



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager *SHH*

From: Jesús Aguirre, MBA, CPRE, Austin Parks and Recreation Director *JA*

Date: June 30, 2026

Subject: **Swim Fees Pilot - Staff Response (Resolution No. 20240418-049)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to [Resolution No 20240418-049](#), which calls for Austin Parks and Recreation (APR) to implement a pilot program to study aquatic facility access.

Pilot and Implementation

APR strategically operated this pilot to better understand the ramifications that fee changes would have on pool attendance. The Department currently maintains high public safety standards at all aquatic facilities and wants to maintain those high standards, regardless of any attendance increases or changes.

Austin Parks and Recreation, after careful consideration of geographic locations and socio-economic factors, moved to eliminate fees at Walnut Creek Pool in north Austin for the entire summer of 2024. In addition, APR offered one free-entry day per week in the month of July at Bartholomew Pool (north) and Garrison Pool (south).

Data Analysis and Final Reporting

Attendance numbers at all pools were collected throughout the summer. However, due to the limited number of single-day entry opportunities, the free-entry days at Bartholomew Pool and Garrison Pool did not provide enough relevant data to draw any conclusions. Weather also affected attendance and only two of the four planned free-entry days were suitable for operation.

Attendance at Walnut Creek Pool shows to have increased in June by 96% and in July by 68%. Total year-over-year attendance improved from 17,952 to 31,568. This correlates to attendance increase at Mable Davis Pool when it transformed from being a paid-entry pool to a free-entry pool. The data collected in both cases indicates that pool attendance will increase if no fee is charged.

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Overall attendance at Mable Davis and Walnut Creek pools remained within normal attendance ranges of other regional pools and Austin Parks and Recreation was successful in scaling up staffing to ensure public safety at both locations.

Currently, APR charges a fee at certain pools based on pool classifications outlined within the [Aquatics Vision Plan](#) developed in 2018. Walnut Creek Pool remained entirely free during the 2025 swim season and continues to be free during the 2026 swim season. For additional details on City of Austin pools and splashpads, please visit: www.austintexas.gov/pools-splashpads.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lucas Massie, Assistant Director of Austin Parks and Recreation at Lucas.Massie@austintexas.gov or (512) 974-6772.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Department Directors