

To: Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Board and Employees

From: Joey Caterinichio; with support of the Alaska Swim Community

This document is to provide background to The Municipality of Anchorage for High Level Competition meets and the issues with the new diving boards installed at the Bartlett Pool.

- To summarize the steps taken for the updating of the diving boards as a replacement project.
- No public process was granted
- No meetings with all user groups were granted
- No Community Council meetings, Parks and Rec Meetings or Park planning happened.
- The Dual 3 Meter Diving boards were not a replacement project but rather an addition to a municipal building and therefore should not fall under a “replacement project”.
- Two, 3-meter boards and Two, 1-meter boards were added. All four board added obstacles to the deck in an already crowded deck that were not there before.
 - Large platforms that block the traffic flow behind the blocks blocking lanes 4 and 5. Diving boards over the blocks impeding starts and hitting hands. A tower to go under to get on the blocks, hitting heads.
 - Large Concrete blocks that obstruct visual for lifeguards, increased an already tight walking space and entry space. The blue concrete was not in the pools prior. But rather low-profile removable diving boards were present. Low profile meaning sleeker, metal poles, and all removable.
- An already crowded space became more crowded.
- Injuries have already happened to swimmers, hitting, hands, heads, and cutting feet already from the new obstacles.
- Swimming did not give input or have any seat at the table to discuss the project and is the primary user group of the Bartlett pool.
- The Bartlett Pool is the only pool that we can conduct swim meets to include high level completions and is used 20 plus times a year for USA Swimming events.
- There are multiple pools with high dives and separate diving tanks for the divers to use within the municipality.
- East High is open with 2 high dives and 2 low dives for a total of 4 diving boards in a separate diving well.
- There are over 1500 swimmers local and statewide using Bartlett for high level competition.
- There are approximately 50 divers.
- The regular 30% percentage of the funds was not given to the Municipality, this could have helped tremendously in fixing other parts of the pools such as pumps and other needs for both swimmers and divers.

- A lot of the project is successful, and the swimming community supports the diving community and is thankful the boards were updated. The Swimming Community is only asking for help with Bartlett, 1 out of the 7 municipal pools.

After multiple meetings, this memo is to help educate the non-official in swimming's needs with regards to running a high-level competition and why these board will need to be removed.

One of the most important parts of competition and rules is safety and equity for an official to judge and keep the competition equal for all. Officials use standard rules and guidelines to prevent subjectiveness and keep things uniform. It would be hard for a non-official; to know about swimming meets and we would not expect them too. Officials and Meet Referees spend years in training.

The new diving boards allow for swim practice and open swim, but they do NOT allow for Swim competitions.

Note: There is no municipal code or fire code that adheres to a rule book for competitions.

Question #1: Can swimming and diving continue with the new boards installed at Bartlett? The answer is yes. Open swim and practice only can continue.

Question #2: Can a large competitive swim meet, adhering -to all of the rules of fair play, safety and perform to the highest standard, continue to operate. The answer is No.

Referees and officials are certified to enforce the rulebook, fair play and safety of the venue:

We have been met with a lot of people not understanding swim competitions. We have included examples of multiple sports. Examples such as a referee for baseball, soccer or football. It is up to the rulebook and the governing body to hand down a uniform set of guidelines so that the referee can make sure the field of play is safe. In a non-swimming sport this may mean, the goal posts, holes in the ground, obstacles that may emerge around the field, volleyball nets and anchors that are removed from a shared space in a basketball court, nets are removed from a sand pit that doubles as a track pit and so on. Soccer nets are anchored by perhaps sandbags, goal posts are padded if not being used. There are many shared spaces, but referees and officials judge the field of play for safety and the fields are usually designed for the obstacles to be removed for each sport or not put permanently in the way.

*Note: We feel that citing municipal code doesn't apply. For the most part, none of the examples above are dictated by a municipal code. Municipal codes are for the general public's municipal operation for safety. An open swim could perhaps fit under this code, but an competitions are not written into municipal code.

The understanding of Lane Assignments within swimming and Track and Field:

Unlike field sports, individual sports have some extra parameters. That of who runs where? What lane do they swim in? and why?

Hours if not days go into setting up a swim meet or track and field meet. Seeding is when a coach enters an athlete in an event. That athlete prior to the meet is ranked head-to-head with others that have entered the competition. A heat sheet or meet program is designed. The athlete's performance from prior events i.e.: times are used to rank them, and a lane is assigned based on that ranking.

The most advantageous lanes are those in the middle. In this case lane #4 and lane #5 in swimming and most often the same numbering in track depending on if it is an 8 or 10 lane track.

These sports use the word "Advantageous": The most advantageous lane is assigned to the fastest competitor.

Swimming: The middle lanes are simply faster than the outer lanes, so they are the most advantageous. The middle lanes are not affected as much by the waves bouncing off the walls. The water is less choppy, so less resistance and swimmers get a better peripheral view of their competition. These advantageous lanes are earned through qualifying times or times prior to coming into the competition.

Track and Field: The lanes are different because the inside lanes have tight corners, and the outside lanes have limited field of vision. Thus, a fair way over the years to assign the most advantageous lanes is through qualifying times or prior times coming into the competition.

Water Science:

Why use the deep end versus over the Shallow end?

The depth of a competition swimming pool may be the most significant factor in making it fast. Deeper water is faster for competition. Shallow water causes waves to bounce or reflect off the bottom of the pool causing turbulence.

Most competition pools are deep. Bartlett shallow end is more on the shallow side and kids have been known to hit the bottom of the pool.

Both tanks are used for our competition swim meets due to the size of the meets. Too many kids for one side. All finals are swum in the deep end for fairness.

Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act:

(13) to encourage and provide assistance to amateur athletic programs and competition for amateur athletes with disabilities, including, where feasible, the expansion of

opportunities for meaningful participation by such amateur athletes in programs of athletic competition for able-bodied amateur athletes.

USA Swimming Rule Book
TECHNICAL RULES

1

All competitive swimming events held under USA Swimming sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules that are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition.

https://websitedevsa.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/governance/governance-lsc-website/rules_policies/rulebooks/2024-rulebook.pdf

ADA

The ADA is a civil rights law that aims to correct unjust discrimination against people with disabilities. It ensures that people with disabilities have the same opportunities and respect as non-disabled people.

According to the Disabilities act, the competition must ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPATION

An adaptive or disabled athlete must have equal opportunity for participation, and this comes down to all the same rights as an able-bodied athlete has. If the Adaptive athlete has earned the use of the most advantageous lanes #4 and #5 it is up to the athlete to choose to forgo those lanes not the obstacles. Reasonable accommodations must also be made upon request of the Disabled athlete, and not the reverse. Only if the athlete requests accommodation would a lane change be made. It is up to our sport to allow fair and equal access to the entire competition and that includes lanes.

We have spoken with many, citing Municipal codes for fire exits and access to the pool with regards to ADA and saying the new diving boards are fine for swimming. Everyone said the swimmer is fine and can just use lane 1. This is not equitable for many reasons.

- 1) If the athlete earns the right to participate in lane 4 and 5, they should have equal access to those lanes.
- 2) By preemptive telling adaptive athletes the most advantageous lanes are blocked and even though they earned them based on performance, they are always relegated to the slowest outside lane.
- 3) It is unfair that the Municipality has restricted access for ADA swimmers.

There is no municipal code on how to run a high-level USA Swimming meet, where 70 plus people are behind the blocks along with the new diving board. The new diving boards do not allow an official to run a fair and equitable meet and treat all the swimmers the same to include safety. This also includes running a meet that is fair and equitable for all competitors. Overcrowding behind the blocks and 2 lanes are not the same as the others,

thus making an inequity for swimmers. For reference: A Track meet relay or individual event, would not be run with hurdles in the two center lanes while the others are free.

The High Dives Block the lane use:

Lanes 4 and 5 blocks are now blocked from the left, right and the back of the blocks to gain entry to the blocks compared to the other lanes. All lanes must be the same and have the same advantage.

What does this do? It gives the swimmer a disadvantage for not only bodily harm with an injury hitting their head, arms or legs on the diving platform that is inches away from the block, it also blocks, entry onto the blocks, it blocks exit out of the pool and places an obstacle that the other lanes don't have. Imagine a swimmer have 16 seconds to get out of the pool during a relay while the other person is swimming. Their exit is impeded by the new boards.

The new diving boards restrict our volunteers of 16-24 timers and block the chairs, especially timing for lanes 4 and 5. This adds to the new congestion and endangers the fire exit even further.

Timing is a big part of the sport. A timer sits in a chair, watching the swimmer. They get up from their chairs to meet the swimmer simultaneous as they are touching the wall. The timers now have maneuver around the diving posts as swimmers are finishing to stop the buttons and watches. Timers are obstructed with the diving towers and must step over or around the tower while maneuvering to work in lanes 4 and 5. This is not equitable. A timer will perform this with over 60-100 heats in a swim meet. Add in 3-4 officials standing over the land, timing equipment and swimmers in a line waiting for their event.

Flow of traffic. The new boards restrict the flow of traffic for swimmers to walk along the wall and return back to their seats or line of for events and relays. Ceremony marching is now blocked as well. Medical will be slower to respond and chairs will need to be removed in order to access. (see pictures attached)

Summary:

The current diving boards do not allow USA swimming to run a fair, safe and equitable meet along with putting Alaska Swimming Sanctioning in Jeopardy with USA Swimming. They lead to overcrowding on the deck, poor flow movement and block fire exists.

The Swimming Community Requests

- 1) The removal of the new 3-meter diving boards.
 - 2) Have no 3 meters at Bartlett but keep the 1m.
- Or
- 3) Go back to the one, low profile style board that was there before. Can not be the current High Dive, must be low profile in the same spot as before.

Insight from our officials:

1. **Safety.** From the beginning, the new boards have raised obvious safety concerns. I have spoken with several of you who felt that the risks were too great to attempt mitigation. I felt differently and thought we could find ways to work around the challenges to provide our swimmers with a normal meet. Here's what I've learned:
 - a. Swimmers in lanes 4 and 5 can easily hit their heads on the diving board metal structure if they step up from the back of the blocks. Most swimmers step up to the blocks from the side of the blocks. We have been encouraging swimmers to step up from the side. Thus far we have had two swimmers report hitting their heads on the metal diving board structures. I am concerned that during championship season we have swimmers who are more emotional and self-absorbed in their pre-meet rituals behind the blocks. We are having ongoing discussion about blocking this area behind the block to prevent swimmers from stepping up from behind and forcing them to step up on the block from the side. This action would prevent a head injury.
 - b. The over-head clearance in lanes 4 and 5 was an issue. Swimmers had been able to easily reach up and touch the spring board directly overhead of lanes 4 and 5. This prevented us from being able to conduct relay starts in lanes 4 and 5. We did have one swimmer who grazed her fingertips on the board practicing a relay start during meet warm-ups (she wasn't supposed to be practicing relay starts in those lanes). The diving community raised the boards slightly with a piece of wood which effectively increased the over-head clearance. This piece of mitigation was effective, in my view.
 - c. Once the boards were raised, swimmers were able to practice a relay start out of lanes 4 and 5. Immediately, two swimmers hit their hands on the metal structures during their relay starts. This is the point where I'm out of ways to mitigate. We have been unable to run any relays out of lanes 4 and 5 and our plan for the ASAA meet will be to run all relays out of the shallow end of the pool.
 - d. Additional injuries include, two timers and a coach hit their heads on the metal structures of the diving boards. We have had one swimmer with a contusion/abrasion to his foot caused by the base of the metal diving board structure.
2. **Fair playing field.** Swimmers in lanes 4 and 5 will have the diving board structure in their way as they prepare for their races. They will have less room to jump and swing their arms prior to their races.
3. **ADA compliance.** Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is essential. It is the responsibility of the city to ensure that the facility is accessible to all patrons, including those with disabilities. I argue that the current arrangement does not adequately accommodate these requirements, which could lead to exclusionary practices and undermine our commitment to inclusivity. For example, if an abled-bodied individual using a wheelchair needed to access lanes 4 and 5, the increased congestion behind the blocks would hinder this accessibility. Swimmers

earn their positions in the middle of the pool. I would not feel good about moving a swimmer to an outside lane due to accessibility. I would also like to highlight the relevance of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act. This act emphasizes the importance of safety and accessibility in sports facilities, aiming to create equitable environments for all participants. Our facility should adhere to these principles to ensure that we are fostering a safe and inclusive atmosphere for everyone.

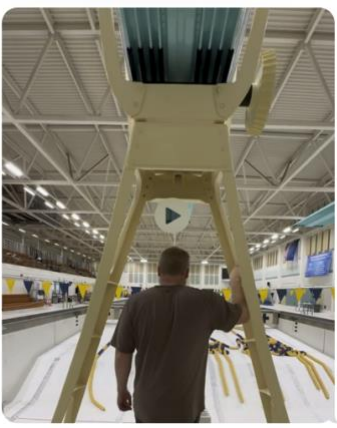
4. **Blocked egress and increased congestion on deck.** I have concerns about the diving board ladder being in very close proximity to the exit door. This exit is where emergency medical personnel have entered and exited the building in the past, and it would also be the main exit for those on deck during an evacuation. The three-meter boards add to deck congestion, and I was surprised at the first swim meet we had at Bartlett by how much the new one-meter boards also contributed to this congestion. They are bulky and have made it difficult for swimmers, officials, and volunteers to move around the deck.
5. **Underutilization of 3-Meter Boards:** With the new boards installed, the 3-meter boards at Bartlett are not being used, leading to concerns about their necessity. If the boards were removed or replaced with a low-profile single 3-meter board like the old design, we would not be taking anything away from the diving community, since they are not even using the current boards.

The diving community had submitted a report to the city illustrating pools with similar set-ups. When I reviewed this report, there wasn't a pool with the same set-up as ours. I did reach out to several of the facilities listed in the report. I have attached this report and what I learned from the facility manager's responses.

The diving community has recently expressed sentiment that the swim community are adversaries and that is disappointing. I would like to emphasize that our goal is to support all athletes, not create divisions between swimming and diving communities. Many of us are swim and dive officials and I know we are here to support all of our athletes. The project by the diving community, overall, should be applauded, as they brought nice upgrades to many of the area pools. However, the changes to the Bartlett Pool have hindered our ability to run a swim competition.

Thank you,
Stacey Mank
USA Swimming Official
NHFS Swimming Official
Special Olympics Official
907-401-0728

Attachments







Old Pool Deck. Low Profile Single High Dive and Low profile (no Concrete) 1 meter dives.



MEMORANDUM

To: Alaska Swimming Local Swimming Committee

From: Rachel Olson, Program Director, Risk Management, USA Swimming, Inc.

September 13, 2024

Subject: Bartlett Swimming Pool Facility Diving Boards

Members of the Alaska Swimming Local Swimming Committee (LSC) recently raised concerns regarding the safety of our USA Swimming members following the installation of diving boards at the Bartlett Pool facility in Anchorage, Alaska.

USA Swimming Rulebook

Please note that these diving boards may be in violation of the following USA Swimming Rules found in Article 103, Facilities Standards. This Article addresses facility standards for issuing a competition Sanction.

103.9 OTHER DECK EQUIPMENT

- .1 /LSC/ Use of portable lifeguard chair stands and other deck fixtures is recommended and they should be removed from the competition area to allow free passage and unobstructed view for competitors and officials along all sides of the course.

- .2 /M/ 1-meter diving boards which overhang the racing course shall be hinged out of the way or removed during competition.

Related to the Rules above, the following definitions apply:

103.1 DEFINITIONS

- .1 /M/ = Indicates mandatory requirement for all competition
- .3 /LSC/ = Predicated on facility availability, LSCs may waive strict compliance with these requirements in sanctioning local competition.

USA Swimming's Insurance Coverage

USA Swimming's Commercial General Liability insurance policy for its members, swim clubs, and Local Swimming Committees includes a specific exclusion for diving board injuries. The insurer may possibly deny insurance claims for injuries arising out of the diving boards and 3-meter support structures placed near the starting blocks and partially blocking an emergency exit. This means that if a claim or lawsuit for injuries arising out of the diving board use were filed against a swim club who hosts a meet at this facility or against Alaska Swimming who Sanctioned a meet at this facility, it is possible the insurer could deny insurance coverage for the claim or lawsuit.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



September 26, 2024

Mr. Mike Braniff, Director
Anchorage Parks and Recreation
632 W. 6th Ave, Suite 630
Anchorage, AK 99501
<Delivered Electronically>

Dear Director Braniff,

Due to the overwhelming community and statewide interest in ensuring the only Olympic-sized swimming pool in the state is accessible for Alaskan athletes, we write to request action regarding the Bartlett High School pool.

As state appropriators, it is a priority that state-funded capital improvements are used effectively and result in an improvement for the community – not create limitations. Currently, as we understand the design, the Bartlett 3-meter diving boards prevent full competitive access to all lanes for official and USA Swimming-sanctioned competitions.

We understand during the September 25 meeting of the Anchorage Assembly Quality Municipal Services, Ethics, and Elections Committee, you acknowledged the public's concerns with these diving board designs and the lack of public process ahead of their installment. Thank you for this recognition, your public apology for lack of oversight, and your intended efforts to initiate a thorough public process about this issue. We will be watching this process closely.


However, because of the lack of public process, we request the controversial 3-meter diving boards at Bartlett High School are removed by October 25, 2024, so the pool is fully accessible for state and regional meets in November. We understand that any further delay will impact the ability for Alaskan athletes – locally and statewide – may not be able to compete at this facility as a result.


Further, we request the designation of Bettye Davis East High School pool as a premier pool for diving practice and competitions, due to the pool's proximity to Bartlett and the existing diving well.


Thank you for your timely response and your service to the community of Anchorage.

Sincerely,



Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senate District K


Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Senate District I


Senator Matt Claman
Senate District H


Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senate District J


Rep. Cliff Groh
House District 18


Rep. Sara Hannan
House District 4

CC:

The Honorable Suzanne LaFrance, Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage
Municipality of Anchorage Assemblymembers
Mr. Jim Reeves, Municipality of Anchorage Aquatics Director
Mr. Don Winchester, Dimond Alumni Special Projects, Inc.
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development