

**Batavia Park District  
Hall Quarry Beach  
Information Campaign Results**

**August 2010**

## **Campaign Summary:**

The Batavia Park District made a determination that the longer-term future operations of the Hall Quarry Beach should be a decision that was made by the community. In so doing, the park district created an educational campaign to educate residents as to what the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges have been in operating Hall Quarry Beach.

All of the most current financial and operational data was made available as part of the public information campaign. Eight public meetings were scheduled at Hall Quarry Beach to present the information. Morning, midday, Sunday and evening meetings were scheduled to try and meet the time schedule of any resident who desired attending. In addition, separate meetings were made available and continue to be available for interested groups and organizations. As a result of early input from several former lifeguards and a current lifeguard, a separate meeting was held to garner the input from 18 of the currently serving lifeguards at the beach.

In all, over one hundred different people turned out for the meetings at the Hall Quarry Beach, with a quarter of those persons attending more than one session. In each meeting the input was comprehensive, well thought out and constructively offered. Most of the meetings included a presentation of approximately 20-25 minutes and questions and answers that lasted an average of 90-100 minutes. The process was very thorough and the citizens who attended deserve a great amount of credit for their approach.

Every meeting included a Batavia Park District Board Member, with John Tilmon and Nicole Corken sharing the responsibility as liaisons to the public information campaign. Both commissioners volunteered for this task. In addition to the commissioners, meetings were alternately attended by staff members including Executive Director Mike Clark, Planning Director Jim Eby and Marketing and Public Relations Director Allison Niemela who hosted and moderated the sessions. After every session, a written report was submitted to Commissioners Tilmon, Corken and President Pat Callahan per direction of the Board. The final session was recorded for broadcast on BATV.

The first surveys issued will be forwarded to the attendees of the sessions. The survey will also be sent to every resident on the park district email list. The survey will be posted on the Batavia Park District website as well as the Park District Facebook page. Visitors to the Park District office in the Civic Center may fill out the survey there. We will encourage the local media to print stories encouraging residents to visit one of the places where they can take the survey. Upon completion, we will provide the results to everyone via our website and Facebook as well as in press release format to the media. If you are on our email list or attended one of the sessions and provided us with your email, you will receive the results that way.

## **What To Do About The Q?**

Our goal is to reach a community resolution to answer this question. In our sessions, we heard a number of things loud and clear as to what the community thought about this question. The answers fell into 6 primary areas. Many of the things we heard, we heard repeatedly. In some cases, we heard things once or twice. We've included every response we recorded in the sessions according to the frequency we heard it. We still have a few questions to answer. Rest assured we are working on getting those answers. The good news is that there was only a couple. The areas the categories are broken into are:

- ▶ Operational Issues/Solutions,
- ▶ Cleanliness, Public Education/Information,
- ▶ Additional Programming/Features
- ▶ Financial.

These are listed in the importance of how our attendees mentioned these items. Please remember the strongest point in one category will have been mentioned more than a point down the list in another. The categories are ranked and within those categories the individual issues are ranked.

# Operational Issues and Solutions:

This was by far the largest area of inquiry and response.

## ► Water Temperature

Most of the items dealt with the temperature of the water and the daily water loss. The single biggest response to any issue at HQB is that the water is too cold. If we fix that, everything else will take care of itself. The consensus throughout all the sessions was that we should investigate a way to seal the Quarry. Half of the attendees described the use of 250K gallons of water anywhere from irresponsible, to infuriating to wasteful. Nearly every attendee realized that filling 20-25% of the quarry each day with 58 degree water was the principal reason the water was so cold. Demographically, younger mothers reported that they had to remove their children from swim lessons because of the water temperature.

## ► Preserve Historic Tradition

In a number of ways, our attendees told us that they want to preserve the HQB atmosphere and traditional experience. Only one attendee favored the idea of adopting the theme of a water park. All but one single attendee were anywhere from in favor to very animated about preserving the integrity of the historic experience at the beach.

## ► Explore Sealant Alternatives

- Concrete - While most people felt concrete was the answer for sealing the quarry, many attendees asked (some pleaded) with the park district to investigate other specific and non-specific other options for sealing. Many favored looking at the most environmentally friendly material available. To others, the longer-term maintenance and cost efficiency was most important.
- Sand is a key part of the HQB experience and people want it to continue to be. Comments ranged from wanting to seal the quarry and maintain a sand bottom (or use silica sand) to have sand up to the water's edge. A few attendees favored half sand and half concrete as it was prior to the last renovation/ update. The following statements or questions were mentioned once or less frequently, but fell into this category:
  - What's the electric cost of pumping in water each day (negotiate with the city for lower rates)?
  - Host IHSA events.
  - Erect a wall on the river side of the quarry.

- Place spigots at each end of the beach to rinse off sand.
- Meet with lifeguards (meeting did take place on 8/13/10).
- Research the Joliet quarry for ideas.
- The last renovation resulted in concrete being poured wrong.
- If you close HQB for any length of time, people won't return.

► **Cleanliness:**

- Grounds and Facilities-Attendees were very loud and clear on this issue. While the water in the quarry received strong reviews of being clean despite the lake water appearance, the grounds and facilities were roundly criticized. From the sand not being combed to some debris in the picnic area, attendees felt the grounds need some urgent attention.
  - Bath house/Restrooms-The greatest area of concern was the bath house/restrooms. Some attendees went so far as to single this area out as the biggest reason they don't come to HQB. In the lifeguard session, guards stated that they had little time during the day to devote to this task. A crew comes in each morning to clean the bathhouses and the attention they receive during the day is limited at best. A suggestion was made that a person be hired as part of the staff whose sole responsibility is keeping the grounds and facilities clean and hygienic. In one of the sessions it was suggested more comprehensive grounds maintenance might be a possible volunteer effort two weeks before and two weeks after the HQB season. The Park Commissioners accepted full responsibility for this issue and promised to see that it receives the proper attention. The cleanliness issue came up repeatedly in all but one of the sessions.

# Pricing, Value, Marketing and Promotion

## ► Hours

The most mentioned issue in this area of concentration was the hours the quarry was open. Many people felt that having the quarry open longer during the daytime to accommodate working adults and families with two working parents. Another group that desired this were people who have greater sensitivity to the sun and could not tolerate midday sun. There was a wide variety of people who felt offering a discounted twilight time would generate more attendance, as this was often the only time of the day some people could come to HQB.

## ► Extend Season

There was significant, but slightly less support for a longer season. There is some consensus that opening at least during the weekends earlier in June and later in August would be desirable. There is a realization that lifeguards become an issue before school lets out and again when it begins. The attendees felt some effort should be made to hire more guards with less time restriction. On a separate note, attendees felt having a few guards older than college age would help minimize some colorful language and increase some greater discipline at HQB.

## ► Consider Alternative Revenue Streams

Attendees felt there might be more promotional opportunities for revenue streams through sponsorships and special programming for adults.

## ► Examine Admissions Pricing & Special Promotions

The coupons and promotions (i.e. Way Back Wednesdays) are very well received and residents would like more opportunities to take advantage of special pricing promotions. Attendees felt the admission prices in general should be reviewed to see if there was any way to make it more cost efficient, especially for multi-member families.

## ► Improve Hall Quarry Beach Policy Signage and Admissions Count

Some attendees questioned whether attendance is being accounted for correctly by the people at the admissions area. Twice we heard that the decision to close the Quarry for the entire day was made prematurely and that it should re-open if the weather improves. In most meetings we were told more marketing effort should go into HQB and the signage should be improved directing people to the beach as well as the signage at the beach.

# Public Education and Information

## ► **Intensify Communications**

The Public is eager to get information on all things Park District. Most of the attendees were familiar with the Batavia Park District website. There was particular eagerness to be able to examine the maintenance costs and operating expenses at HQB. Some people felt that the swan song for HQB was this year and this was their last chance to attend and enjoy it. Many were surprised by the amount of money that has been invested in the past few years and were willing to give the Park District credit for continuing to appropriate maintenance costs to keep HQB operational. A couple people stated that the only information they received or read about focused too much on negative aspects. The information about water consumption provoked a very thoughtful and strong response.

### ○ **Better Visibility**

While people were pleased with the fact the meetings were advertised, one thought the ad was too small and the font within the ad was too small in the paper they read.

### ○ **More Media Channels**

They also want continued communications through the website, email blasts, Facebook and any other vehicles to help get the word out. In general, all of them are interested and eager to receive information about HQB.

### ○ **More Communication/Interaction with Residents**

Residents were reminded about the Park District periodicals that also go to every address in the district that contain information. A question was asked as to what percentage of Batavia households currently use the quarry. There is some skepticism about taxing bodies in general in Batavia relating to experiences with schools and the library as well as the city and the park district. Attendees assured us repeatedly that they would like all of the information available to make the best decisions with their tax dollars.

# Additional Features or Programs

## ► Features

### ○ **Waterslide for Older Kids**

The biggest desire for a new feature was a waterslide for older kids who attend the quarry. It's an age group that attendees felt didn't have the same drawing power that younger and older visitors have.

### ○ **Separate Baby/Children's Area**

A few people skewed the other direction looking for more segregation for babies and children with possibly even a separate swimming area (or separate pool) with clear water. Sand came up again with one person advocating more sand on the shore of the shallow end of HQB.

## ► Programs/Events

The different programs already in place was detailed to the groups. Many offered more ideas to add to a list they were pleasantly surprised by:

### ○ **More Programs For Adults**

Many of the items tended to skew toward making HQB more marketable to an older demographic. Yoga, aerobics (inside and outside of the water) and diving were suggested. Diving and scuba lessons were suggested a few times as well as lap lanes (which already exist).

### ○ **More Adult Themed Events**

Events suggested were jazz nights vs. rock bands, movies, etc. The music is too loud for some visitors. Perhaps an area could be reserved where the speakers are turned away from a section that lends itself to a quieter experience.

# Financial

## ► Explore Funding Options

Attendees were deeply interested in all the cost factors from maintenance to renovation. Some questions were obviously too premature to answer with any real accuracy without more engineering and construction input. Attendees dealt with this area in a very matter of fact and frank manner.

### ○ Private Fundraising/Historical Tax Credits

Some suggested that private fundraising be part of the formula. One person asked that the park district look into funding through Historical tax credits or other mechanisms designed to promote historic preservation. Each group spent some time asking about what the costs could amount to and what methods were available to pay for it.

As far as any private fundraising questions went, the attendees were reminded that anyone can donate private funds to the park district and specify how those funds are allocated. In stating this, attendees were also reminded that the Hall Quarry Beach was a gift to the community and was placed under the stewardship of the Batavia Park District which has assumed all of the expenses and maintenance responsibilities since 1969.

### ○ Institute a Referendum

One session found consensus that a referendum asking the community for \$2-\$3 million would be an acceptable sum to consider. Questions concerning the 2008 referendum were asked in a couple of sessions. The proposed Downtown Renovation and Rec. Center came up at least once and often more than once in every session. In each case, it was made clear that the Community Resolution on Hall Quarry Beach was a separate, stand alone issue that needed a thoughtful discussion and direction to the Batavia Park Board. The Park District understands its role in the process and as such has asked the community in a very thorough way what their long-term commitment is to this beloved community asset.

## Operational Issues and Solutions

<u>Concern</u>	<u># Responses</u>
Water is too cold (Implement Solar heating panels).	18
Seal the bottom with concrete (investigate other materials	14
Eco-friendly supporters are infuriated over water usage.	8
Preserve traditional experience and maintain HQB atmosphere.	7
No Water park!	6
Keep sand as part of the HQB, at least the beach.	6
Concrete bottom with sand.	3
Go back to the 1980s with ½ sand and ½ concrete.	2
What's the cost of pumping water into the quarry (electricity cost).	1
We should have IHSA events. It's deep enough.	1
Would a wall erected on the river side of the Quarry help reduce new water needs?	1
Spigots on either end of beach to wash off sand.	1
Meet with lifeguards and ask for their input (meeting took place 8/13/10).	1
Research the Joliet Quarry for ideas.	1
1985 (1995) changes caused problems; concrete poured wrong, improper island insertion.	1
If you close HQB, people won't come back.	1

## Concern

## # Responses

### **Cleanliness**

Clean the place up; sand, washrooms, etc.	11
Ask for volunteers for 2 week preseason and postseason maintenance.	1

### **Pricing, Value, Marketing and Promotion**

Desire Longer Hours to attract more adults (later in day).	8
We'd like more coupons and promotions (affordable for families).	7
Spend more on marketing and signage. Try to get more sponsorships for snack bar, etc.	7
Desire Longer Season (weekends when school is on).	6
Season pass holders should get preference (esp. on Wednesdays).	4
The admission price to HQB should be reviewed. How does attendance decline compared to admission increase?	3
Need better attendance recording.	3
Need some adult lifeguards to keep HQB open longer.	1
Decision to close Quarry for weather made too quickly.	1

### **Public Education and Information:**

Public must get more education.	7
Share maintenance costs and longevity of repair and replacement parts (add a clock in a better spot) more upkeep.	5
Provide an accurate estimate for the cost of renovations.	4
Stress the positives of HQB. Too much negative information.	1
Want a list of expenditures- Did everything fall apart?	1
BPD needs to communicate better. Advertisements are too small (re: meeting schedule).	1
What percentage of Batavia households use the Quarry?	1
Is it a Batavia trend to have financial issues with public facilities?	1

**Concern**

**# Responses**

**Additional Features or Programs**

Waterslide for older kids.	4
More programs i.e. yoga, aerobics, diving, jazz nights (use property besides Quarry).	3
More adult time; swim, movies, music, etc. (even use portable lights).	2
Radio is too loud. Direct speakers to provide quieter area?	2
Add basketball hoops (already there, need new nets).	2
Diving and Scuba lessons.	2
Try to attract more 12-17 year olds.	2
Create a baby/children's pool with concrete bottom to ease minds of parents.	1
More sand on the shore of the shallow end.	1
Create a lap lane (already exists).	1

**Financial**

Private fundraising.	3
When and how long would upgrades take?	3
\$2-\$3 million is okay to ask for.	3
Where does the money come from to fix HQB? Resident believes community would be open to more funding.	1
Questions about 2008 referendum.	1
Historical Tax credits?	1

## **The Community Resolution for the Information Sessions**

**The overriding answer to the question of “What To Do About the Q” is:**

**To keep Hall Quarry Beach open and address the following steps:**

- 1) Find a way to make the water warmer; if it makes the water clearer, even better.
- 2) Preserve the long-term traditional integrity of Hall Quarry Beach and make sure sand is a key part of the experience.
- 3) Eliminate the need to add a quarter million gallons of water per day by sealing technique.
- 4) The only additional in water amenity to add is a water slide.
- 5) Pay greater ongoing attention to the cleanliness of the sand and the facilities at Hall Quarry Beach.
- 6) Consider extending the hours and the season of Hall Quarry Beach.
- 7) Create greater awareness of Hall Quarry Beach with more marketing and better signage.
- 8) Increase promotional ideas to increase attendance.
- 10) Provide as much public information as possible in as many ways as possible to keep residents up to date on maintenance and operational status at Hall Quarry Beach.
- 11) Residents would be open to a discussion for potential financial solutions to assure long term stability of the facility.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM QUARRY COMMUNITY FORUM MEETINGS

- 1. Water Temperature and Loss of Water** – This was by far the largest issue facing the District and was reiterated by attendees at the forums as the number one issue to address for the long term operations of the Quarry. The recommendation is to complete the exploration of feasible options recommended by the consultants and implement the best option to reduce the leaching of water out of the Quarry.
- 2. Water Clarity** – This is a difficult issue due to the competing values that were heard at the meetings. The majority of attendees stated that they want the park district to maintain the beach elements of the Quarry as it stands now. This includes keeping the sand amenities of the facility. Without significant changes to the facility to separate the sand from the water this issue will not be resolved easily.
- 3. Cleanliness and Maintenance** – This was a consistent issue brought up at the forums. Plans will be made operationally to upgrade maintenance levels to include the grounds, sand areas and bath houses. Hiring a separate daytime maintenance porter will be addressed in the next budget development cycle.
- 4. Extended Hours** – Attendees inquired into the possibility to have longer evening hours for family swims and for those individuals who work. This past year the park district remained open longer one day a week. The Park District will explore remaining open additional evening hours up to three days a week as part of a phase in approach. Staff will monitor and track attendance during the extended hours to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio since there will be budgetary considerations with this recommendation.
- 5. Extending Season** – With the scope and type of training and qualifications for guards at the Quarry rather than a traditional swimming pool, it is difficult to properly have enough staff available to safely operate the facility. The Park District will be diligent on the screening and hiring processes to ensure staff is available to work an additional week. The park district will extend the season one week in coordination with the school district calendar. Staff will monitor and track attendance during the extended hours to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio since there will be budgetary considerations with this recommendation. If the monitoring illustrates an active response by Quarry patrons then additional phases to expanding hours can be explored further.
- 6. Pricing** – The Park District experienced positive feedback with the daily promotions such as Way Back Wednesdays, which offers heavily discounted pricing every Wednesday the Quarry is open. These promotions will continue and expand when possible. In addition, the Park District will explore bringing back the Family Season Pass for additional flexibility and convenience. The Park

District will also continue to survey and analyze pricing of daily admissions and passes with other area providers to keep it attractive in the market.