



April 9, 2024

VIA Hand Delivery and email: commissioners@tetoncountywy.gov

Teton County Commissioners

RE: Teton County Rec Center Pool Usage –
JH Stingrays Request for 2024 Fall Lane Use

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Jackson Hole Stingrays, I request the commissioners' consideration of our request to secure sufficient lanes to maintain our current swim team members and avoid cutting 20 swimmers from our fall 2024 swim program. As explained in the letter below, the Stingrays are asking for a short-term exception to a new Teton County Rec Center policy requiring that two lanes be made available to "the public" at all times. This policy, as applied in the evening hours during the 8-week Jackson Hole High School girls' swim season (September 3 – November 3), leaves the JH Stingrays short lanes to accommodate our existing team. We are asking for a short-term exception to the policy during 8 weeks in fall 2024. Thank you for your attention this important request.

Who are the JH Stingrays?

The Jackson Hole Stingrays are a non-profit youth sports club affiliated with USA Swimming. Formed in 1994, the JH Stingrays' mission is: "To foster personal growth, fitness & achievement in training and competition through the sport of swimming in a safe, healthy, and positive team environment." For 30 years, the JH Stingrays have been doing just that—providing a vital service to the County and Town of Jackson Hole, teaching our young people how to swim, and providing a positive team environment for their social, emotional, and physical development. There are no other competitive swim teams for youth (other than school sponsored teams in middle (for girls) and high school (for girls and boys)) in Jackson to fill this important need.

In the past year, the JH Stingrays team supported 124 swimmers,¹ ranging in age from 7 to 18, and nine dedicated coaches. Some of our swimmers are with us for just one of our 4 sessions (fall, winter, spring, and summer), but the majority of our swimmers are year-round athletes. Our year-round boasts some of the most dedicated and tough young athletes in this community. Our girls won the 2024 Wyoming winter short-course championship in February, and with the

¹ I'm attaching a roster of our 2023-2024 swimmers, some of whom you will surely know.

help of our young men, Jackson Hole overall placed third in the State, against powerhouses like Gillette, Casper, Laramie, and Cheyenne. Every season, we see greater and greater demand for our program, and we now have a waiting list of approximately 40 swimmers² (some of whom have been waiting a year) to join the team. In fact, the time gap between completing all the swim lessons offered by the Rec Center and getting on the swim team continues to widen as swimmers wait well beyond when they are ready for competition.

We are incredibly grateful for the pool time the Teton County Recreation Center has afforded us in recent years. The reality is that the primary factor that dictates our club's success is access to the water. We strive to maximize every minute of our time in the pool to support our swimmers. For instance, the below figure shows how we are dividing pool time (6 lanes over 3 hours) this spring to make full use of the facilities for approximately 100 swimmers in our spring session.³

JHSR – Spring 2024										
	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
5:00-5:30 --6 lanes	Level 1	Level 3	Level 2		Level 1	Level 3	Level 2		Level 2+	
5:30-6:00 --6 lanes		Level 2+ (1 hour)				Level 2+ (1 hour)				
6:00-6:30 --6 lanes	Level 5		Level 5	Level 3 Level 2+	Level 5		Level 5	Level 3 Level 2+	Level 5	Level 4
6:30-7:00 --6lanes		Level 4				Level 4				
7:00-7:30 --6 lanes				Level 4				Level 4		
7:30-8:00 --6 lanes										

JH Stingrays Concern for Fall 2024

As the Board knows, the school district swim teams under agreement with the County receive priority use of the Rec Center pool. During the JHHS girls' swim season, the school swim and dive team uses the entire pool after school from 4:15-6:15 pm. During the 8-week period in which the Stingrays' fall swim season overlaps with JHHS girls (approximately, September 3 to

² I'm attaching a list of swimmers on our current waitlist.

³ We are also working within this schedule to give up lanes on Wednesday and some Mondays this spring to the kayaking club, which needs half of the pool for its rollover clinics from 6:00-8:00 pm. We are happy to work in dryland exercises and plan to bring in a sports psychologist to talk with the swimmers on deck during those times when we have limited pool access so that, as good pool citizens, we can reasonably share the space to the extent possible.

November 3), the Stingrays practice will run from 6:15 – 8:15 pm.⁴ This is a critical time-period for us as we welcome swimmers back after a month-long break in August and begin work toward our winter state short-course championship meet. With 8 lanes, as we've enjoyed over the past 4 years, and with some of our older female swimmers opting to swim for the JHHS girls' team, we can accommodate our existing roster of swimmers in 8 lanes during 2 hours.

What has changed this year is that the Rec Center has implemented a new policy requiring that 2 lanes be left open at all times for “public use.”⁵ During our winter, spring, and summer sessions, we are able to work with the Rec Center and fit our program into 6 lanes because we can spread out over 3 hours. However, when pinched to 2 hours, it is impossible for our current swimmers to have sufficient pool time to accommodate the various levels. That means that during the 8 weeks of September and October 2024, assuming we are limited to 6 lanes between 6:15 and 8:15, **WE WILL HAVE TO CUT 20 SWIMMERS FROM THE JH STINGRAYS ROSTER.** We have asked the Rec Center for a solution to this problem and an exception for the fall session, but have been told that the answer is “no.”⁶

While we fully understand the need to balance community uses of this limited pool resource, we submit that this trade-off is not acceptable for the following reasons:

- Evening pool use by adult lap swimmers is minimal and sporadic. Keeping lanes open for the occasional drop in swimmer would accommodate one or two swimmers per evening, possibly, compared to consistent use by 20 young community members.
- Adult lap swimmers have use of the pool from 6:00 am to 4:15 pm on a typical fall day, but our Stingrays are in school and can only access the pool starting at 6:15 pm. Despite the lateness of the hour for young swimmers, they are dedicated to the sport and show up to practice.
- JH Stingrays swimmers are also members of the “public.” Our swim families pay taxes in this County and their children deserve pool access as much as adult swimmers.
- The need for consistent and on-going swim training is critical to our young athletes who are committed to year-long competition compared to occasional swimmers who could make use of the pool at alternative hours.

⁴ We are separately negotiating with the Rec Center regarding staying open the extra 15 minutes after 8:00 pm to allow our team 2 full hours to practice. We hope to reach a solution on this issue, as we are more than willing to pay for additional staff to allow us this 15 minutes.

⁵ The policy is attached.

⁶ There is a possibility that the Rec Center will close the pool facilities to the public at 7:00 pm, which is the current closing time, if there are insufficient lifeguard staff to remain open. In that case, the Stingrays (who have certified all coaches as lifeguards) would be able to use 8 lanes starting at 7:00 pm, but the Rec Center staff has said that we cannot count on it, as they will open longer to the public if they have sufficient lifeguards available. In the event the Stingrays had 8 lanes starting at 7:00 pm, we would only have to cut approximately 8-10 swimmers. But even that trade-off makes little sense to allow for 45 minutes of “public” swim lanes from 6:15-7:00 pm.

Exception Request

To be clear, the Stingrays are not asking the Board for more pool time or lanes so that we can grow our team or maximize profits.⁷ We are here solely to advocate for the 20 young athletes who have chosen swimming as their sport, are working toward season goals, are building their confidence during critical periods of growth and learning, and will have to be told they cannot swim this fall. It seems impossible for us to choose which of these dedicated swimmers will be told to sit out the fall season.

We ask that the Board advocate with Teton County Parks and Rec for a limited exception to the new “public” policy between 6:15-8:15 pm from September 3 until the end of the JHHS girls’ swim season (approximately 8 weeks) so that we are able to invite all of our current swimmers to return to the team for the fall. Following this period, if we are able to begin practices earlier, we can accommodate our existing team in 6 lanes. We are willing to work with the Rec Center regarding other solutions, to the extent they are offered.

We very much appreciate your time and attention to this matter. If you have questions, or if you would like to speak with me, please call me at 307-413-2310 or jhstingrayboard@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Dessa Reimer, President, on behalf of the
Jackson Hole Stingrays

cc: Steve Ashworth, Teton County Parks and Rec Department

Attachments:

- 2023-2024 Swimmer Roster
- Current JH Stingrays Waitlist
- TCPR Scheduling Policy

⁷ It is heartbreaking to say “no” to 40 swimmers on our waitlist each season, but that is the reality of the limited space and time available for our program.