



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool
85 Southeast Jerome Street, Oak Harbor, WA 98277
Thursday, January 22, 2026
6:00 PM

- 1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER** at 6:00 pm by BOC Chair Larsen.
- 2. ROLL CALL:** Comms Kraner, Larsen, Witmer, Hartmann and Guy were present.
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Becky Wilson commented regarding the elimination of the Premium Membership. She stated she was unaware of the change prior to her membership expiration and expressed concern about communication and the financial impact. She requested reconsideration of reinstating the Premium Membership, potentially with an increase.

Akemie & Clint Christensen reiterated written comments previously submitted. She requested reinstatement of the Premium Membership with a potential increase, consideration of a senior discount, adjustments to punch card options, cooperation with the City of Oak Harbor regarding future pool management, and discussion of alternative revenue options.

Angie McAllister expressed concern about the elimination of the Premium Membership and its impact on her ability to continue participating at the same frequency once her current membership expires.

Andrea Grunberg expressed concerns regarding the process and communication surrounding the fee increases and elimination of the Premium Membership. She questioned transparency, suggested greater outreach and community input prior to changes, and raised concerns about equity and funding sources.

Elaine Graham expressed appreciation for the materials provided but requested additional information regarding the analysis supporting elimination of the Premium Membership. She suggested exploring alternative membership structures, including an all-access option, and encouraged investigation of insurance-based fitness benefit programs as a potential revenue source.

Teri Bono shared personal testimony regarding the importance of the pool to her health and well-being. She expressed concern about the financial impact of the rate changes on frequent users, particularly seniors and individuals on fixed incomes. She requested reconsideration of the Premium Membership structure and restoration of membership timeframes previously purchased.

Rae Hicks spoke in support of maintaining affordable access to aquatic programs, particularly for seniors. She emphasized the health and fall-prevention benefits of water programs and encouraged the Board to explore compassionate solutions, including potential fundraising efforts, to preserve accessibility.

Additional public comments included requests for clearer posting of committee meeting information and clarification on how to participate in future discussions.

4. CONSENT AGENDA ANNOUNCEMENT.

5. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Comm. Kraner requested that the September 25, 2025, meeting minutes be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration. There being no objection, September 25, 2025, minutes were removed from the Consent Agenda and added to the regular agenda as Item 6. Comm. Guy made a motion to approve the consent agenda as amended. Comm. Kraner seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with no further discussion.

a. Minutes:

- i. 11.20.25 Budget Hearing Minutes - Amended
- ii. 12.18.25 Regular Meeting Minutes

b. Vouchers and Payroll:

- i. Expense Voucher #'s 11017-11056 \$53,292.67
- ii. Payroll \$63,104.67
- iii. DOR. \$2,104.65

Total: \$118,501.99

6. 9.25.25 Regular Meeting Minutes - Amended. Comm Guy motioned to approve the 9/25/25 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented in the packet. Comm Kraner seconded and the motion carried unanimously with no further discussion.

7. STAFF REPORTS: ED Cochran presented staff updates with the business manager and the maintenance manager.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. Budget Committee:** NONE
- b. Program Committee:**

Commissioner Guy responded to public comment concerns:

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns. We value public input and appreciate the opportunity to clarify several items.

Fee Schedule Timing and Communication

It was never the intent of the Board or staff to withhold information regarding the updated fee schedule. Our primary method of communicating with the public has historically been through our website, nwpprd.org, and the updated schedule was posted there once it was finalized.

That said, we recognize that additional communication would have been beneficial. We accept that criticism and are committed to improving how we communicate important changes in the future.

The fee schedule was formally approved at the November Board meeting, which resulted in a shortened timeline for implementation. In reviewing internal discussions, it appears that some directions may not have been conveyed as clearly as intended. Staff were instructed not to speculate on potential rate changes prior to Board action and to direct patrons to public meeting schedules. Unfortunately, that approach may have continued after approval, resulting in less proactive communication than was appropriate. Leadership is addressing this internally and has committed to providing clearer guidance and more direct outreach going forward.

Use of Unexpired Premium Memberships

The Committee agrees that patrons should be able to utilize any unexpired portion of a premium membership after purchasing a basic membership. This will be addressed with the board and staff for a final decision.

Staff is currently reviewing this matter and will reach out directly to affected patrons to ensure it is handled appropriately.

Consideration of the Price Increases

The Board reviewed the budget and proposed pricing schedule over several months prior to approval. While a single-year increase of approximately 20% is understandably concerning, it reflects a longer period of pricing stability dating back to the COVID era. During that same timeframe, core inflation increased by roughly 59%, while our fees remained largely unchanged.

In 2025—the first year following passage of the new levy—operating expenses rose sharply, in some cases doubling. Without adjustments to fees, the District would not be able to meet its budget obligations.

Continuing without these changes would place the long-term viability of the facility at risk.

The Board continues to explore additional funding options, including grants, a potential levy lid lift, and possible structural changes to the District. However, fee adjustments were necessary to maintain operations in the near term.

With regard to premium memberships, analysis showed that the previous pricing did not come close to covering the actual cost of the benefits provided. In fact, premium memberships have consistently operated at a major loss and were effectively subsidized by tax dollars. The Board felt strongly that it is not appropriate for public funds to disproportionately benefit a limited group of users. Pricing must more accurately reflect actual costs to ensure fairness and sustainability. Fair pricing would have been close to \$1,600 per year.

Staffing costs are also a significant factor. While many employees start at minimum wage, the District works to retain trained staff through cost-of-living and longevity increases. Retention is critical, as training new employees is costly and turnover remains a challenge in today's labor market.

Lap swimming remains our most heavily used program. Managing lane availability requires balancing swimmer preferences, safety, and program diversity. While there may not always be visible wait times, many swimmers adjust their schedules to avoid congestion. Our goal is to equitably serve all users while maintaining program quality.

Above all, the Board is mindful that this is a tax-supported facility. Tax dollars are used to maintain the facility itself, while patron fees are intended to support the specific benefits received. This balance is essential to ethical and responsible public stewardship.

Punch Cards

Punch cards have been carefully reviewed by both staff and the Board. While originally intended as a convenience and incentive for advance payment, they have created long-term financial challenges. Punch cards cannot legally expire, must be honored at their original value, and may not reflect current costs. Additionally, during busy periods, missed punches can further compound losses. Moving forward, punch cards will remain available as a convenience, but not as a discounted pricing option.

Senior Discounts

An estimated one-third of our patrons qualify as seniors. The District has also received requests for discounts for other groups, including military, school district youth, low-income individuals, and organized groups. Offering discounts to one category would reasonably require extending similar consideration to others, which would significantly impact revenue and sustainability. It is estimated that 90% of patrons would fall into some kind of group where a discount would be requested. For that reason, the Board has chosen to maintain uniform pricing.

Other Revenue Sources

District revenue comes from three primary sources: taxes, patron fees, and grants or loans. While grants are continually explored, they are generally restricted to specific projects and often require matching funds.

Grants cannot typically be used for routine operations or maintenance. Pursuing grant funding must therefore be done carefully to avoid diverting resources needed for daily operations.

Efforts to Increase Participation

Staff continually work to promote programs through multiple media platforms and community outreach. In addition to aquatic programs, the District operates youth camps and sports leagues and is always seeking new opportunities to serve the community in financially responsible ways.

Future Swimming Pools

There are no current plans for additional swimming pools. While the City of Oak Harbor has expressed interest in the concept in the past, the significant costs associated with construction and long-term maintenance make such projects challenging. Community members interested in pursuing private fundraising opportunities are welcome to contact the office for guidance on how donations may be directed.

Environmental Considerations

At this time, there are no plans for major renovations or conversions to experimental heating systems. Any future upgrades would be carefully evaluated for reliability, cost-effectiveness, and long-term impact on operations

- i. **Spring Break Day Camp**
- ii. **Running Program.** Comm Guy presented on a "couch to 5k" like running program. Comm Guy motioned to approve the proposed program fees as presented: Summer Break Day Camp - \$205 per camper; and 5k Running Program - \$30 per runner. The motion was withdrawn and then restated by Comm Guy as motioned to approve the proposed program fees as presented: Spring Break Day Camp - \$205 per camper; and 5k Running Program - \$30 per runner. Comm Hartmann seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with no discussion.
- iii. **Whidbey Pickleball Association.** Comm Guy presented some concepts for a feasibility study for the Pickleball Association.
- iv. **Premium membership discussion.** Comm Guy presented on the discussion from program committee.

c. **Bylaws Committee:** NONE

9. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** NONE

10. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Election of Officers.** Comm Guy nominated Comm Larsen as BOC Chair, and Comm Kraner nominated Comm Guy as BOC Chair. Comms Hartmann, Guy, Witmer, and Larsen voted for Comm Larsen, and Comm Kraner voted for Comm Guy. Comm Larsen nominated Comm Guy for BOC Vice Chair, which passed unanimously. Comm Larsen nominated Comm Witmer for BOC Secretary, which also passed unanimously.
- b. **Survey.** ED Cochran presented on the feasibility study survey that OH Parks and Recreation is putting out. Must get inputs into the ED by noon Monday (Jan 26th).
- c. **Resolution 2026-01 Resolution to Annually Reappoint the District's Investment Officer.** BM Millang presented on the district investment officer. Comm Kraner motioned to approve Resolution 2026-01 Resolution to Annually Appoint/Reappoint the District's Investment Officer as written. Comm Witmer seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with no discussion.
- d. **SAO Data Sharing Agreement.** BM Millang presented the data sharing agreement for the SAO. Comm Kraner motioned to approve the Washington State Auditor's Data Sharing Agreement and authorize the Executive Director to sign the agreement. Comm Guy seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously with no discussion.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION: NONE

12. ACTION ITEM/REVIEW:

- a. ED directed to place the Premium Membership Extension adjustment, addressing overlapping membership terms, on the February board agenda for consideration and possible action.
- b. ED to post the scheduled committee meetings on the reader board and on the website.

13. FINAL BOARD COMMENTS: Comms Kraner, Guy, Witmer, and Larsen made comments.

14. NEXT MEETING: February 26, 2026, 6:00 p.m. at John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool.

15. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm by BOC Chair Larsen.

Attest:



Bill Larsen, Chair

3/24/26

Date