

Testimony of Link Hoewing  
Chair, Fair Access Committee for the Western County  
FY27 CIP Budget  
February 10, 2026

I am Link Hoewing of the Fair Access Committee for the Western County. We appreciate that the Council approved funding for a new Western County Community Center that includes a first in the county clinic space so desperately needed in our area. **Your partnership with our community on this project has been vital and we thank you.**

The budget proposal does not include the innovative, cost-efficient proposal the Committee made to install a pool bubble system on the Sarah E. Auer outdoor pool so it can be used year-round. The pool is only open for three to four months a year and sits idle and unused for much of the time.

Meanwhile, the swim team, young families, older adults and disabled residents who need the facility for everything from practice to rehab exercises must get to facilities that are sometimes fifteen miles or more away.

Think of how much more the pool could do for our community and the rest of the county if it could become a year-round facility. We could not only use the facility for practices and family entertainment year-round in a convenient nearby setting. We could also hold more of our own competitions and events of all kinds, attracting visitors from other areas. The County really needs more indoor pools because demand is high, and this would cost effectively add another indoor pool.

We have done our own analysis and found that a year round pool could generate **68,000 visitors annually versus 17,000 last year**, possibly hold **twenty competitions and events versus five last year**, and provide a welcome site for the over **1600 seniors who live in the Western County and those with disabilities to swim and exercise year round**.

The Committee has done the hard work of researching this technology and developing a proposed budget for this cost effective approach. The potential offsetting revenues are significant, and its benefits to the county and our residents are substantial. **We urge county leaders to fund this project in the upcoming fiscal year.**

A reminder as these projects goes forward. As the county itself says in a Rec Department report, the County offers virtually no programming our area because there are no facilities. We welcome the county's resources and programming as the community center and other facilities go forward . . . **but the county must listen to and collaborate with our local groups who have filled the gap in offering services in our area for years to ensure we do not lose the unique and innovative offerings our residents appreciate and already rely on.**