

CG-B swimming pool gets \$26,000 heater

Written by CAROL POMEDAY

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Expenditure has school officials considering fate of 43-year-old facility

The swimming pool at Cedar Grove-Belgium Middle School is back in operation, and the water is warm, but the expense has prompted some officials to ask if it's worth it.

The heater, the original one installed in the pool 43 years ago, went out recently, and the pool was closed until a new heater arrived.

The heater was installed Monday just in time for the facility to be available during the holiday break.

"We had ordered a new hot water heater knowing it was going, but it died before it came," Supt. Steve Shaw told the School Board on Dec. 12.

The new heater cost \$26,000, which will come from the community service fund balance, reducing it to about \$100,000.

"Do we as a board need to sit down and talk about the viability of keeping the pool? We keep throwing money at it," board president Jim Lautenschlaeger said.

Board member Chad Hoopman noted, "It's coming out of Fund 80 (community service fund), and that's exclusive of what it costs to run the school."

Community service programs, which includes gym and swim, swim lessons, water aerobics, weight room and other fitness programs open to the public, generate \$80,000 in revenues, which Shaw said covers the cost of maintaining the pool and paying salaries.

But there isn't enough for major repairs, such as the heater.

In 2011, the School Board put \$125,000 into the fund to purchase better weight equipment and expand programs. The money was not spent and has been tapped for pool repairs.

Lautenschlaeger noted the fund is for all community activities, not just the swimming pool.

Shaw said he doesn't expect any major repairs next year on the pool.

"We've taken care of all the expensive things that can go wrong," Shaw said.

Teacher Natalie Brocktrup urged the board to keep the pool operating.

"It's a great asset. Our children learn to swim and it's used for phy ed," she said. "People who can't run or walk for exercise can get into the pool and get their exercise that way. The benefits are way more than \$26,000 for a pool heater."

Lautenschlaeger said if the district wants to keep the pool, it should plan for replacing it.

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“That pool is from 1969. If the community feels it’s that important, we need to decide if we should go to a referendum and build a new facility rather than sticking money into it,” he said.

Hoopman suggested Phil Burns, who maintains the pool, put together a report on the condition of the pool’s mechanical systems that the board can review.