

## **Budget Strategies**

### **B-2: Mothballing Parks Facilities**

#### **Strategy**

Define the actions necessary to preserve facilities in condition that will preserve the asset and minimize the cost of re-opening it in event operating dollars are not available for continued full public operation.

#### **Recommendation**

The strongest priority should be placed on finding means to fund operation of facilities, either by transfer or other arrangements. If, after considering all reasonable options, full funding for operation cannot be found, then steps should be taken to preserve assets to the extent possible for later public enjoyment, avoiding any possibility that the assets are converted, and work should continue to find other means to re-open the facilities.

#### **Policy Issues**

A mothballing strategy is intended to preserve assets within the County's limited budget capacity in hopes that these facilities can be fully utilized for public use and enjoyment when funding and/or new operators can be found. If facilities are closed without taking steps to minimize later operating cost—e.g., if they are *not* mothballed-- it may be much more difficult to secure such future operating agreements due to their increased expense.

#### **Discussion**

“Mothballing” means different things for different facilities. **Parks** will be posted as closed, although access by users will not be curtailed. Mothballed parks will be routinely inspected for hazardous conditions, which may require the removal of illegally dumped materials and fallen tree limbs. Mowing schedules will be reduced and conducted primarily during the growing season to avoid overgrowth. Restrooms will be closed. Parking lots will be closed. Children's play equipment will be removed or fenced off. **Pools** will be maintained by retaining the water in the liner to preserve its functionality should the pool be reopened. The mechanical systems will be maintained, filters routinely inspected and cleaned, pumping systems and gaskets will be inspected for functionality, and the pool building boarded and maintained to avoid vandalism. (See attachment for further details of pool mothballing proposal). **All other facilities** (community centers) will be boarded and maintained, including routine inspections and preservation of electrical, HVAC, and plumbing systems.

Mothballing buildings that currently house community center programs can be accomplished with few resources. However, mothballing a pool requires considerable planning and resources to preserve the asset in a manner that will enable the facility to be re-opened for public use at a later date without incurring considerable capital expenditures.

It is anticipated the mothballing of most in-city parks, facilities, and pools will require an expenditure of approximately \$804,000 in 2003, including four FTEs (3 Pool Operators

and one Park Specialist II) at a cost of \$250,000. The balance of the expenditure required is for materials, supplies, and utilities to maintain the grounds, buildings, and mechanical systems at the pool sites. This is a relatively small investment in order to preserve County assets worth millions of dollars. It is hoped that successful agreements to transfer or otherwise provide for operation of in-city facilities will be reached that will enable the public to enjoy these facilities, and allow this mothball cost to be commensurately reduced or these dollars applied to support normal operation of the facility.

**Attachments**

Attachment A: Swimming Pool Mothball Proposal

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Swimming Pool Mothball Proposal**

The mothballing of pools will result in substantial savings in energy and operational costs as compared to normal public operation. Prevention of serious deterioration or damage to the buildings, pools, and mechanical equipment such as boilers, heating and ventilation systems, and filtration systems is a primary concern in undertaking a mothballing process for pools.

A plan to mothball the aquatic facilities has two key elements. The first consideration is to protect pools from the damage that could be caused by weather, earthquakes, and other natural events. The second element is to conduct preventive maintenance and minimum operation of mechanical systems to ensure continued structural and cosmetic integrity of the facilities.

Draining pools, mothballing buildings, turning off all systems, and simply locking the doors is not practical if the facilities are to be reopened at some point in the future with reasonable startup costs. Without mothballing, some facilities could deteriorate beyond the point of renovation being practical.

The pool tanks are not designed to be drained for extended periods of time. Severe damage to pool liners and shells, piping, tile, and decking may be caused or aggravated in empty or partially filled pools due to high water tables, shifting ground, or minor earthquakes.

Mechanical systems that are not operated for prolonged periods of time are prone to increased risk of seal and bearing damage. During very cold weather, components of heating and ventilation systems may suffer extensive damage in unheated buildings. King County parks staff has had experience with a facility being damaged because a contractor improperly mothballed it during cold weather. There has also been severe damage to facilities during power outages in below-freezing temperatures. In order to ensure the future of these facilities, it is imperative that no shortcuts be taken in the mothballing process, as repair and replacement costs would be prohibitive.

Staff recommends that the pool water be maintained at the minimal level necessary for proper circulation and for protection of the pool shell. The most efficient water circulation will require filtration and minimum chemical treatment. Slightly heating the pool water will keep the boilers operating and functional. This will also provide a safety margin against pipes freezing should there be an electrical or mechanical failure in cold weather. The building temperature should be maintained at a minimum level for the same reasons. Electricity use will be curtailed under this scenario. Pumps and motors will be operated only as needed. Only a few safety lights and nighttime outdoor security lighting will be required. Pool operators (the number of which would be dependent on how many pools are ultimately mothballed) would be retained to monitor facilities, perform regular preventive maintenance, and make any repairs needed.

Costs to complete the initial mothballing would be low. King County parks staff could install timers for pumps and motors and cover windows, skylights, and doorways.

Vandalism and graffiti would need to be repaired or removed immediately to discourage their reoccurrence and to reduce the costs of repair or cleaning.

Savings in the primary costs of swimming pool operation would be substantial, even allowing for minimum operation of facility systems. The proposed building heat setting is 55 degrees. Proposed water temperature is 50 degrees. Outdoor pools would not be heated except during extreme cold and then only enough to prevent freeze damage. Generally, heat would not be necessary during mid- to late spring through the summer and early fall at all facilities.