



Status Update on the Dulles South Recreation and Senior Center

The Dulles South Recreation and Senior Center project has become both a source of pride and frustration for me. Pride because I think it will be a fantastic facility that we worked hard to bring to fruition, and frustration because the community has not been able to utilize it yet. While I have been providing updates in my monthly newsletter, I wanted to give you a more detailed explanation of exactly what is happening with the facility--why it hasn't opened yet--and what to expect moving forward. I recognize that this email is lengthy, but given the amount of questions I have been receiving, I want to provide you with as much information as I can. If you aren't as interested in all the details, skip to the end for the bottom line.

Obviously, at this point we expected the facility to be open and operating by now. It is perhaps fitting that I'm sending this update on Friday the 13th, since we have encountered what seems to be an unusual number of delays driven by different issues, which I will explain in more detail below.

There have been three main areas of delay. At the beginning of the construction process, a number of unanticipated site issues were identified which required



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changes to the site plan and an additional round of permitting. (While the County was essentially the "applicant" here, we still have to follow our own process and rules, and that takes some time). Those were eventually resolved and construction commenced.

The second group of delays centered on the mechanical systems of the building. It took longer for actual construction of some of those systems than expected, and when they were constructed, issues were identified in what we call the Commissioning and Balancing (essentially testing) process. We are talking about things like the HVAC system (which is very complicated in a building with aquatics), electrical, and so forth. Most of those issues have now been addressed. The mechanical and electrical issues were exacerbated by a power surge and power outage that occurred in the building during the significant windstorm we had a few weeks ago. Some of the surge protection equipment was either not operating yet because it was in the process of being installed, or not operating correctly, which resulted in some components being damaged. Those components have been replaced, and the protection equipment has been completely installed and tested. There is one outstanding issue that is still being worked on related to the communications systems between equipment (which may have been a lingering effect from the surge), but there are workarounds for that issue which will not prevent the facility from opening.

The final, and most recent set of delays is related to the pool filtration systems. There are three filtration systems, one for the competition pool, one for the leisure pool, and one for the spa. The pools themselves have been constructed and kept in operating condition by a pool maintenance subcontractor for several months. Last month, some performance issues in the filter of the leisure pool was noticed by staff, which received adjustments by the maintenance contractor. Those issues seemed to resolve themselves until last week when they reappeared. As a result of these latest observations, the subcontractor that actually built the pools was brought back in to investigate, which

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occurred over last weekend. This is an area where I don't have a lot of technical knowledge, but the best way that I can explain it after receiving some detailed briefings is that the material that is used to actually clean the water was escaping some of the gaskets and "socks" that fit over them within the actual filters. That led to what could be described as a corrosive appearance (though the gaskets weren't actually corroded). That cleaning material is supposed to be eliminated during the filtration process, which is what we want for a variety of reasons. Each of the filtration systems has a large quantity of individual filters (with "socks") to do that job-to give you some idea, the largest of them has over 300.

Since the problem appeared most acute in the leisure pool, the contractor first opened up the filtration system in the leisure pool and disassembled it, and then examined every single gasket and "sock" one by one, corrected those that appeared compromised, and reassembled it. It is still somewhat unclear exactly what caused the material to come loose, but some of the "socks" may not have been attached to the gasket tightly enough and appeared to be uneven. These units come already assembled, so it could have been an issue during manufacturing, during shipping, or during installation. After having discovered that issue in the leisure pool, the decision was made to undertake the same effort in the competition pool and the spa. The spa gaskets underwent the same inspection and reassembly and that work is also now complete. Now that those two have been reassembled, they need to be tested and operated to ensure that the issues are corrected. That will occur all weekend.

That leaves the competition pool, which is the largest and has the most filters (several hundred). The pool construction contractor will be back on Monday to observe the results of the testing of the other two units. If there are no problems with those units, they will then begin the same process on the competition pool. Since that is the largest unit with the most gaskets, it will take a little longer, but they are hoping to be able to get

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through all of it by the end of next week. Once again, that unit will need to be tested for several days.

So, the bottom line: if all of this goes according to plan and the pool filtration systems are all working correctly, then we will be in a position within the next two weeks to at least set an opening date for the facility. From that point, we will not need a long lead time, as most of the staff has been hired (and in fact the aquatics staff is now conducting on-site training). I still do not want to speculate on what that date would be, but early May would be realistic. Again, that's if everything goes according to plan, and the additional testing and repairs work out.

The senior center itself is pretty much ready to go-we'll need about 10 days lead time to get that up and running. We were planning on opening both centers at the same time. Depending on how things are going next week on the recreation center, we may make the decision to go ahead and open the senior center at an earlier date than the recreation center. We will obviously keep everyone posted on that. It would be more difficult to open up the recreation center without the pools being open (because of the way that staff and the fee structure works), but if we encounter more issues with the filtration system and it looks like the pools won't be ready for a more extended period of time, then we will change gears and work toward doing that instead.

If there is good news, it is that the project remains within its budget, but it has cost time. As I've mentioned before, the contract did have performance clauses and deadlines, and obviously those have not been met. Those will be issues that are worked through during a liquidated damages process following project closeout, after the facility is fully open.

I really do appreciate everyone's patience, and I completely understand the frustration that the facility is not open yet. I certainly share it. Over the past weeks, the County Administrator has personally been involved with trying to resolve these issues, along with the

department leadership from Transportation and Capital Infrastructure, Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and General Services. All of the staff share my frustration and would like nothing more than to finish the project. I do continue to believe that the facility itself will be a tremendous asset and focal point for our community, and I can't wait to open it.

I do get questions about the fee structure, which is available [here](#). Once we have established an opening date, we will also be providing "early bird" discounts on passes, so you'll want to watch for that.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to email me. Have a great weekend.

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