

## City Manager Action Item Memo

**To:** Mayor Mark Smith and West Liberty City Council

**From:** Lee Geertz, City Manager

**Date:** March 3, 2026

**Agenda Item:** Kimberly Park Pool – 2026 Pool Season Operations

**Requested Action:** Consider approval of temporary closure of Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 pool season and direction to proceed with a facility options study

### Recommendation

City staff recommend that the Mayor and City Council **approve the temporary closure of the Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 pool season**, consistent with the unanimous recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Board and authorize staff to proceed with a **facility options study** with assistance from **ISG Engineering**, with findings to be presented by **Fall 2026**.

### Background

Kimberly Park Pool has been a valuable part of the West Liberty community for many decades, offering an important amenity for quality of life. Since it opened in 1930, the pool will reach 96 years of service in 2026. However, the facility is now at a pivotal stage; continuing to operate seasonally without significant investment increases financial, operational, and liability risks. The most recent upgrade was in 2002, which focused on mechanical improvements and slide installation but did not address the pool shell, deck, or shower house structure. Since then, major infrastructure and compliance issues have been managed through repairs and patchwork.

The Mayor and City Council have previously engaged in discussions regarding the future of the pool, including:

- **Pool Feasibility Study work session – May 3, 2024**
- **Kimberly Park Pool facility tour – June 17, 2025**

On **February 19, 2026**, the Parks and Recreation Board met to review City staff's analysis and recommendation regarding the 2026 pool season. After discussion, the Board **unanimously voted to recommend temporary closure of the pool for the 2026 season only**, with the expressed goal of identifying viable long-term options for a pool facility moving forward.

### Financial Considerations

Recent state legislation limiting property tax levy growth has reduced General Fund capacity. At the same time, the City is not pursuing a property tax increase. This has required staff to evaluate discretionary and seasonal operations.

Financial performance of the pool over the past five years shows:

- **Average annual revenue:** approximately \$16,700
- **Average annual operating expenses:** approximately \$107,000
- **Average annual operating loss:** approximately \$81,000

In addition, recent cost estimates for necessary repairs and replacements (exclusive of full renovation) exceed **\$140,000**, including major equipment, concrete, roofing, and safety components. These costs do not address underlying structural concerns.

### **Facility Condition and Infrastructure**

The Kimberly Park Pool infrastructure—including the **pool shell, concrete deck, shower house, and mechanical systems**—**has not been renovated in nearly 30 years**. While the City has made repairs as needed, the facility has not been modernized.

Key issues include:

- Outdated mechanical and filtration systems with **limited or unavailable replacement parts**
- Persistent and significant water leakage
- Aging concrete surfaces and structural components

In **March 2025**, the City retained **Terracon** to complete a **Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) study** of the pool and surrounding deck areas. The GPR report identified:

- **Potential subsurface voids and soil saturation beneath the pool slab**
- Areas of concern around the pool deck and paving
- Conditions consistent with ongoing water infiltration that may compromise structural integrity over time

These findings confirm that continued operation without a comprehensive evaluation and reinvestment plan poses increasing risk.

### **Operational and Liability Concerns**

- The pool requires a **high lifeguard-to-patron ratio** due to its size and configuration.
- Over the past **seven years**, the City has struggled to consistently staff the pool for full operational days.
- A significant leak has impacted on a neighboring private property, requiring continuous sump pump operation. The City has entered into an agreement with the property owner, recognizing this issue as an **ongoing liability exposure**.

## Parks and Recreation Board Discussion

The Parks and Recreation Board emphasized that:

- The recommendation to close for 2026 was **difficult but necessary**
- The Board's intent is **not to abandon aquatic programming**, but to pursue sustainable options
- Future pool designs and amenities may need to change to ensure long-term viability
- There is frustration that the pool has been a lower priority historically, and a strong desire to see it treated as a **high-priority project moving forward**

City staff communicated that the pool has been identified as a **high-priority goal during the City's 2026 goal-setting session with ISU Extension**, and that temporary closure is viewed as a **first step toward addressing the facility comprehensively**.

**Budget Impact:** Temporary closure of the Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 season is expected to result in an estimated **net General Fund savings of approximately \$81,000**, based on a five-year average annual operating loss, by avoiding seasonal staffing, utilities, chemicals, insurance, and routine maintenance costs. Closure also avoids committing more than **\$140,000 in near-term repair and replacement costs** that would be required to continue operations without addressing long-term structural issues. Engineering and facility study costs to evaluate future options for the pool will be **determined and brought back to Council for approval** once scope and contract terms with ISG Engineering are finalized.

### Next Steps

If Council approves the temporary closure for the 2026 season:

1. City staff will work with **ISG Engineering** (contact initiated with Lenny Larson) to:
  - Conduct a facility and equipment options study
  - Evaluate design alternatives, cost ranges, and funding strategies
  - Assess feasibility of renovation, replacement, phased improvements, or permanent closure
2. City staff will coordinate clear and transparent public communication regarding the decision.
3. A **formal report with options and recommendations** will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Board and Mayor and City Council by **Fall 2026**.

## Council Action Requested

### Council Action Options

1. **Approve Temporary Closure (Recommended):** Approve temporary closure of the Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 season and direct City staff to proceed with a facility options study with ISG Engineering, with findings returned to the Parks and Recreation Board and City Council by Fall 2026.
2. **Open for 2026 Season:** Direct City staff to open the pool for the 2026 season and continue operations with repairs addressed as issues arise, acknowledging potential limitations on operating days, staffing challenges, increased costs, and ongoing infrastructure and liability risks.
3. **No Action / Defer Decision:** Take no action at this time and request additional information, recognizing that deferral may impact staffing, budgeting, operational readiness, and public communication for the 2026 season.

### Staff Recommendation:

City staff recommends approval of the temporary closure of the Kimberly Park Pool for the 2026 pool season, consistent with the unanimous recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Board. This action allows the City to address financial, infrastructure, operational, and liability concerns while avoiding further short-term expenditures that do not resolve long-term issues. Upon approval, staff will proceed with the **Next Steps outlined in the memo**, including working with ISG Engineering to evaluate facility options and return recommendations by Fall 2026.

\*attachments

Exhibit A: Cost identified to repair for season

Exhibit B: Terracon report of soil composition.