March 17, 2014

Dear Town Administrator Selig and members of the Durham Town Council,

I am writing on behalf of University of New Hampshire President Mark W. Huddleston to share a proposal for resolving the future of the UNH Outdoor Pool.

As you know, for more than a year, the University of New Hampshire has been working with the Town of Durham to identify an appropriate resolution for the future of the UNH Outdoor Pool. The University’s long-standing concerns about the safety of the aging facility prompted a decision last July to close the pool after the 2013 summer swimming season and since that time, through dialogue and intermittent meetings with an ad hoc “pool working group,” we have been working with the Durham Town Administrator, members of the Town Council, and interested citizens to consider various options for ensuring a safe and welcoming outdoor pool for the UNH-Durham community.

Among these options are a 10,000 square foot pool (deemed appropriate in size for the population of the community and for the scope of programming anticipated by UNH), a 14,000-16,000 square foot option (that was significantly larger than required, but might better replicate the ambiance of the original pool and that would allow for additional consideration in the design process to strike an appropriate balance between water and surrounding social space), and a 32,000 square foot retrofit of the existing pool that would sustain as much of the size and footprint of the existing pool as possible, while still conforming to the current standards for health and safety. Initial estimates for these three options ranged from approximately $3.7MM for the smallest version to more than $6.5MM for the largest. In March, UNH received cost estimates from multiple sources for three versions and while there was some variation among the contractors who presented estimates (and not bids), the general outline of those results confirmed the original cost framework for our discussions.

Since receiving those estimates, and while awaiting the next scheduled meeting with the “pool working group,” discussions among those of us at UNH who have been involved with this project and with the Durham Town Administrator have begun to point toward an emerging consensus favoring the 14,000-16,000 foot option. In light of the University’s desire to present a proposal to the Board of Trustees in April, and wanting to confirm support by the Durham Town Council for this option, on behalf of President Huddleston and the University, I would like to present the 14,000-16,000 square foot option to the Town Administrator and the Town Council and to seek your formal support for this proposal. While larger than is essential for the University’s own current programmatic needs, the University recognizes the value that the Town places in a uniquely large outdoor swimming facility and also sees value in anticipating future needs. We think the new pool will be a beloved asset for the University and the Town for many years to come. Additionally, the University is prepared to absorb the full cost of this option, estimated at $4.4MM. If we receive Trustee support in April, it is our hope to have the new pool open for the 2015 summer.

Tonight, we will be requesting the Town’s elected leadership to add its support for the University’s proposal. This will allow sufficient lead time to prepare the University’s formal presentation for the USNH Board of Trustees’ meeting in April at which time UNH will seek the Board’s approval for the project. Discussion at tonight’s Town Council meeting should also inform subsequent discussion at the previously scheduled meeting of the “pool working group” that will take place this Wednesday.

In support of this proposal, I will plan to attend this evening’s Town Council meeting to address those questions that might arise and for which responses are available.

Sincerely,

Mark

Mark Rubinstein
Vice President
Student & Academic Services

University of New Hampshire