

Community Pool Preferences and Usage
December 2020 Survey Summary

Pleasantville Pool Task Force

February 3, 2021



Original Swimming Hole on Lake Street, precise date unknown (likely early 1930s or before).



Pleasantville Pool, July 4, 1939

Pleasantville Pool Task Force

The Pleasantville Pool Task Force was formed in early Fall 2020 at the request of Mayor Peter Scherer and the Village Board of Trustees with the aim of helping the village to evaluate options for the future of the village pool. The pool is nearing the end of its useful life and is reaching the point where routine maintenance and repair may no longer be cost effective. It may soon require major structural updating (reinforced or reconstructed pool walls and floor, along with new drains and a new gutter system) or, potentially, full replacement.

Members of the community were recruited to comprise a diverse group of Pleasantville community members with significant interest in the future of the pool. These include pool users with young and old children, senior citizens, adults with children out of the household, users of town camp, current and former pool members utilizing family, individual, and senior memberships.

The members are Sean Doyle, Amanda Gleason, Jill Jameson, Jim Kennedy, Suzanne Largey, Steve Lord, Brooke Petriccone, Larry Petriccone, Danielle Raefski, Tim Rossi, Zaw Thein, Petro Zorgman. Troy Tassier chairs the task force.

In anticipation of future decision points for the Board concerning an upgrade of the pool facility, the task force set the following initial goals: to (i) assess the community's preferences for pool design, features and programming, (ii) evaluate options to meet these preferences and (iii) identify costs and the cost impact to the Pleasantville Village residents and pool members associated with the recommended option(s).

To help complete item (i) the task force implemented a community pool preferences and usage survey in December 2020. This report summarizes the findings of that survey.

Pleasantville Village Pool History

Pleasantville has a long history in communal swimming. For more than a hundred years, the sun-and-shade location on the Lake Street hill has been a gathering spot for swimming and a local treasure to the community. At first, a natural swimming hole, watched over by a rag-tag group of lifeguards in one-piece tank tops and trunks, served the community's swimming needs.

The swimming hole became a full-fledged in-ground pool in the 1930s, thanks to the efforts of local fundraisers, who raised the first cash to put the able-bodied unemployed men of the community to work digging into the dirt and clearing timbers. Aided by local businesses that pressed a steam shovel into service and drew up the plans for free, the project quickly became a source of immense community pride and solidarity. Public works financing from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as part of the New Deal helped finish the job.

The pool, largely as we know it today, was updated in the 1970s, again with the help of local businesses and civic organizations, working hand in hand with the village government. Live

music and a chilly dip greeted a crowd of more than a thousand on grand re-opening day May 24, 1975. The 1970s upgrades included the first “kiddie pool.”

Another significant upgrade was made in 1996, not to the pool itself, but instead, to the amenities and buildings surrounding the pool. Additional upgrades made to the bathrooms, entrance and other features of the pool grounds were completed more recently.

Survey Response

The survey was conducted on the village Survey Monkey account from December 11 - 21, 2020. Although the survey officially ended on December 21, a small number of additional responses were received between December 21 and January 4, 2021. These responses are also included in the results that follow. Respondents were asked to complete one response per household.

In total, we received 936 responses to the survey representing 3,522 household members as reported by the respondents. 698 respondents (75%) reported being village residents, 206 (22%) reported living in the Pleasantville School District (but not the village) and 32 (3%) reported “other” when asked for location.

All respondents were forced to report a location in order to complete the survey. Answers to other questions were not required. Responses for all questions contain a significant majority of the 936 respondents but are typically not all respondents. Below, percentages are stated in terms of the number of responses given to a particular question, not in terms of the 936 total respondents.

Of these respondents, 469 reported being pool members in 2019. According to the recreation department information, there were 612 pool memberships (which included 1,770 pool members in total) in 2019. Thus, we assume that a very significant majority of the most recent pool members completed the survey. In addition, 294 respondents reported membership in a previous year. 156 reported not having previously joined the pool, although 36 of those 156 reported interest in joining in a future year. In the comments section of the survey, 31 respondents that haven’t joined the pool before reported having recently moved to Pleasantville. Of the respondents that were previous members, 31% reported having held a membership for 10 or more years. Another 19% reported a membership history of 6-10 years. Along with the high response rate, these consistent long-term memberships help to indicate the importance of the pool to the Pleasantville community.

Of the respondents who report previous pool memberships, 75% report their most recent membership type as family, 14% individual and 10% senior. These percentages are comparable to recent memberships at the pool. In 2019 the recreation department reports that 63% of memberships were family, 13% individual and 23% seniors. While the numbers are very close, there is a slight over-representation of family member respondents and a slight under-representation of senior member respondents.

522 respondents (57%) plan to join the Pleasantville Pool in summer 2021 if opened with appropriate COVID precautions, 255 (28%) report “unsure” and 133 (15%) reported “no.” Of the 133 “no” responses, only 26 have joined the pool in 2017, 2018 or 2019.

Of the respondents, 123 joined an alternative pool in summer 2020 when the village pool was closed. The most common other pools joined were Mt. Pleasant (62), Westwood (21), and Chappaqua Swim and Tennis Club (9). Approximately one half of these 123 respondents were 2019 pool members at Pleasantville. 59 of the 123 plan to return to the Pleasantville Village Pool in 2021 if opened with appropriate COVID precautions and 11 are unsure.

Respondents were asked to indicate all types of pool use (more than one answer was allowed). The most common uses reported were general recreation (92%), lap swimming (33%), summer camp (31%), swim team (17%) and swim lessons (15%).

Pool Features

The most unequivocal responses in the survey were in response to the kiddie pool. 91% of respondents want a separate kiddie pool. The strong response covered the range of respondents. For instance, 90% of respondents with children under 14 in the household want a separate kiddie pool and 96% of respondents without children under 14 want a separate kiddie pool. (The response with even younger children is similar to the under 14 respondents.) In addition, 84% would like fencing around the kiddie pool.

Although the yes or no portion of the question drew a stark preference for a separate kiddie pool, the respondents who chose to offer comments were somewhat more mixed. (Approximately 10% of the respondents commented on the kiddie pool separation.) Overall, there is a concern for safety but the possibility of a zero-entry main pool was mentioned as an alternative by some respondents. Some example comments include:

- *“Safety is the number one priority for our tiny ones.”*
- *“Depends on the overall pool design and layout. The gradual entry of the Mt. Pleasantville pool is ideal.”*
- *“Make it into a kids’ spray park. Slides and spray.”*
- *“It is fantastic separate but I didn’t know how it would be integrated. Happy to review options.”*

Overall, there seems to be some openness to considering alternate options if done with safety in mind and a kiddie pool area remains separated from the rest of the pool.

In Table 1 we report responses to a set of specific pool features. In the table we display the percent of respondents declaring a particular feature to be Unimportant, Not Important, Neutral, Important or Very Important. We also display the number of responses to each particular feature

as well as a “score” for each feature. The score is calculated as the average numerical response to each question where Unimportant is given a value of 1, Not Important is given a value of 2, Neutral is given a value of 3, Important is given a value of 4 and Very Important is given a value of 5. Thus, higher scores indicate that a larger share of respondents have reported Important and Very Important.

As reported in the table, the kiddie pool remains a source of agreement on average. 47% of respondents view a kiddie pool as a very important element of our pool, while only 7% view it as unimportant or not important. The score was 4.14.

Lap lanes are also viewed as an important element of our pool with 78% responding important or very important for this feature. It is important to note that while only 33% of respondents reported using the lap lanes, the support for them exceeds their usage.

Table 1. Pool Features

Pool Feature	Unimportant	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	# of Responses	Score
Kiddie pool / swim area	6.16%	1.16%	12.79%	32.44%	47.44%	860	4.14
In pool sprinkler(s) (“mushroom”)	13.41%	11.91%	35.84%	28.67%	10.17%	865	3.1
Slide(s)	13.09%	12.63%	30.59%	29.78%	13.90%	863	3.19
Diving Board	13.80%	12.51%	28.30%	31.46%	13.92%	855	3.19
Lap Lanes	3.26%	3.14%	15.81%	38.02%	39.77%	860	4.08
Zero entry (gradual slope) access	5.33%	6.98%	35.50%	34.67%	17.51%	845	3.52

Zero-entry access – meaning a gradual entry in the shallow end that allows people to wade into the water – had a largely positive response. 52% of respondents answered important or very important when considering zero-entry access, while only 12% viewed zero entry as unimportant or not important.

Three potential new amenities drew more mixed responses. In pool sprinklers, a slide and a diving board all had between 39% and 44% responses of important or very important. In addition about 25% of respondents viewed these features as unimportant or not important and between 28% and 36% reported a neutral rating. More people view them as important or very important than unimportant or not important. Thus there is some support for them.

Because of the slight ambiguity in the responses for these last three features and the recognition that they would likely be used by a subset of pool users, specifically those with younger children,

we investigated these features in more detail. To do so, we broke out the respondents into three subsets: those without children in the household younger than 14, those with children in the household younger than 14 and those with children in the household younger than 10. (This last group is a subset of the children under 14 group. All respondents in the children under 10 group are also in the children under 14 group.) We report these results in Table 2.

In Table 2 we see some stronger support for these three amenities among respondents with children under 14 in the household. The responses among respondents with children under 14 and children under 10 yield almost identical scores. Respondents without children in the household see these three potential items less favorably. Thus, there is some support for a modest inclusion of some additional play features, perhaps best placed in the kiddie pool area or in an area somewhat separated from the central pool body. The support is most strong among the groups that would use them the most.

Table 2: Pool Feature Scores

Feature	All Respondents	Respondents with kids under 10	Respondents with kids under 14	Respondents without kids under 14 (Includes no kids)
In pool sprinkler(s) (“mushroom”)	3.1	3.37	3.26	2.83
Slide(s)	3.19	3.45	3.46	2.71
Diving Board	3.19	3.35	3.37	2.87
Lap Lanes	4.08	3.91	3.96	4.29
Zero entry (gradual slope) access	3.52	3.56	3.51	3.55

Pool Space, Size, and Sun

Another strong source of agreement: respondents like the three sections of the pool. Over 80% of respondents felt that each of the shallow depth, medium depth and deep areas of the pool are

important or very important. A majority (61%) of respondents feel the pool is currently the “right size,” while 37% would like it to be larger and only 2% want a smaller pool.

While respondents seem to like the pool size, a majority (60%) would like a larger deck space. 39% responded that the deck space is the right size, and only 1% thought it should be smaller.

Over 60% of respondents want the kiddie pool shallow depth, medium depth and deep section of the pool to remain the same size; 25-30% wanted each to be larger. The specific tabulations are given in Table 3.

Table 3: The size of this area of the pool should be:

	Smaller	No Change	Larger
Kiddie Pool	13%	74%	14%
Shallow	4%	69%	27%
Medium	7%	67%	26%
Deep	8%	63%	30%

45% of respondents would like more shade on the deck space and 40% want to keep the amount of shade on the deck space the same. As revealed in a question below, 73% responded that pool provided umbrellas are an important or very important feature of a pool. 38% of respondents would like more sunny space in the pool, and 53% responded that the amount of sun over the pool is sufficient.

The most common mentions in the open-ended comments for this section of the survey concerned an enlargement of deck space and seating. There was also frequent mention of improved access to lap lanes at all times. There may be demand for having three or four lap lanes available at all times. Again, zero entry appeared here as a desirable feature in many comments.

Additional Pool Complex Features

We asked respondents about a series of other features on the pool grounds. The responses are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Additional Pool Amenities

Feature	Unimportant	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	# of Responses
Large deck games (table tennis, shuffle board)	10.40%	11.51%	31.70%	36.60%	9.79%	817
Pool provided umbrellas	3.65%	5.85%	17.78%	46.53%	26.19%	821
Pool provided chairs	1.83%	3.41%	8.05%	36.95%	49.76%	820
Children's playground within pool area	13.41%	18.41%	28.17%	26.10%	13.90%	820
Snack Bar	2.56%	1.95%	10.61%	38.54%	46.34%	820
Picnic area	3.18%	3.67%	18.24%	46.63%	28.27%	817
Basketball court	16.67%	13.38%	32.85%	24.82%	12.29%	822
Lighting of court area	15.10%	12.67%	36.54%	23.87%	11.81%	821

Pool-provided chairs and umbrellas are seen as important or very important to a majority of respondents. Very few see these items as unimportant or not important. The snack bar, like the kiddie pool, is seen as an essential feature of the pool grounds. A picnic area is also seen as a very favorable amenity with 75% of respondents viewing that feature as important or very important. Other features listed have more mixed responses.

The open comments for this section were expansive. Two common themes underscore the need for more seating or chairs and more shady area or umbrellas. The snack bar was another source of a large number of comments that should be viewed more closely by the food vendor as a potential source of customer satisfaction. There were also comments on features and games for kids and comments on a simple sprinkler or splash section appeared both here as well as in the kiddie pool section mentioned above.

Financing

We asked respondents to state the maximum amount that they would be willing to pay if they joined the pool on one of a family, individual or senior membership for a pool with *significant upgrades*. Some respondents answered this question for more than one membership type. The

responses give us some indication as to what membership fees may be supported by pool members. The results for family, individual and senior memberships are provided in Tables 5-7.

For each membership type, the lowest possible response included an increase from the current membership rates of family membership (\$400), individual membership (\$200) and senior membership (\$75). There does appear to be some room to fund pool upgrades with larger membership fees. Family rates appear to be the ones most flexible in their willingness to accept a price increase. The average response was \$225 above current rates.

Individual rates seem the least willing to absorb a price increase. This group may need more study as there can be a range of types of people within this group, from HS or college students to lap swimmers or recreational adults who may use the pool for very different purposes. Perhaps dividing this group up by student versus non-student, or recreation versus exercise status, may be worth investigation.

Finally, seniors responded in a bi-modal manner. The two most common responses were the lowest and the highest of the range provided. 32% listed \$90 for their maximum and 29% listed \$150 as their maximum. Other answers had much lower rates.

Table 5: Maximum Amount Willing to Pay if Significant Pool Upgrades are Made:

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP, Current Rate = \$400

Annual Family Membership Fee	% Responding
\$500	35%
\$600	30%
\$700	18%
\$800	10%
\$900	7%
Total # of Respondents:	657
Average \$ Amount:	\$625
Average \$ Amount Village Resident:	\$623
Average \$ Amount School District Resident:	\$634

Table 6: Maximum Amount Willing to Pay if Significant Pool Upgrades are Made:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP, Current Rate = \$200

Annual Individual Membership Fee	% Responding
\$250	52%
\$300	25%
\$350	11%
\$400	6%
\$450	5%
Total # of Respondents:	475
Average \$ Amount:	\$293
Average \$ Amount Village Resident:	\$288
Average \$ Amount School District Resident:	\$294

Table 7: Maximum Amount Willing to Pay if Significant Pool Upgrades are Made:

SENIOR MEMBERSHIP, Current Rate = \$75

Annual Senior Fee	% Responding
\$90	32%
\$105	17%
\$120	17%
\$135	4%
\$150	29%
Total # of Respondents:	441
Average \$ Amount:	\$117
Average \$ Amount Village Resident:	\$118
Average \$ Amount School District Resident:	\$115

Pricing structure garnered the most of any of the narrative answers. These comments centered on requests such as more flexible pricing such as day passes (already available) and family passes that included au pair or child care providers. Discounted or free guest passes with membership were also noted, along with allowing household adults over 21 to be covered in the family pass. Several noted that a couple and/or parent and child pay the same rate as a larger family.

A number of people were amenable to price increases as long as the amenities warranted the price. This included upgrades to the pool itself as well as the deck space and pool amenities.

There were also a number of people who were averse to a price increase. Comments here included noting that this was a town pool and people who were inclined to join more costly pools or country clubs had those options. Selected comments:

- *“We would spend over \$1k for the pool if it was a place to spend an entire day.”*
- *“If the space was upgraded to a level that all of my children would want to go on a regular basis, I would spend a little more than specified. In recent years, however, I have been told that the pool is boring and limited. It would be nice to be a member of a facility that reflects where we live and brings the community together.”*
- *“We think that there should be some regard to seniors in this village when it comes to pool membership. We have supported the pool and other recreation expenses over the course of many years, therefore a nominal membership increase should be considered for village seniors.”*
- *“Please control the costs. People are struggling.”*

Conclusions

We offer the following conclusions:

1. The Pleasantville pool has been a central feature of our community for over 100 years. There is great interest in maintaining the pool as demonstrated in the exceptionally strong 936 responses received and the representation of 3,522 household members within those responses.
2. Overall, the survey displayed a preference for a pool similar to the current one. Respondents like the current pool, its size, the three depth areas and the lap lanes. Additionally, there is support for maintaining a separate fenced in or otherwise enclosed kiddie pool if the cost is not prohibitive.
3. Overall, a zero-entry entrance to the pool is favored in some fashion. 51% of respondents stated this was important or very important, while only 12% think it is an unimportant or not important feature of a pool.

4. Support for additional features like sprinklers and slides was more nuanced. The support is stronger for these features among respondents with children under 14 in their households. People seem to like the less hectic and more calm nature of the village pool compared to the Mt. Pleasant pool. Yet, there may be some space to draw in more families with minimal additions of some type of a limited “splash zone.”
5. The snack bar is seen as an important feature of the pool. A picnic area also received strong support.
6. There is support for a pool fee increase *if significant pool improvements are made*, in some groups. The willingness to accept an increase is strongest in the family membership respondents and lowest in individual membership respondents. Senior membership respondents have mixed opinions with some indicating support for a minimal increase and an equal number willing to pay a significant increase.