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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pausing the Cortez Outdoor Pool in 2027: What It Means and What Comes Next

The City's proposed 2027 budget pauses operation of the Cortez Outdoor Pool next summer. Running it would cost an estimated \$477,000 and bring in only \$86,000 in revenue, leaving taxpayers to cover \$391,000 for about 11 weeks of swimming, at a time when City revenue is expected to drop by \$539,291, mostly because revenue shared by the State is falling. The shortfall in State revenue totals \$468,233, which is a combined reduction in local share of the mineral extraction tax, severance tax, tobacco tax, and State marijuana tax. The remaining \$71,058 shortfall is from a projected decrease in investment income.

This is not an easy call. The pool teaches kids to swim, gives families a safe place to cool off, and is a well-loved part of summer in Cortez. But when the City must choose between quality-of-life services and the services it is required to provide, the required services have to come first.

Less money coming in, more going out

The significant decrease in State and other revenue comes at a time when the cost of doing business keeps climbing:

- Goods and services
- Staffing
- Insurance
- Oil, gasoline, and diesel for City vehicles and equipment
- Increasing equipment maintenance and replacement costs
- The list goes on and on.

Sales tax is expected to tick up slightly, which helps, but is not enough to close the gap. Like a household budget, the City cannot spend money it does not have, so something has to give.

Why the outdoor pool

The pool is one of the most expensive services the City offers for the shortest season. Even after fees, it would cost taxpayers about \$391,000 in 2027, or 72.5% of the City's entire revenue shortfall.

The pool by the numbers	2027 estimate
Cost to operate	\$477,000
Fee and Sales Revenue	\$86,000
Net cost covered by taxpayers	\$391,000
Share of cost covered by fees	About 18%
Weeks open to swimmers	11 (about 77 days)
Net cost per day open	About \$5,100
Time to get ready and shut down	More than 1 month
Net cost as a share of the \$539,291 revenue drop	About 72.5%
Savings from all other recreation adjustments combined	More than \$100,000

Beyond the annual price tag, the facility itself is a concern:

- **It is about 70 years old.** Built in the 1950s, the pool is past due for renovation and needs costly short-term "Band-Aid" repairs each year just to open.
- **It leaks thousands of gallons of water a day.** Over an 11-week season, the City loses roughly 570,000 to 840,000 gallons of treated water, about the volume of an Olympic-size pool, along with the chemicals and money that go with it.
- **A real fix costs about \$1.5 million.** That is nearly four years of the pool's net operating cost, on top of what it takes to run.
- **Fees cover only about 18 cents of every dollar.** Taxpayers citywide make up the rest, whether or not they use the pool.
- **Patching it keeps costing more.** Every dollar spent on short-term fixes is a dollar not spent on a long-term solution.

How the leak behaves each season:

When	Leak rate	Water lost per day
First few days to a week after filling the pool	About 20 gallons per minute	About 28,000 gallons
The following week	About 10 gallons per minute	About 14,000 gallons
Rest of the season	About 4 to 6 gallons per minute	About 7,200 gallons

To aggravate the problem, we are not certain where the water goes. We know that the foundation of the pool structure continues to shift slightly each year, which is likely making the water leakage worse over time.

Pausing the pool for one season avoids a large cost and gives the community time to decide its future through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

What the budget protects

The City is required to provide four core services: drinking water, roads, police, and sanitation. Keeping the pool closed for 2027 helps the City keep those services strong:

Service	Planned for 2027
Drinking water	Raw water line assessment; water treatment plant improvements; four distribution line replacements, including Arbor, Cherry, and Linden Streets and a main transmission line through Carpenter Open Space
Roads	Cherry and Arbor Streets repaved after water line work; General roadway repair and maintenance.
Police	Six aging patrol vehicles replaced; new fingerprint scanner and drug identification kit
Sanitation	Community cleanup days continue; expanded refuse service in Dolores

As City Manager Drew Sanders put it: "We never want to reduce services, but we must be responsible stewards of the community's resources, especially during challenging times."

What happens next, and how you can be heard

The closure of the outdoor pool is a budget decision for one year, not a final decision on the pool's future. That conversation belongs to the community, through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which starts in earnest next month.

"I expected to have the conversation about keeping the outdoor pool open during the Park and Recreation Master Plan," said Parks and Recreation Director Creighton Wright. "Unfortunately, this year's tough budget position is forcing this issue." He expects long-term funding for parks and recreation to be the biggest topic in the plan.

Ways to weigh in:

1. Review the proposed budget and leave feedback in the digital budget book: <https://cleargov.com/colorado/montezuma/city/cortez>
2. Attend the public budget forum scheduled for **October 28, 2026, 6:00-7:00pm**, in the Cortez City Council Chambers at City Hall.
3. Attend the public hearing before City Council regarding the 2027 budget on **November 10, 2026** at 7:30pm
4. Join the Parks and Recreation Master Plan process starting in November 2026

Questions residents are asking

Is the pool closing forever? No decision has been made beyond 2027. The pool's long-term future will be discussed through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, with community input.

Why not just raise pool fees? Fees are expected to cover only \$86,000 of the pool's \$477,000 cost, about 18%. Covering the full cost would mean raising fees more than fivefold, pricing many families out of a community pool. If fees were raised to cover the cost, the estimated cost to swim would likely range between \$21 and \$23 per visit (child, adult, senior), assuming the same rate of participation occurs (24,000 visits in 2026).

Why cut the pool instead of something else? The City is cutting in many places, the pool is just the largest and most visible. Recreation program changes will close the funding gap by more than \$100,000 through fee increases and reduced youth camp and after-school spots. But the pool's \$391,000 net cost is nearly four times those savings combined, and it serves residents for only 11 weeks.

Where can kids learn to swim in 2027? The City's indoor pool can host swim lessons, so lessons will continue, and possibly be offered throughout the year versus summertime only.

What about the swim team? The indoor pool is not a 50-meter pool, so unfortunately it cannot fully replace the outdoor pool for the swim team. The Cortez pool is one of two 50-meter pools on the west slope, so we recognize the negative impact upon swimming sports teams.

Can the community raise money to keep it open? This is certainly an option to consider, but raising nearly \$400,000 year over year, with costs increasing, is a very high bar to reach.

What about the repairs it needs? The pool was built in the 1950s, leaks between 7,000 and 28,000 gallons of water a day, and needs an estimated \$1.5 million renovation. Rather than keep paying for short-term fixes, the City is asking the community to decide the pool's future through the Master Plan.