affect our Foster Street neighborhood
 - We don't have infrastructure to support it
 - The neighborhood is subject to flooding
 - Our Foster Street neighborhood is not good for a pool
 - The high school could be a good place for a new pool
 - It's already served with buses
 - Take into account many people.
 - The best place for a pool is where the people are.
- **What other expectations would the people consider for an aquatic amenity?**

- We are a growing city and have the capacity to do this
 - It could have a splash pad and also with a pool
 - It could be along the river
- Let's use the old pool foundation in the river to enhance boating
- Here in Maine we have limited months for swimming - although season could be extended with some sort of pool covering
- Whatever we do should be accessible to everyone in all seasons
- Let's make more of our natural water based resources
 - Many towns have pools but we have a river!
 - Let's take a look at the Lake Auburn Outlet facility
 - Let's make the most of our river
 - It could be an in-river pool and provide a place for ice skating in the winter
 - Can we take advantage of the old foundation in the river?
 - Develop a facility in the river
- What types of amenities do other similarly-sized communities have?
- Regarding cost, let's think out of the box
- Get people to think about the history and how all things are connected
- Westbrook should be a destination place.
 - That's fine, but if we are to build a pool or a splash pad it should be for us, for our community
 - A pool would attract people to our community
- Let's do something creatively
- Make sure everyone can access the survey
 - There's another survey - not the city survey - and of course we welcome all data and public input on this topic.
 - We are looking into making the City survey available in different languages
 - Anyone can call City Hall for help with filling out the survey
 - Perhaps keep the survey open until we get a certain percentage rather than close it on a certain date.
 - We need to educate people about the difference between the two surveys
 - If you want to submit the survey on paper, that is welcome
- **What are the other competing interests for resources for people to consider?**
 - There's a new fire station being planned at Pride's Corner
 - Perhaps we could have a pool there
 - With a shuttle service for senior citizens
 - We have many other types of recreational facilities here in Westbrook
 - Let's look at some benchmark metrics
 - How many municipalities have two pools?
 - What would be the operating costs of two pools
 - There will be proposals forthcoming for other funding of municipal infrastructure
 - Fire stations
 - Police station upgrade
 - Congin school upgrade
 - New high school and athletic facilities
 - Spend the money on transit instead
 - And on bike and pedestrian lanes
 - A pool is not a priority for me

- **What are the people's thoughts on project cost?**
 - Let's spend a decent amount of money and build something that lasts
 - We should build like the Europeans build; that's going to last a long time
 - Regarding cost, let's think out of the box
 - Let's not spend money on a water-based amenity but rather on public transportation such as buses
 - A pool is not a good investment for just 8 to 12 weeks of use.
 - Not sure we need this
 - 12 weeks is not much use for such a big investment
 - What's the life expectancy of a pool versus a splash pad?
 - What are we looking for? Let's define.
 - What would be the cost of a splash pad?
 - Can we have a high benefit with low cost?
 - The payoff of a pool or splashpad will be very high, especially for people who pay lower than average taxes
 - We should do things in moderation
 - Slightly prefer an outdoor pool
 - It could be shallow with lanes
 - It's got to be feasible
 - Look at modularity - building in phases over time
 - Environmental regulations are stricter now regarding what we can (or cannot) do in the river
- **What thoughts would City representatives like to share?**
 - We want to hear from all segments of our Community
 - Please share word about the survey and encourage others to fill it out
 - You can find the survey at the city's official website
 - You can also respond by sending us an email
 - communitydev@westbrook.me.us
 - Email us longer answers if you want
 - Stop by City Hall at 2 York Street
 - Or call us (207-854-9105)
 - When everything is a priority, nothing's a priority. That's why we're asking you to make hard choices about priorities

Closing Comments

- Thank you for coming and participating in the survey before September 29
- These meetings have been great so far
- The Council will find this input extremely valuable
- This is such an important issue. We are making every effort to "read the room" of the whole city.