



Township of Cranford

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From: Cranford Township Committee and Swim Pool Utility Advisory Board

Questions & Answers about Cranford Pools

The Cranford Township Committee and the Swim Utility Advisory Board announced negotiations with the Westfield YMCA. This Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) Sheet is to advise community members about the ongoing discussions regarding renovations to the Centennial Avenue Fitness Center. An agreement is not yet signed. Final construction plans have not been submitted and no permit has been issued. We will continue to provide updates as more details are finalized and appreciate your patience with this process. The goal is to provide upgraded, high-quality facilities to pool members and attract new members to financially sustain the Cranford's pool facilities.

What is happening with the indoor pool and fitness center at the Centennial Avenue facility?

The Township has been in discussions with the YMCA of Westfield about expanding our partnership. In 2022, the YMCA made an investment to upgrade the summer camp facility and they ran the summer Kids Camp. This is considered Phase 1 of our partnership with the YMCA. The YMCA currently runs the summer camp program and rents the indoor pool for their Devilfish Swim Team.

If the Township and YMCA reach an agreement to continue our partnership, the YMCA will invest in a substantial renovation of the fitness and wellness area, the childcare room, multi-purpose space, the indoor pool filtration and chemical feed system at the Centennial Avenue indoor facility. The timeline on the construction has not yet been finalized but work is anticipated to begin this Spring and may take up to 6 months to complete if an agreement is reached. This is Phase II. We understand this is an inconvenience to pool members and are exploring options to minimize it.

Phase III is renovation of the bathrooms and locker rooms. There is no schedule for Phase III at this time.

Will Centennial Avenue and Orange Avenue outdoor pools be open this summer?

Yes. Opening Day will be May 27.

Is the YMCA making improvements to the outdoor pool at Centennial?

No. The outdoor pool at Centennial and Orange are not part of the renovations.

When can I sign up to join the pool?

Sign up for all current and new members, both Cranford residents and non-residents, will begin March 13. You may sign up online at <https://register.communitypass.net/cranford>

Will current pool members be able to use the YMCA pool and fitness center during renovations?

Yes. If an agreement with the Westfield YMCA is finalized, current pool members who use the indoor pool and fitness center will be able to go to the YMCA at no extra cost through May 23rd.

Will the Cranford High School Swim Team and the Cranford Gators still be able to use the pool?

Yes. The Cranford Gators and Cranford High Swim Team will be permitted to use the Centennial indoor pool for practice.

When will the Centennial Indoor Pool re-open?

The anticipated completion date is October 2023 but this is subject to change. The Township will keep the members updated on the progress of the project if it is approved.

What is the cost of these renovations?

The cost of the proposed renovations is approximately \$1.5 million. The YMCA will fund these upgrades and the Township will repay the YMCA through a revenue sharing agreement. There will be no interest charged.

Why can't the Township fund the renovations?

The seven total pools that are part of Centennial and Orange Avenue complexes cost \$1.7 million annually to operate. The pools are intended to be self-funded through memberships. However, there has been a steady decline in membership over the last decade from 5,100 in 2011 to 2,912 in 2022. This has negatively impacted operating revenue.

In addition, costs go up each year. Township tax dollars were used to subsidize the pool operations several times in the past few years to keep the Orange and Centennial pool complexes open. Partnering with the YMCA provides opportunities to continue offering swim, fitness and recreation options and, importantly, to attract new members. It is hoped that this will allow the pools to be self-sufficient and not pass costs onto the majority of taxpayers who do not use pools.

Presently, neither the Township nor the Pool Utility have the funds to pay for these needed major renovations and operations.

Is this deal finalized?

No. The Township and the YMCA have been in discussion for a year and hope to finalize an agreement in the coming weeks. The YMCA Board of Directors will meet and vote at the end of February. The Township expects to take action following the YMCA Board decision.

Do other towns have this problem with municipal pools?

Clark, Springfield, Summit, Mountainside and Westfield have also seen declining membership for several years and each only has one municipal pool to maintain. Cranford is the only town in the area that has two municipal pool complexes, an indoor pool and a gym.

What is the Township doing to attract new members?

In 2022, the Swim Pool Utility Advisory Board launched an extensive marketing campaign that included a direct mail advertising postcard to every Cranford home and homes in nearby towns like Kenilworth, Garwood, Union, Linden and Roselle Park. Regular announcements and ads and press releases appeared in area newspapers, Township newsletter, social media and a video on TV 35. Outreach was also made to past members. The campaign brought some new members but not enough to allow the pools to remain financially self-sufficient.

February 17, 2023
