

Hong Kong Language Needs Assessment Project

The beginning of a solution

The HKLNA Project

<http://homepage.mac.com/moogoonghwa/earth/current/hklna/>

Ms. Michele Finnegan

Interim Operations Director

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Seattle Parks & Recreation

City of Seattle

Parks and Recreation Services Administration Building

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Seattle, Monday, June 18, 2007

Re.: Medgar Evers' Pool June 15, 2007 Incident Report

Dear Ms. Finnegan,

On Friday, June 15, 2007, between the hours of 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM, I was accosted by an adult male user and told, "Don't yell at the kids!". The man made no effort to introduce himself, nor did he show any interest in the problem that had caused me to shout already on several occasions -- namely, the dawdling on the board brought about by the constant squawking between the board and deck by other users. In fact, the man worsened the problem by telling the user currently standing on the board not to jump, just after I instructed the user to jump. To the best of knowledge the man made no effort to communicate his concern with a lifeguard before accosting me.

SAFETY

At the time there were between five to seven users (nearly all teen girls) using the diving board in various ways other than springboard diving. Among the activities that I observed were: jumping feet first into the water in an effort to make the largest splash possible, multiple jumping (crow's feet) on the board before entry into the water, disco-dancing on the board's edge, jumping head first with entry into the water at angles between 0 and 45 degrees, and the usual shouting from board to deck and vice versa. During the entire hour that I was there I only observed one user attempt anything off the board's edge that came close to diving, and because of the angle with which he entered the water not even this could be considered more than a "swimming hole" stunt. It may even have been the man that accosted me.

Although much of this behavior is considered "normal springboard diving behavior" by a Seattle Parks and Recreation Department's lifeguard, some of it was clearly against the Department's stated rules including entry into the water at angles under 45 degrees (horizontal entry) and multiple jumps (crow's feet) before leaving the diving board.

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FAIR PLAY

As there were between five to seven users at the time, the constant shouting from board to deck and vice versa was causing long delays. Moreover, some users would not mount the board until other users had reached the side of the pool. Others would wait at the tip of the board, until other users were completely out of the water. Still others would remain standing on the board long after the last user had exited the water and was already standing in line again. In effect, there was no coordinated effort on the part of those jumping into the water to maintain a regular flow of board activity, and there was no lifeguard around to ensure that a steady and rhythmic flow took place.

Apparently the brief, but loud, encounter between the man and me frightened the acting pool co-ordinator into believing that a fight would break out, and I was instructed to report to the office. I do not recall anything being said to the obtrusive man who was causing further delay on the board. After being instructed by the coordinator not to "yell at the kids" and notify a lifeguard, when I saw inappropriate activity, I returned to the board. As the time was nearly gone, and I found little change in flow upon my return I left the pool area early. After showering I went to the office and spoke with the acting pool coordinator at length. We covered many issues about diving board and pool safety, proper etiquette, and other matters of concern to both of us and others.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Having witnessed similar activity numerous times at both the Medgar Evers and Queen Anne pools I would like to suggest the following as possible, additional solutions (see 14 April 2007 with Queen Anne Pool management):

JUMPING BOARD: Do not advertise a board that is primarily used and approved for "jumping" as a diving board. Rather, advertise it as a "jumping board" with rare possible use for springboard divers when there is no jumping activity. In this way, divers such as myself would not be led to believe that they are paying for facility-use that, in fact, does not exist but for approved pay-as-you-go classes twice a week at the Queen Anne Pool and age-restrictive, club activities at the Federal Way diving tank.

DIVING-FREE CITY: Remove all diving boards from Department pools and declare Seattle a "Diving-Free City". In this way, parents would no longer be afraid to send their children to a public pool in the fear that they might someday return home with a red back, or bruised leg, and municipal life-guards could concentrate their attention on the shallow ends of public pools, where most truly dangerous pool activity takes place anyway. You could also install additional rope swings, a far safer and better monitored indoor pool activity.

KNOWLEDGEABLE LIFEGUARD: Continue to advertise the board, as a diving board, but station a knowledgeable lifeguard near the board to insure that users actually dive. Such lifeguards may be difficult to find in Seattle, however, as current policy does little to encourage the sport. Indeed, unless the lifeguard has any springboard diving experience of his own, he or she is likely to do more to destroy the sport than promote it.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Please understand that these suggestions are not the result of my conversation with the pool co-ordinator on Friday; rather, they are the result of my continued frustration with the Department and the absence of a substantive response to my previous suggestions.

Sincerely,

Mr. R. A. Stegemann, A.B., M.A., M.A.

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