

## The Desert Sun

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# Desert Hot Springs OKs summer swim program deal



*(Photo: Jay Calderon, The Desert Sun)*

DESERT HOT SPRINGS – The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to allow the Fullerton Aquatic Sports Team Inc. (FAST) to run Desert Hot Springs' swim program this summer.

The city started seeking summer swim program proposals on Feb. 26 locally and on its website, but only FAST responded.

FAST started as a swim team in 1964, before becoming a full-service aquatics provider for the city of Fullerton's Janet Evans Swim Complex and new Community Center.

"I think it's safe to say we'd be in quite a fix right now if it was announced tonight we didn't have anybody to operate the pool," Mayor Pro Tem Russell Betts said. "We're getting a whole lot more for less."

Only \$33,000 remains in the city's fiscal year 2013-14 budget for the Aquatic Center, 11750 Cholla Drive, which FAST will operate for no more than \$82,000.

The rest of the money will need to be appropriated from the next fiscal year budget to keep the center, which opened in June 2013, running.

City staff recommended that the Wardman Pool, 65750 Eighth St., operating cost be limited to \$22,000. FAST will do that, too.

"In order to be able to offer much of what was in the request for proposal, we would need to use both facilities here that we found here in Desert Hot Springs," said Brian Brown, head coach and COO of FAST. "On a personal note, I hate to see pools not used."

FAST's offerings include a swim team, swim lessons, lifeguarding, lap swim, open swim, and Masters programs, Brown said.

The summer season runs from Memorial Day on May 26 to Labor Day on Sept. 1.

FAST will hire swim instructors and lifeguards locally and certify them as needed.

In other business, the City Council voted unanimously to maintain last year's daily aquatic center rates.

City staff had recommended raising daily youth admission from \$2 to \$3 and daily adult admission from \$3 to \$4 to account, in particular, for the high number of youth drop-ins last summer — 69.34 percent.

"My feeling on the raise in prices is that we shouldn't do it," Councilman Joe McKee said. "I don't think we did a good job with publicity and letting people know the pool was going to be open."

A hike in prices would hinder an expected spike in attendance, McKee said. Aquatic Center revenues would've increased about \$2,200 to \$7,600, according to the staff report.

Center maintenance runs \$261,000 a year.

The council also voted unanimously to extend its Aquatic Center maintenance agreement with Knorr Systems through Aug. 1 for no more than \$63,725 — enough time and money to put ongoing maintenance up for bid to obtain a cheaper proposal.

If a cheaper proposal is found before Aug. 1, the agreement with Knorr Systems will be terminated immediately.