

Canon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Park District
575 Ash Street
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SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
July 28, 2026

CALL TO ORDER The Canon City Area Metropolitan Recreation and Park District Special Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Board President, Cooper Trahern, in the board meeting room located at 575 Ash Street.

ROLL CALL

Board Members:

Present: Cooper Trahern
 Melissa Smeins
 Andrew Palmasano
 Kristina Post
 Sean Rodgers

Staff: Kyle Horne Executive Director
 Dawn Green Finance Director

Attorney: Dan Slater

Guests: Heather Darrow Ben Googins
 Ed Norden Dan Francis
 Chris Hardin Mike Banker
 Marc Sindler Amy Schmissey

Discussion and Recommendation on Pool Proposals to Canon City Council

The meeting began with presentations of the two pool proposals.

Heather Darrow presented her proposal (Option A) first. In her presentation she highlighted that the question to fund construction of the pool passed in 2024 and citizen support for a pool is still being voiced online. She started a petition and gathered 543 signatures in support of a pool. Support was also expressed during the three ballot committee meetings she attended.

She referenced the feasibility study, with the outdoor aquatics pool being a top ranked option, and that a smaller number of users would be using the indoor pool. Frequent swimmers could still use a seasonal pool. Constructing an outdoor pool only would save money on both construction and operations. The study's review of pool visits stated 82.1% are by occasional/infrequent users who visit the pool to socialize and exercise and 17.9% by more frequent users. She said if you

combined the ratings for the outdoor pool- lap pool and the outdoor leisure pool in the study, “they kinda outrank” the indoor/outdoor option . No pool at all ranked the lowest. The ballot survey (1,027 respondents) showed support for a seasonal option. Ms. Darrow believes that the people who voted for the sales tax may have preferred a seasonal pool.

Her proposal is to take the 2A ballot language and add operations and maintenance and go back to the ballot. The question could start with “Without raising taxes....” The sales tax would continue, but be split, with .25% for construction and .05% for operations and maintenance (O & M). This would allow for \$16 to \$18 million for pool construction and \$250,000 annually for O & M. The .05% portion could or could not sunset. If it sunsets, it could be revisited ten years down the road. If this question passes, two accounts could be set up with the O & M being collected until the pool opens. The estimated \$2.2 million that will already have been collected can be used to start the design/construction process. She referenced a prior outdoor only concept with two bodies of water- a lap pool and a recreational pool which could be scalable depending on the level of funding secured. She stated this would meet all the needs of the swimmers. Benefits of this pool design include it is liked by the citizens, it ranked second in the feasibility study, it remains at the location of the Icabone Pool (which is advantageous as site work components have already been done), and it has surveyed well in the past.

This plan is not without risk as it requires going to the voters, campaigning and educating the public on a tight timeline. But Ms. Darrow thinks it is worth it to keep the project going. She requested that the Board think of what is best for the people. She stated the pool is the responsibility and part of the mission of the Recreation District.

Board member Cooper Trahern asked Ms. Darrow if she had talked to the campaigners from the last election. She responded that this effort is “worth jumping in for.”

Ben Googins started his proposal (Option B) by emphasizing the need for children to learn how to swim. He feels the District’s primary purpose is the pool as it was originally established to build a pool. He has concerns about having another ballot question. His proposal keeps it off the ballot with no new taxes by finding funding from other sources. He stated we have a budget to start with pool construction. After speaking with other pool operators, he feels a \$250,000 - \$300,000 annual subsidy for operations is realistic. A portion of these funds could come from the City (\$50,000- \$75,000), the train (\$50,000 specified for the benefit of underprivileged children), and donations. He suggested the ability to go back to the voters down the road for operational funding.

His proposal uses the same design from the feasibility study as Ms. Darrow’s with the outdoor seasonal pools. The benefits include not having to go to the ballot, a seasonal pool is more likely to be solvent, construction can start sooner, the location is fantastic and the design still meets the swim team’s needs. Although it is a design change from a year-round facility, he believes the seasonal pool addresses what people want. He questioned the disadvantage of his proposal as it relates to

bonding, citing a need for more transparency. Board members Sean Rodgers and Cooper Trahern both pointed out that the process has been transparent as numerous meetings were held with both public and City input. Mr. Googins stated the voters are exhausted and no more studies would be needed. He urged collaboration with others while keeping the tax going so that the community does not lose the \$25 million (from the passage of 2A). A pool is needed for child safety.

Board member Cooper Trahern asked how this proposal is different? Mr. Googins spoke about finding a portion of the operational funding in the City and Recreation District budgets. Mr. Trahern said they can't lock in future boards for this. Attorney Dan Slater agreed saying multi-year financial commitments are not legal. Board member Andy Palmasano expressed concern about relying on outside donations as it is not good for bonding. Further discussion on bonding and funding occurred. Both Board members Sean Rodgers and Melissa Smeins recognized the energy for the project displayed tonight and referenced the number of conversations about the project that have taken place in the past. Board member Sean Rodgers wondered if a seasonal pool option would be controversial based on what was presented in the past.

Board member Cooper Trahern opened the meeting to public comment.

Ed Norden said he got reengaged in the process when his granddaughter could not swim during a visit. He said Mr. Googins' is a feel-good proposal. He said the mayor is pushing for something on the ballot this fall. He urges the District to work with the City to figure out the ballot language to use for a pool which was supported by the people during the feasibility study phase of the project.

Dan Francis mentioned his difficulty in obtaining the Recreation District's minutes. Kyle explained how to find them on the District's website. Mr. Francis also asked if there was interest in moving the District's offices to the pool facility. Kyle stated that throughout this process, at no time would the District offices move.

Chris Hardin asked if there was any discussion about providing swim lessons in temporary pools. As a swimmer, he also asked if there was a way the season for an outdoor pool could be extended to accommodate more users.

Mike Banker acknowledged the renewed energy in the room for the project. He believes Heather's proposal is doable but realizes that voters are tired. However, we have the opportunity now for the project and need to take advantage of it. He believes the voters will vote for it.

Marc Sindler believes people are willing to step up and donate because of their enthusiasm for the project. He said extending the pool season would be enormously helpful and perhaps volunteers could be recruited to help keep it open. He stated we have to have swim lessons in a town with a river running through it, and he wondered about obtaining above ground pools for lessons.

City Councilmember Amy Schmisser thanked the board for holding this special meeting and providing input for their next meeting on August 3rd.

Attorney Dan Slater provided comments on Heather Darrow's (Option A) proposal. The sample ballot language she showed would need to be reviewed. The portion dedicated to operations needs to sunset, otherwise you are raising taxes.

There are advantages for asking the question this year as the voter pool in a general election is more favorable (to these types of questions). There is higher voter turnout. The question would only go to Canon City voters, which were more favorable to us in the last election.

Kyle Horne recognized the efforts over the last few weeks on this project and hopes the energy continues. He has met with City Administrator Ryan Stevens several times and has been in contact with the project team (representatives from Wember, BRS and G.H. Phipps) who are interested in continuing to work on the project. Kyle also met with the bond underwriter who thinks the bonds may be rated AA with an interest rate in the range of 4.5-5.0% with Option A. This will give us less money to work with. (.25% sales tax would raise \$16 to \$17 million). The District could look at grants and capital donations to increase this amount. If we look to extend the season the cost of the program would be more expensive. Option B could lead to a BBB bond rating and increase the interest rate by .5%, raising \$18 million for construction. However, there is risk subjecting operations to annual appropriations with this option. The City may have to pull from something else that it already funds. The District will be competing with other 501C3s in the community for donations. Also, he questioned whether there would be enough money raised for both operations and capital repair and replacement. Kyle pointed out that the consultants strongly advise against a phased approach due to the site dimensions. Having to go to the voters is a risk with Option A. Kyle mentioned the expense of site work and the need for parking on school district property which affects both proposals. He stated there might have to be a ballot question for Option B. There is risk in going back to the voters a third time in three years. The bond underwriter thinks a shorter question that has no new taxes may be more favorable for the community. The pool project is only going to get more expensive as time goes on. Kyle stated the first-choice option in 2024 was an indoor/outdoor facility and going to a seasonal pool is a big switch. However, asking the voters whether they want a pool or not could take the place of a survey (which is estimated to cost \$15,000). The cost of an election question is approximately \$20,000, which the Recreation District can split with the City. The sales tax sunsets no later than December 2050. The bond underwriter wondered if leaving the tax split between operations and construction more open in the question, with a new bonding amount, could it make the ballot language simpler. Dan Slater responded that leaving the question too open may be a problem. Kyle stated that at this time he can't give specific construction and operational numbers for a seasonal only project.

Board member Sean Rodgers asked about cost recovery on seasonal pools. Kyle said the average is 50% according to representatives from other entities operating similar facilities that he spoke with. The design work will not be done before the election, so he is using educated guesses with a construction cost of \$16-\$17 million and an annual operating subsidy of \$250,000. It is the staff's recommendation to choose Option A due to the bonding benefits while safeguarding the District's budget. The staff's second choice is to let the tax go.

The board members need to provide a recommendation to City Council and a member to report it at their next meeting. The board discussed the options presented.

Board member Kristina Post thanked those individuals working on these proposals, bringing new ideas and energy. She said going back to the voters is scary and having a lower bond rating with Option B is a big disadvantage of that proposal. She likes Option A. There was discussion about the risk of having the bond rating in Option B downgraded a few years into the project. This would sully Canon City's bonding in the future. Public sector bonds are supposed to be safe. The donation from the Royal Gorge Route Railroad was also discussed.

Board member Sean Rodgers liked the aspect of Option A of going back to the voters, as it lets the citizens determine what they want. The voters will decide if it is time to build the pool.

Board member Melissa Smeins agrees with Option A.

Board member Cooper Trahern said it is disappointing as there was a desire for an indoor/outdoor pool to move the community forward. Option A may be the best path forward with where we are at now, but with a mentality that this is "good enough."

Board member Kristina Post made a motion, seconded by board member Sean Rodgers to recommend that City Council move forward with Option A for the pool. Motion carried unanimously, all present voting aye.

Staff will draft a formal letter to the City informing them of this decision and Board Member Kristina Post will read it at the City Council meeting on August 3rd.

Kyle stated that if City Council says yes to this proposal, it will trigger a special joint meeting on Wednesday, August 5th at 6:00 p.m. in council chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Board President, Cooper Trahern, adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Submitted by:

Approved as written or amended:

/s/ Dawn Green

Dawn Green, Finance Director

/s/ Cooper Trahern

Cooper Trahern, Meeting Chair