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CA passes budget for Fiscal Years 2017-2018

New projects include tennis facility, Columbia Swim Center upgrades

By Tripp Laino

Columbia Association's Board of Directors voted earlier this year to approve operating and capital budgets for fiscal years 2017 and 2018, setting a path for some major improvements to CA amenities — including a brand new indoor tennis facility in Long Reach and a revamped Columbia Swim Center with new Splashdown flumes.

Tennis is one of CA's most popular programs, with 33 courts in several locations. Nine of those tennis courts are indoors; five of the indoor courts are at the Owen Brown Tennis Club and Bubble and four are at Columbia Athletic Club. The bubble, which opened in the late '90s, is reaching the end of its useful life.

CA will be able to build a larger, better indoor tennis facility in Long Reach, across the street from Long Reach High School's ball fields, off Old Dobbin Lane. The new air-conditioned tennis facility, expected to cost \$9 million, will sport six new indoor courts, two viewing lounges, locker rooms with shower facilities, some office space and possibly a meeting room.

"This is an exciting project for Columbia and welcomed by the village of Long Reach," said Albert Edwards, CA's director of construction. "The design and entitlement process is currently ongoing with a construction start projected for early 2017 and opening in February 2018, if county approvals stay on target."

Owen Brown's indoor courts would then be turned into outdoor courts, keeping the club with 12 courts overall.

Another exciting project is updating Columbia Swim Center, which opened in 1967, the same year as Columbia's founding. The project has three parts: The first phase will bring back SplashDown's water slides, with new flumes and a stair tower being constructed and a new piping system installed. The second phase will bring upgrades to the locker and changing rooms, improve the lobby and go toward making the facility compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The third phase will replace the wading pool. About \$5 million has presently been budgeted, but the full scope of work for the project is in the process of being determined.

CA will continue to offer the fun Wibit inflatable water play features at Hawthorn Pool once SplashDown reopens.

Columbia Swim Center is home to 11 of CA's 23 indoor swim lanes; by working on this project in phases and limiting work to the summer months, these lanes will be available for the most in-demand times. CA hopes to finish the last phase in 2018.

Other projects in the upcoming fiscal years include facility improvements and construction at Columbia Ice Rink (\$2.2 million) and ADA-compliant wading pools and repairs at River Hill (\$370,000) and Hawthorn (\$425,000) pools. For more information and the complete budget, visit ColumbiaAssociation.org/Budget.

Budget includes annual charge cap increase

The budget for fiscal year 2017 increased the annual charge cap from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent to help pay for planned capital improvements to the amenities and facilities enjoyed by Columbia's residents and guests. The annual charge rate of 68 cents per \$100 of assessed value is staying the same. CA believes that the average residential annual charge will increase by approximately \$6.67 as a result of the cap increase.

For more information on the cap increase, go to ColumbiaAssociation.org/budget and click on "FAQ on Increase to Annual Charge Cap."