

Dear Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield, and members of the Committee:

My name is Billie Jo Smith. I was the Mayor of Toledo, Oregon from 2014 to 2018. I am also an active member of the "Friends of the Greater Toledo Pool."

I am requesting that you include funding for the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center in your 2021 -2023 budget recommendations.

Materials for this request have been provided to you by Rep. David Gomberg.

During my 2 terms as Mayor, the Toledo City Council determined that the City could no longer afford to operate the Toledo pool. They voted to close it – unless the community could come up with a way to save it.

The community stepped up!

In 2017, they voted to establish the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District, which includes a large part of rural east Lincoln County. Most importantly, they voted for a permanent property tax of \$0.77/thousand to cover the pool operation, maintenance, and programs. The campaign was truly a community celebration of a treasured resource. Community support for this facility couldn't be much higher!

The now, Greater Toledo Pool, is thriving and providing a wide range of programs.

The Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District must now renovate and rebuild the 73 year old pool and the building that was constructed around it in the 1960s. The improvements are essential, not simply because it will be great to have a new, updated pool and community center. The old pool tank and the plumbing for the water input and release have been seriously leaking for years – despite numerous repairs. The old gutter system doesn't recycle the water. The serious water loss can only be resolved by completely replacing the gutter system, tank, and plumbing. Engineering studies have determined that the original building foundation and walls are inadequate and the roof stability is questionable.

The renewed facility will become the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center. Grants from community organizations and donors have paid for our completed "Master Plan," which includes a new community room and fitness center.

We must obtain the main funding for the new center from large and small donations, grants, and loans. Other vital community needs for water and sewer system restorations and improvements make taxpayer funded bonds or local option levies untenable.

Our goal is to begin construction in Mid-February of 2022. However, grants for pools have been nearly impossible to find. I've been helping with our extensive search and grant writing, and it's discouraging to discover that the doors of government and major foundations have been "closed for pools." "NO POOLS." Even the park and recreation grants from Oregon State Parks will only fund "outdoor" pools. Yet, solid research has shown that pools provide the best possible family recreation, save lives, and contribute multiple benefits to communities.

When pools fail, it is usually because the operating and maintenance costs cannot be covered by usage fees – unless the fees are extremely high. High usage fees reduce attendance and make pools unaffordable for low and moderate income families. I have discovered that nearly all funding organizations and agencies will not fund pools for this reason.

The Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center, however, is a good investment for grant funding.

- Its operation, maintenance, and program funding is covered by the permanent tax levy.
- Its low usage fees attract and make it affordable for all residents.
- It has been valued and well used by community members for 73 years, and they are determined to keep the doors open.

State funding is critical for us. Please recognize how important the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center is to our rural community, and that very few other funding options are open to us.

I greatly appreciate it that you are considering us for funding in your 2021-2023 budget.

Thank you!

Billie Jo Smith