

Questions & Answers about Cranford Pools

Why did the Township decide to open only Orange Avenue Pool in 2021?

Quite simply, the Township cannot afford to operate three municipal pools (Orange, Centennial and indoor). The Swim Pool Utility has faced a deficit for several years because of declining membership and increased costs to operate and maintain the three (3) pools.

Based on operating three (3) pools:

2018 deficit - \$68,839 (covered with Township contribution)

2019 deficit - \$77,258 (covered with Township contribution)

2020 deficit - \$1,098,000

As you can see, the Pool Utility was already facing ongoing financial issues before the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. The Township and the Swim Pool Utility Advisory Board value these amenities and are committed to making responsible decisions.

Where did money come from in previous years to cover the deficits?

In the past few years, the Township covered the deficits to keep both outdoor pools and indoor pool operating. When the Swim Pool Utility was created, the intent was to run the pools with revenue from membership fees and pool programs and not be subsidized with taxpayer dollars.

Is there a chance all three pools will be open in the future?

That is difficult to answer at this time. The Swim Pool Advisory Board will monitor memberships and expenses throughout the year.

This was the 2021 operations budget presented to the Township Committee in January for three (3) pools.

Centennial Indoor - \$650,900

Centennial Outdoor - \$567,495

Orange Ave Outdoor - \$486,395

We just kicked off a membership drive and hope to increase membership (residents and non-residents) now that we can announce the pool will be open for a full 2021 season with no increase in membership fees. There are no plans to close the indoor pool.

Have other towns closed municipal pools?

Several towns never opened pools last year. We believed it was important for members to have that outlet and opened Orange Avenue as soon as permitted by the State. It is important to point out that Cranford is the only town in the area and of our size that has three municipal pools: two outdoor pools and an indoor pool. The neighboring towns of Clark, Springfield, Summit, Mountainside and Westfield have one municipal pool.

Municipal pools in general have seen declining membership for several years.

How many Cranford residents belong to the pools?

Less than 25% of Cranford residents belong to the pool. When Township revenues are used to subsidize pool operations that means 75% of residents are paying for something they do not use. A five year look at membership that includes residents and non-residents:

2016 – 3,710 memberships / 9,674 members

2017 – 3,340 memberships / 9,246 members

2018 - 3,359 memberships / 9,179 members

2019 – 3,255 memberships / 8,888 members

2020 – 1,878 memberships / 4,684 members

Why Orange Avenue instead of Centennial Avenue pool?

Orange Avenue pool, the surrounding deck and green area are slightly larger. Using the 2020 COVID guidelines, we were able to accommodate 800 people last year (at one time not cumulative for the day) and never exceeded the capacity, faced overcrowding or social distancing issues. Average occupancy in 2020 was 500 people at any given time.

Additional information about pool membership.

- **How do I sign up for a pool membership?**
 - Please visit <https://register.communitypass.net/Cranford> to register.
 - All returning members have an account. If you forgot your username or password, please contact the pools and we can assist you. 908-709-7260 or pool@cranfordnj.org.
- **What are membership rates?**
 - Rates can be found on our website at <https://www.cranfordnj.org/pool-fitness-center/pages/membership-and-registration>.
 - Senior memberships begin at 62 years of age
 - Children under 2 are free.
- **Will the amenities be open?**
 - The diving board, slide, playground, basketball court, volleyball court will be open.
- **Should I bring my own chair?**
 - Pool furniture has been removed but you can bring your own chair, blanket, etc.
- **Do I have to wear a mask?**
 - Masks are strongly encouraged when you are at the facility but should not be worn while in the pool.
 - Children under the age of 2 should not wear a mask.
- **Can I register for swim lessons?**
 - Swim lessons will be offered this year.