

## **Souderton Community Swimming Pool Closed for the 2020 Season**

The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in significant disruption to our daily lives and daily routines. Businesses have been forced to close or operate under significant restriction. Schools closed, traditional graduation ceremonies were cancelled, summer youth sports and recreational facilities have closed and most summer festivals and gatherings have also been cancelled or postponed. We all share in the growing frustration of the continuing restrictions and disruption to normal routines and expectations. Recent reports suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten our lives and is showing signs of a resurgence as many states begin to reopen.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the opening of many recreational facilities, including the Souderton Community Pool. Some of our neighboring community pools decided to remain closed, while others have decided to open with restrictions to only serve their local residents. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and the Montgomery County Health Department determined that outdoor pool facilities can open in the yellow and green phase of the Governor's re-opening plan but must implement policies and procedures to strictly adhere to CDC COVID-19 guidelines and the Governor's restrictions for business openings. The restrictions will impose significant occupancy limitations, maintain social distancing requirements, increase sanitizing of the facility and mandate additional staff responsibility and training to monitor compliance with CDC guidelines. These restrictions will make it impossible to provide deck furnishings, will limit access to the bathhouse facilities, requires the use of masks and social distancing practices while inside the pool facility and will not provide residents with equal opportunity to access the pool due to occupancy limitations.

On June 1, 2020 Souderton Borough Council reached a split decision to maintain the closure of the Souderton Pool through the yellow phase of the Governor's re-opening plan. Souderton Borough Council further created a special committee to evaluate a potential operational plan if and when the Governor moved Montgomery County into the green phase of the re-opening plan. The special committee spent the past several weeks evaluating and discussing potential operational plans in an attempt to salvage a few weeks of the 2020 season for our residents. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 restrictions presented significant operational obstacles to limit membership sales to maintain reduced occupancy limitations of the pool. Planning was further challenged by the recent resignation of key experienced management staff, the eventual loss of other experienced staff members to school in August, and concerns over the heavy reliance on younger staff to lifeguard and monitor COVID related restrictions and social distancing policies.

After much discussion and careful evaluation it has been determined that the logistics of operating the pool under the mandated restrictions, compounded with the loss of key management staff will create significant and unacceptable challenge to maintain a safe and enjoyable environment for our patrons and staff.

Souderton Borough Council did not take this decision lightly and realizes the frustration and disappointment to our residents. The special pool committee and Borough Council will continue to develop plans and preparations to reopen the Souderton Community Swimming Pool for the 2021 summer season. Please remain safe and vigilant as this COVID-19 pandemic continues.