

Re: Indoor aquatic facility

Gayle Woody - Commissioner <gaylewoody@jacksonnc.org>
To: Gail Debnam <gail@wcproperties.com>
Cc: Ron Mau - Commissioner <ronmau@jacksonnc.org>

Fri, Feb 22, 2019 at 2:40 PM

Dear Gail,

First if all, thank you for your thoughtful comments. I feel that my first responsibility as a County Commissioner is to be responsive and respectful of the wishes of my constituents. People who express their opinions and give us feedback are essential to fulfilling this responsibility, so I sincerely appreciate your message.

To say I am "opposed to having an indoor pool facility" is not correct. The comments I have made in response to the question, "are you going to build a pool?" has been that a pool is not a personal priority for me. I feel I need to be honest and let folks know where I stand. In light of our budget planning session yesterday and our efforts to prioritize needs vs. wants, I expressed my personal opinion.

That said, I am in full support of what the majority of our citizens want. When asked, "Would you like an indoor pool in Jackson County?" most people do answer "yes". When asked are you willing to fund a pool, building and maintenance, with a rise in your taxes, the response is less positive. When asked if this is a priority over greenway expansion, bike trails, playgrounds, lake access, etc, the answers become more varied. I know the pool is a priority for many citizens, but not necessarily for all. So much of what is spread about the desire for a pool is anecdotal, depending on one's circle of influence.

Chairman Brian McMahan brought a great resolution to this discussion by suggesting that we have a County wide survey done of people's needs, wants, and concerns surrounding a pool. I also suggested that we meet with key individuals with Dogwood Health Foundation (holding the money from sale of Mission Memorial to meet health needs in WNC), Harris Regional, and school system to see how we can collaborate and receive possible funding from these sources.

If a survey shows majority citizen support for a pool, I AM IN FULL SUPPORT. I will lay my person preferences aside.

Jackson County is a wonderful community with natural beauty that is unique and a treasure. I learned to swim in the Oconaluftee River when I was 7 years old. We enjoyed taking our grandchildren swimming this summer in Lake Glenville at the new county beach/lake access. We also go tubing and swimming in the Tuckasegee. We hiked part of the Pinnacle trail over Thanksgiving with all our grandchildren. Phil and I are avid hikers, so I know that my personal bias toward green ways and parks is rooted in personal enjoyment of these pursuits.

I understand and respect your personal desire for a pool, Gail. Several people have also expressed need for aquatic therapy, which is valid need, not just a "want."

I remember visiting with you and your children at the pool in Cullowhee in the summers. Those are great memories.

Please understand that I will be in full support of a pool when we know that our citizens want to make that commitment. I hope you will pass that information on to those who question my support.

One long range plan we are moving forward on is a park in Whittier, which is the last community in Jackson County without one, and is also the district I represent.

If you have further questions, please fell free to call me. 828-508-0522.

At some point I would like to talk to you and Jack on housing issues in Jackson County and your opinions on addressing those needs. Your long experience in real estate here is something I hope to learn from. I would like to see the plans for the pool you mentioned as well.

Sincerely,

Gayle

Sent from my iPad

On Feb 22, 2019, at 11:02 AM, Gail Debnam <gail@wcproperties.com> wrote:

Gayle,
I understand that you are opposed to having an indoor pool facility even though it is the most requested item for years from several surveys. I was frankly surprised and disappointed that you could not see how much this is needed and wanted. The long range plans have always called for one. The plans exist, and the desire is great from across the board. I work with people all the time that are surprised and disappointed that there are not more options for the community. I love the greenway, in fact my late friend Barbara Capps gave the first piece of property to it, but these last few weeks have really shown that we need some indoor options for indoor recreation. Not everyone participates in a sport that involves a ball. Not everyone who uses the rec center wants to work out with a trainer or in a fitness class. I believe both your girls were on the county swim team so you know how hard it is to get practice in and how far we had to travel for a regulation facility My arthritis does not allow me to do a lot of walking, but I could enjoy a pool with my grandchildren. Every school, age child in the county needs to learn to swim, there is too much water here for them not to learn how to be safe. A pool provides a great opportunity for post surgery physical therapy, and as we know, broken legs and sprained ankles and hip replacements are not selective. The university has been generous up til now, but they are bursting at the seams. It is only a matter of time before they need the Reid facility for the 11,000+ students and the swim team will be kicked to the curb.

Please become an advocate for a facility that will fill a great need and desire of the majority of our county. If I can show you some research or facilities that would meet our needs I would love to, or I am sure Rusty Ellis can share the results of the past community input surveys and the plans that exist.
Thank you for your consideration of this issue.
Hopefully yours,
Gail

—
Gail Debnam
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