

## OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET ANALYST REPORT

**Date Issued:** Thursday, October 12, 2006

**IBA Report Number:** 06-44

**City Council Agenda Date:** October 16, 2006

**Item Number:** 331

**Item:** In the Matter of Blue Level Swim Program, A Service Program Operated by the Park and Recreation Department

### OVERVIEW

The Fiscal Year 2007 Budget was adopted by the City Council on May 30, 2006 and signed by the Mayor on June 7, 2006. The approved budget included \$2.7 million for the Aquatics Program within the Park and Recreation Department's Fiscal Year 2007 budget.

The City Council and IBA were informed by a citizen who received notification from the Park and Recreation Department via a letter dated September 18, 2006, that the Department is ending the Blue Level Swim Program from the City of San Diego Swim League (CSDS) Program on December 3, 2006 due to declining enrollment and rising costs. This program has been funded in the City's budget since Fiscal Year 2000. City Council discussion and possible direction and action on the Blue Level Swim Program are requested, since this action represents a service level impact to the community.

### FISCAL/POLICY DISCUSSION

The Park and Recreation Department's Aquatics Program, offers year-round aquatics at 13 City-wide locations. The City of San Diego is home to CSDS, a multi-level progressive swim program that offers a range of competitive swimming opportunities for nearly 1,000 youth ages 5 to 17.

The **White Level** is for swimmers new to competitive swimming. The focus of the White Level is placed on the instruction and technique of the four competitive strokes (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly) in a fun and social environment. This level is recreational-based and is offered at all 13 City pool locations.

The **Silver Level** introduces the athlete to the more structured competitive aspect of swimming. Training and swim meets are planned around the development of the athletes. This level is recreational-based and is offered at all 13 City pool locations. Competition among the 13 City pools is scheduled year around and competition in sanctioned swim meets may begin at this level with USA (United States Swimming Association) swimming membership.

The **Blue Level** is the most advanced level of competition in CSDS. This level is for USA members only and membership to USA Swimming is required. Participation in many local and western states swim meets are scheduled for these advanced swimmers.

### **Declining Participation**

The level of participants in the Blue Level Swim Program has declined over the past several years. There are approximately 45 registered swimmers in the Blue Level Swim Program out of the near 1,000 in the CSDS Program. The decline in participation could be attributed to many factors, including the level of commitment that swimming requires, the number of swim teams in the area, and the variety of other sport activities available for youth.

There are over 20 USA Swimming sanctioned clubs operating throughout San Diego County. The Park and Recreation Department attached a list of ten swim clubs to the letter to the program participants for swimmers interested in competing via the USA Swimming sanctioned competitive level. Participants were also advised of the Silver Level Swim Program as an option.

### **Rising Costs**

The Blue Level swim Program is sanctioned by the national governing body for the sport of swimming, USA Swimming. The City pays an annual club membership fee along with all individual Blue Level coach registration and is bound to adhere to USA Swimming rules and regulations.

The list of swim clubs distributed to the program participants contained 10 swim clubs with fees ranging from \$45 to \$90 per month depending upon swim level. The costs to CSDS swimmers range from \$24 to \$48 per month. Although the City receives approximately \$38,000 in revenue from the collected fees, the annual cost for the Blue Level Swim Program, offset by the revenue, is approximately \$115,000.

If the program is continued, the Department has indicated that program costs will increase due to required program enhancements to fully comply with USA Swimming guidelines and to increase effectiveness. This includes increasing coaching hours for practice and competition events, USA Swimming certificates and educational requirements, and other enhancements.

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

What is the total cost of the Park and Recreation Department's CSDS Program and the cost recovery level of the full CSDS Program? What are the cost recovery levels for the White and Silver Levels?

What is the cause of the decline in participation on the Blue Level Swim Program? Is there also a decline in the White and Silver Levels?

How long has the Blue Level Swim Program been operating with this reduced enrollment? Should this issue have been surfaced during the budget process?

If the competitive Blue Level Swim Program is continued, what is the estimated cost to run the Program with the enhancements to fully comply with the USA Swimming guidelines and increase effectiveness?

How long has the Program been operating without these enhancements, and what has precipitated the need for them to be added at this time?

Has the Park and Recreation Department explored other funding options?

How does the Department propose to utilize the funds that were budgeted for this specific program if it is eliminated?

## CONCLUSION

Participation in the Blue Level Swim Program has declined and the Department has indicated that costs are increasing.

The Park and Recreation Department's Aquatics Program, including the Blue Level Swim Program, is not cost recoverable. It is a service that the City provides to the citizens of San Diego. A policy discussion is needed for any modification of this service to the citizens.

**[SIGNED]**

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