



School pool splash out?

Citizen's group asks the district for funds to renovate the pool at Corona del Mar High School.

By Michael Miller

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The Newport-Mesa Unified School District may soon allocate funds to help renovate the pool at Corona del Mar High School, after a citizens' group urged it to put the project on its budget for the current school year.

At Tuesday's board meeting, several members of the CDM Community Aquatics Facilities Foundation -- a nonprofit organization that banded in April to renovate the aquatic area -- asked the trustees to consider allocating funds for pool improvements in Newport-Mesa's 2006-07 budget. The group, which includes former state Sen. Marian Bergeson and a number of Corona del Mar High School parents, has been meeting with both city and district officials to get its project off the ground.

According to facilities director Tim Marsh, Newport-Mesa has already earmarked about \$250,000 to re-plaster the Corona del Mar pool for its 2007-08 budget, but Bergeson and her colleagues asked the district to move the funds up a year.

"We'd like to advance the money so that we can get started," Bergeson said after the meeting. "When everything's ready to roll, we'd like to have the funds in order."

The trustees -- one of whom, Serene Stokes, is a member of the nonprofit's steering committee -- agreed to vote on the matter at their August meeting. The city of Newport Beach has already pledged \$290,000 in matching funds for the pool in this year's budget.

In 1990, the city and district banded together to create the Marian Bergeson Aquatic Center at Corona del Mar High School, signing a joint-use agreement. Since then, the complex has been in use almost daily, with school aquatic teams and community programs sharing the space. Sixteen years after its inception, however, the pool is showing signs of wear.

"I think that it needs to be re-plastered, certainly," Marsh said. "I'm not sure what happened to it, but it certainly is not a nice, clean white any longer, and it is leaking in certain areas."

Newport-Mesa's funds would probably go solely toward re-plastering the pool or making other technical repairs. The foundation, however, plans to make other upgrades to the aquatic area, including new lockers, showers, and a revamped coaches' office. For those additions, Marsh said, the group would have to turn to city dollars or fundraising.

The total cost of the pool project, as estimated by the foundation, is about \$1.2 million. Bergeson and her colleagues have already announced plans to solicit funds from community members, and perhaps to have a large fundraising event with former Corona del Mar High School athletes.

One of the pool renovation's most prominent supporters is Newport Beach City Councilwoman Leslie Daigle, who oversees Corona del Mar and serves on the foundation's steering committee.

"One of the wonderful things about swimming is that all ages can swim," she said. "You can start as a baby and your whole life be a swimmer. It's a very inclusive activity and, in our community, very popular."