Memorandum

To: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Cc: City Council; City Clerk Carol Moore
Re: Gath Pool
Date: January 18, 2022

We are writing regarding the Gath Pool project and urge you to enter into a full discussion with the City Council regarding building a year-round aquatics facility to replace it.

We can all agree that the current Gath Pool needs to be replaced. So, the question is, do we simply rebuild what is currently on the site or do we invest in a facility that can be used all four seasons for decades to come?

There are multiple projects either underway or being contemplated at or near Albemarle Field: repair of the fields, including a possible lighted field, an artificial turf field; the reconstruction of the old Horace Mann School into the new early childhood education center; and the replacement of the bridge across Cheesecake Brook. A year-round pool should be part of the discussion. Such a facility would be an exceptional resource for all Newton residents, whether they are young children or seniors; competitive swimmers or those learning to swim; or day time, evening or weekend users.

We have heard some of the objections to a year-round facility and do not believe that they should stand in the way of a robust discussion of this option:

- Concerns about flooding were not an issue for either the replacement of the current facility or during discussions of putting the new Senior Center on the site.
- While Newton has one other government-owned indoor pool – the one at Newton North High School – that is used primarily for students and does not offer open air options during the summer months. Nor are the private indoor pools in the city sufficient – they are not under city control, are not sufficiently sized for competitive swimming, may lack sufficient spectator seating and/or parking, have their own users who will take priority, and do not have outdoor options.
- If staffing costs are a concern, we can have a discussion about ways to pay for year-round staff. We should also engage private swimming clubs to see what they would be willing to contribute to make a year-round pool a reality.
- Finally, while we are mindful of the costs involved and are aware that Community Preservation Act funds may not be available for this project, we are able to bond many important public works projects due to our AAA bond rating and this could be one of them. We have learned over the years that when it comes to public facilities, we must look at them from a long-term perspective, even if that requires spending more time and money.
The residents of Newton deserve excellent recreational facilities. A new year-round pool is an investment that would be a valuable community asset for years to come. We look forward to discussing with you how we can turn that vision into a reality.