

Referendum would fix outdated pools

New pools for Central and South totaling \$39 million are part of Nov. 6 question

By Ken Knutson

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Hinsdale Central junior Molly Bruns is a member of the Red Devils' girls junior varsity swim team and is a Hinsdale Swim Club member and coaching assistant.

In other words, Bruns is deeply familiar with Central's 60-year-old, six-lane pool.

"I'm in the pool a lot," she said.

It's actually where Bruns took her first strokes in the learn-to-swim programs

that used to be conducted there. HSC, of which Bruns is both a member and coaching assistant, packs multiple age groups in the pool during practice sessions.

"It's very crowded," she remarked. "It's really loud because you have different coaches who are talking and the kids are trying to listen, too. It's hard to do a lot of different stuff because you are limited by your space."

Among the projects Hinsdale High School District 86 has earmarked as part of the \$166 million referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot is construction of a new \$24 million pool facility on the south side of the Central campus. Another \$15.1 million would pay for a new six-lane, 40-yard pool at Hinsdale South High School.

The new 10-lane, 40-yard pool at Central also would feature a separate diving well. Lack of an adequate diving well has precluded Central from hosting competitions the last two years. Bruns said remedying that would boost morale.

"Our meets right now, our team doesn't feel very connected or cohesive because the divers have to go another school to compete," she said.

A larger pool would bring Central in line with other schools at which she's competed.

"A lot of them have a lot more space, a separate diving well or bigger pools with a lot more lanes so you can do a lot more," she said. "You are able to race more people."

And then there are the locker rooms — or room, to be precise. It all depends on the time of year as to which gender has rights of possession.

"During girls swim season, we get that locker room all day and the boys don't really have a nice locker room," Bruns stated. That flips in the winter, causing significant inconvenience.

"If I swim during the day, I can't go (retrieve) my swimsuit after school, which is hard," she said. "If you have to go to the bathroom (from the pool), you have to go all the way across the hall if the



Hinsdale Central junior and swim program member Molly Bruns supports construction of a new 10-lane pool with a regulation diving well, as is proposed in the \$166 referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot. She believes an enhanced facility could offer possible open swim opportunities and bolster the youth swim club that fueled her interest in the sport. (Jim Slonoff photo)

boys are still in there."

Its ambiance, Bruns exclaimed, is conspicuously sub-standard.

"Our locker room is really gross. The last couple of days it smelled really bad," Bruns said, speculating at the possible presence of mold. "It's way too small. People have to double up for the good-sized lockers. If we have all 80 girls in there changing before a swim meet, it's so hard. Nobody has any space."

This summer during the District 86 board's deliberations over projects to include in the referendum, board President Bill Carpenter acknowledged to changing his mind on the pool enlargement after initially supporting an eight-lane model.

"I've learned quite a bit over the past year and I do see the value in the 10 (lanes) versus eight and am very comfortable," Carpenter said.

An eight-lane pool would save the district \$1.1 million,

or about \$5 a year for the owner of a \$1 million home, according to officials.

Board member Kathleen Hirsman said the additional funds for two more lanes was a worthwhile investment.

"That is money well spent. That is something we will realize every season, every year," she said.

At Hinsdale South, space constraints limit the pool facility to six lanes, which school officials said are sufficient for program needs. It will also have deeper diving area.

An improved, expanded pool will benefit more than just high school swimmers, Bruns asserted. Better accessibility will serve those with disabilities. Those with respiratory issues, like Bruns' two asthmatic sisters, will have improved air quality. And water polo matches will be able to played in a pool with regulation depth on both sides.



Perhaps even those learn to swim classes that propelled her aquatic pursuits can return.

"If we had the learn to swim programs again or community swims, I think our community would really enjoy having a nice new pool they could swim in year round," she said.

Brunks know that a successful referendum will not impact her high school experience. But she has the youngsters she's coaching in mind.

"They would really enjoy swimming in (a new facility)," she said. "I think that would help them all become better swimmers."

Aquatic visions

The \$166 million referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot includes \$39 million to construct of larger pools at the two high schools.

Central — \$24 million to build a 10-lane, 40-yard pool to replace the current 60-year-old, six-lane pool. The project will include construction of new boys and girls locker rooms and a deeper diving well to address safety issues and space constraints posed by the present facility.

South — \$15.1 million to build a six-lane, 40-yard pool to replace the current 53-year-old, six-lane pool. The project will include construction of new boys and girls locker rooms and a deeper diving well to address safety issues and space constraints posed by the present facility.

The following proposed projects at Hinsdale Central are related to the pool work.

- \$4.4 million to convert the existing pool to wrestling and gymnastics gyms.
- \$6.8 million to convert the existing gymnastics gym to three classrooms and two science labs