

# Rotarians offer group support to joint city-school pool venture

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TWIN FALLS — Twin Falls Rotarians voted 54 percent to 46 percent in favor of plans for a new indoor city pool at a luncheon meeting Wednesday.

Afterwards Twin Falls City Councilman Gale Kleinkopf, one of the pool's main proponents, said he was "encouraged" by that vote.

Nevertheless, if the straw vote among Rotarians, the first taken on the subject, is representative of the mood of the community at large, favorable opinion remains 13 percentage points shy of the two-thirds margin needed to pass a nearly \$2 million bond for the project. The bond vote is Tuesday.

The vote came after a short debate between Kleinkopf and Pam Shropshire, a member of Idaho Neighbors Network, a Twin Falls and Burley-based citizens' action group opposed to the project.

The debate was moderated by talk-show host L. James Koutnik, who — among other acid remarks — introduced the joint city-school district proposal as "being sometimes known as Jack McNeen's folly," in reference to the school

board member and former swim team coach who has supported the project since its inception.

Kleinkopf said the pool, which would be built at Twin Falls High School, is a good deal for taxpayers.

The 50-meter by 60-foot pool would have the same surface area as the city's old Harmon Park pool, he said.

It would be owned, operated and staffed by the city, and feature a roll-up southern wall, opening it to a grassy recreation area.

He argued replacing the old Harmon Park pool with a comparable outdoor facility would cost \$1.5 million, while the indoor pool offers city residents and school district pupils "four times the use for a little more than \$1 million more."

And he said there was no reason the two taxing entities should not cooperate in a facility that will help solve both their needs.

Shropshire, who lives outside city limits, said she joined the opposition to the project, because she opposed school district involvement in it. The district has higher priorities than risking one-half the cost of the pool's possible operating deficits, she said.

In addition, she questioned the

impact a large indoor pool would have on the "survivability" of the YFCA, and said user fees would not be enough to cover the cost of operating the pool in the winter.

Taxpayers already are paying for several new schools and will be asked to support school overrides and a new county jail in coming years, she said.

The city, by itself, should build an outdoor pool that can be covered at a later date when more money is available, she said.

In answer to questions from Rotary Club members, Kleinkopf said he expected the pool to break even on a \$150,000 operating budget — a figure low in comparison to the operating cost of pools in neighboring states.

He also said he expected the pool to be open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. School Superintendent Gary Pillier has said the district would use it 20 percent of the time, he said.

After the lunch, he said of hard-core opponents, some are simply "anti-tax" while others take the attitude if they were not going to use it, they were not going to vote for it.



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L. James Koutnik moderates as Gale Kleinkopf, right, and Pam Shropshire debate