

Coffee with the Mayor

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Traveled to Oregon a few weeks ago for family vacation and mornings with Stumptown coffee provided by my daughter! Even the coffee at the local coffee shop was very good! The coffee was good as expected but family time was much better! Grandsons, ages 5 yrs, 2 yrs and 4 mos, make family time very special. The mountains of Oregon only add to the experience.

This seems like a good time to focus on a relevant subject: the A M Risher Pool! The pool that is at the back of Humphrey's Park has been a positive asset to the community for many years! I was recently provided a *Linton Daily Citizen* (yes, that's what it was called) paper dated July 2, 1965. The focus of the edition was the grand opening of the newly completed A M Risher Pool! Although the paper is now yellowed with age, it was interesting to read of the community support in raising funds for the construction and the excitement around the opening. There are several photos of various stages of construction, pool employees, pool board members and many other interesting articles pertaining to background of support. The paper, in all, was 25 pages and it was noted that this was "the largest edition ever published by the *Linton Daily Citizen*". In reading this old edition, it is easy to understand the anticipation for using the new pool! Ok, I even remember it and I was in the 5th grade! If you'd like to read it, stop by city hall and it will be made available.

That was 60 years ago! A lot has happened since that time. Today the pool is in need of major repair/update at considerable expense. A new liner will be needed at a rough cost of over \$200,000. This in addition to a new liner for the kiddie pool at a current cost of \$24,000. The fixtures in the bathhouse are original and have not been replaced. The concession area could use a complete renovation. Then there's the maintenance of the conditioning and pumping equipment. There's no doubt there are additional needs not readily known or visible.

Considerable work was put in this Spring by several people getting the pool ready to open on the Memorial Day weekend. Much of the work involved painting and general cleaning with some updates accomplished. The hope here (at least my hope) was this update in appearance would make the pool more attractive to the community and increase attendance. Additionally, the pool board was also involved in hiring staff: managers, lifeguards, bathhouse and concession attendants. The latter process took some time to accomplish but resulted in meeting the hiring goal. Almost all employees were either high school or college students. As to attendance, there were several pool parties and special events in addition to the swim team practices and aerobic classes. However, the final numbers are yet to be determined but all indications are the financial results, as in previous years, will be in the red.

In previous years, budgeted amounts for the pool did not meet expectations. As discussed in the pool board meetings there are several reasons for this. First, and I think foremost, is the impact of the school's schedule. Due to state mandates, schools must be in session 180 days with no waivers allowed. To accomplish this, several snow days are built into the schedule in case they are needed. As a result, the school schedule begins the first part of August, the hottest month of the year when pools should be popular. Almost all the employees and attendees are back in school and no longer available to work or utilize the pool. This leaves a shortened season of usually 8, and no more than 10 weeks when the pool can be open. Second, since the pool opened in 1965 (a period now known as mid-century) more private pools have been installed and utilized. Third, additional equipment to make the pool more attractive had been installed at a significant expense but, unfortunately, did not hold up to regular use and had to be removed. Fourth, pool liners were required, at another significant expense, some years ago in order to prevent inadvertent draining. These liners are at the end of their useful life and have been repaired several times. Possibly a fifth, and not sure of the impact, but the available pools located nearby in Sullivan, Bloomfield and Shakamak State Park could also have been an influence on the lack of attendance.

There were a number of days in July when the pool opened at noon and closed at 2 due to zero attendees. The daily attendance information indicates significant pool usage from opening to shortly after the 4th of July then drops off. There could be a number of reasons for this with family vacations probably number 1. Pool parties still happen in this timeframe, but regular attendance tapers off. The cost of needed chemicals to maintain the water at the required levels has risen, adding to the red ink.

So, what does all this background mean? Do we, as a community, want to see the pool continue in operation? If so, at what cost? It would require major investment in taxpayer dollars to see the pool update project to completion and right now we have no idea of the potential cost. From a purely financial perspective would it be worth the investment knowing it would take several years to recoup the expense? From a quality-of-life perspective I'm sure many would consider it worth the investment and, if it is worth the investment, where would the funds come from to make the needed repairs/updates? Easy questions, not so easy answers.

Consider this an unofficial survey to obtain input. What is your opinion? First, should the pool be closed, yes or no. If no, would you support obtaining funds to make the needed updates, to possibly include an increase in the city's tax rate? I'd like to hear your opinion at jpreble@cityoflinton.com (when sending an email use POOL in the subject line) or contact the mayor's office at 812 847-7754.

UPDATE: On a brighter note, the Veterans Hall of Honor has officially been approved to utilize the William T Murphy Community building located at Glenburn to display the many Veteran photos that were on display at Shields Hardware. Display cases prepared by Twin

Rivers are being completed and installed on the available wall space. The photos will be added in the next couple of weeks! Will keep you updated on the progress.