

December 28, 2017

Bianca Hill  
Aquatics Manager  
Seattle Parks and Recreation  
4209 W Marginal Way

Dear Ms. Hill

Seattle Parks and Recreation's Summer Swim League is a program whose benefits to the public, as well as to the department, are many and far-reaching. It offers an affordable and healthy summer activity to children of all ages. It gives children the opportunity to explore competition in a safe, fun, and nurturing environment. Crucially, it also gives children of all socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to gain a skillset that leads to gainful teenage employment, filling a desperate need to employ members of our community passionate about giving something back. Many of the staff currently coaching teams in this league do so because of what the program meant to them as children, and they continue to inspire new interest in this program which offers something truly unique in the region. Our league is remarkable for its focus on the swimmers themselves, ensuring at every level of competition that we stay flexible enough to make room for their needs. Many of these children are as young as seven years old (and in years past even younger), and our Summer Swim League was designed from the outset to patiently and supportively introduce them to competitive swimming.

Unfortunately, over the past few years the infrastructure the league relies on has become brittle and inflexible. In 2014 we started using the Meet Manager software, a decision that required a lot of specific software and hardware knowledge with no real training opportunities available. As a result swim meets have been taking longer, tracking results has become more difficult, and making on-the-fly adjustments to events is now a panicked ordeal. The possible benefits of the software, such as easier use of touchpads and the availability of heat sheets, lose their luster when backup times are unavailable when needed most and meet directors don't have the training necessary to generate meet reports in a timely fashion. If we are to continue using this software, we need the support of a dedicated tech team with a strong training plan and the resources and best practices to effectively operate the many swim meets (as many as four in one night) that we are responsible for.

This last summer was the worst yet. Whereas in 2013 and before we could expect to see Division results and All City entries posted during the Division meets in almost real time, each year since Meet Manager's implementation has seen this process take longer and longer. This year we did not get the entries until 11:10pm on Tuesday night, giving us only two days to try to find (let alone correct) any errors in the entries and communicate with families who are trying to plan their Summer weekends. These errors were all too common, with swimmers' races being lost completely—often with no backup times available and no clear

pattern as to why. This means many swimmers are being cheated out of their chance at fair competition in what is frequently their first experience with it.

The professionalism and dedication of our staff are just as important in a novice league as they are in a professional one. We dishonor our responsibility to these children by so casually shrugging at our part in their exertion. Seattle's Summer Swim League is too important a program—to everyone—to let it continue on this path. Indeed, it is poised to expand and flourish if we are willing to let it, yet over the years we have seen it cut back, reduced, and undervalued. We have the opportunity to truly invest in one of our most important programs with the potential to positively affect more than a thousand children each Summer, and we hope you will spend the time and resources to train the support staff we need to do so.

Respectfully,

Seattle Summer Swim League  
Coaches