

JUMP & SPLASH



*Let's shape the future of indoor recreation
for Montpelier and Central Vermont*

SUPPLEMENT TO TESTIMONY

to the Vermont State Senate Committee on Institutions

April 18, 2017

About Jump & Splash

Mission

Jump & Splash is a grassroots civic initiative seeking to fill recreational gaps, foster community togetherness and enhance quality of life for Montpelier and the surrounding area. The Jump & Splash Task Force aims to do this by launching an indoor recreational facility that will be a crossroads for recreational sports, health and fitness for users of all ages and abilities, providing flexible and diverse programming that will be accessible, affordable and sustainable.

We are committed to involving the community at every step in the process, and to forging partnerships that will ensure long term financial viability so the facility can be a community resource for future generations.

Activity

After forming in the fall of 2016, the task force set about first to gauge community needs and interest in the expansion of Montpelier's indoor recreational facilities. A survey of over 1,000 respondents revealed strong support for expanded indoor facilities and for an indoor swimming pool in particular (see summary next page).

The task force is now following an overall plan that envisions the opening of a new facility potentially as soon as 2020. Activities this spring include the following.

- **Business plan development.** Our target is a facility that can sustain 100% of its operating costs through operating revenue.
- **Detailed study of facility design and operation.** With financial support from the city of Montpelier, two task force members will attend a USA Swimming Build-A-Pool conference next month in Minneapolis.
- **Formation of a 501c(3) organization**
- **Organizing a public panel presentation** by founders of other recreation centers, to build public dialog around the vision and value of a new facility, and around what it will take to succeed.

Following these steps we plan to launch a Kickstarter campaign over the summer to engage and test public support and generate seed funding for the next steps in the plan.

The Jump & Splash Preliminary Survey

Last November we asked people to envision an indoor recreational facility for Montpelier and give us feedback about their dreams and concerns. The online survey was distributed through Front Porch Forum and we also collected paper surveys at City Hall at election time.

The turn-out was gratifying. We received over **1000 responses**, logged **contact information for 376** people who wanted to stay updated on our efforts, and recruited almost **100 volunteers!** The vast majority of people – **83%** – who took the survey **were Montpelier residents** – 845 people, out of a city population of 7,855.

Highlights

Support was overwhelming! **87%** of people who took the survey believe we need an indoor sports facility.

Here are the top choices for what people want to have at the facility

- 67% Lap or competition style pool
- 62% Open gym space
- 59% Aerobics machines like treadmills and bikes
- 57% Strength training and conditioning space
- 51% Aquatics class and water therapy pool
- 51% Free weights and weight machines.

And top choices for programming people want offered

- 68% Group exercise classes
- 60% Aquatics classes
- 58% Lifesaving like CPR and lifeguarding
- **74% of people** prefer to **travel less than 5 miles** to use the facility; **41%** would like to keep it under 2 miles.
- **78%** would like to walk there, **65%** might use a car and **53%** would like to bike.

Additionally, **over 70 people said thanks**, wished us good luck, or expressed enthusiasm for our efforts in their closing comments. Here's a sampling:

This rocks!

I'm cheering for you.

Anything to make Montpelier more family/kid friendly. This is a fabulous idea . . . I would pay to use . . .

I truly feel this project would benefit the community as a whole! Thanks for the idea!

The detailed survey report can be found at www.jumpandsplashvt.org/blog

JUMP & SPLASH TARGET TIMELINE

Dates and amounts are approximate. Can we really build it this quickly? With your participation, it's possible!

Development Phases (with ballpark costs)

Public Dialog

Partnerships & Fundraising

2016

~\$3,000

Business Plan
What functions and facilities are sustainable and worth including?

Public Launch Meeting

Initial Survey
To gauge community interest

2017

~\$2,000

Space Program
How is the building organized into rooms and functions?

~\$15,000

Site Search
Identify candidate sites and their specific costs and characteristics.

Panel Discussion
Lessons learned by other communities

Town Hall Meetings
to discuss planning findings and community priorities

Kickstarter
Goal: \$20,000

Build Partnerships
Negotiate collaborations and in-kind contributions with stakeholder organizations

2018

~\$120K

Feasibility Study
What is the general design, which location works best, and what will it cost to build?

~\$150K

Design Phase
Work out all the details needed to build it.

Bid Phase
Select the contractor

Municipal Commitment Campaign
Negotiate and pass a resolution for the city's contingent commitments to the project

Town Hall Meetings
to discuss feasibility findings and community priorities

Capital Campaign
Goal: ~\$5M-\$10M

2019

~\$5M - \$10M

Construction
Build it!

Municipal Commitment Campaign
Negotiate and pass a resolution for the city's ongoing commitments to the project

2020

Prepared Remarks: Chris Hancock

Good afternoon. I am Chris Hancock, a citizen of Montpelier. I use the city's recreation facilities and I serve on the advisory board of Montpelier's Recreation Department. I am a member of Montpelier's Jump & Splash task force and am grateful for the chance to speak to you today on behalf of that group.

We are a citizen group that formed when the city's main health club closed. Our goal is to tackle longstanding needs for updated and expanded recreation facilities and in particular for an indoor swimming pool.

We support the work of city leaders and the city's recreation department and see our role as complementary in that we have latitude to promote public dialog, campaign for and coordinate public support, and mount a major capital campaign.

Another crucial partner in this effort is likely to be the State of Vermont. This visit is part of the beginning of that dialog and we thank you again for the opportunity to engage in this forum.

We are here today together with representatives of the City of Montpelier, to **request a delay of six to nine months in the disposition of the Redstone property**. This would allow time for both our group, and the city, to conduct detailed feasibility studies, from our respective points of view, into the possibility of building a multifunction recreational center, serving the city, state employees, and the surrounding region.

We were recently alerted to the possible sale of the Redstone property. The task force has been engaged in a systematic process that includes identifying candidate sites in 2017 and a feasibility study and site selection concluding about a year from now. In our preliminary examination of the site we have been strongly impressed us by its unique characteristics:

- It is walkable from downtown, the state complex, and the high school.
- It is very close to interstate exit making it convenient for visitors from other towns.
- It is also very convenient to major stakeholders such as National Life and the State of Vermont.
- Given this central location, it is surprisingly well endowed with parking space.
- Given this central location it offers a remarkably secluded setting with potential for a major public building nestled in the woods and trees.

I know of no other site that affords this unique combination of advantages to the same degree as the Redstone property. We invite you to look at these advantages through the eyes of a group like ours that is working to build a civic resource. The nature of our project requires us to look at many kinds of access.

We start at the city level. City residents have told us that location matters. The more residents who can walk there, the better.

Also, Montpelier is a special city with thousands of commuters who work here. The more commuters can walk from their place of work, the better.

We also need to think regionally, at multiple scales. Residents of nearby towns already use Montpelier's indoor facilities. A good quality swimming pool can draw regular users from an even wider circle, and can earn revenue hosting events at a statewide level. For these constituencies, easy access from I89 is a huge benefit.

A recreation center is an expensive undertaking. For it to be viable, we need to serve at all these scales as well as we can.

So when we look at the Redstone property, a unique pivot point between the city's residents, its commuters, the region, and the state.

It is, moreover, a site with very special character and aesthetics. A site with the potential to promote the well-being of thousands of Vermonters and simultaneously to project the aesthetics and values of Vermont, and its capital city, to visitors and to ourselves.

We are having this conversation at a time of fiscal scarcity. This committee is working hard to help the State manage tremendous pressures to let no resource go to waste, and to maximize the return on every asset. What we are requesting is time for us all to weigh, with appropriate care and using all appropriate measures, what the maximal return on the Redstone property might be.

Thank you.

Prepared Remarks: Kelly Thérout

My name is Kelly Thérout. I am a state employee, but I am speaking today as a citizen of Montpelier, a member of the Jump and Splash Task Force, and as the Head Coach of the Central Vermont Swim Club. As you've heard from previous testimony, delaying the sale of the Redstone property and giving the City of Montpelier and our group time to carry out our due diligence to determine the viability of the site for our indoor community recreation facility with a pool will benefit the city, state, and the greater central Vermont community.

The Central Vermont Swim Club currently practices at Norwich University and pulls from communities as far as Morrisville, Waterbury, Moretown, Waitsfield, Roxbury, Brookfield, Williamstown, and Worcester with the largest number coming from Montpelier and Barre. This past season, we registered a total of 66 swimmers at Norwich and had three of our five groups fill up within one week of registration opening. This is an indication of the demand for novice and developmental level swimming in our area. This response came without any marketing outreach other than emailing past families and others who expressed an interest in our program. Because we rent the pool from the University, we are limited in when we can practice and for how long. Norwich has their own collegiate swim and dive team, classes, open swim for their students and faculty, as well as pool time for various cadet programs which limits the time we are able to rent the facility.

If our proposed indoor facility could be located in a place easily accessible to the schools and downtown, our team would be able to serve more children, not just because the time programming would be for the community but the facility would be accessible by bike and on foot as well as by car. This would also allow for greater opportunities throughout the year for all ages to learn to swim and be part of any number of aquatics programs. This includes the large number of employees from the state, legislature, and other businesses in the area who want to swim, or use some of the non-aquatic fitness amenities we are planning.

We recognize delaying the sale of Redstone will delay the State's access to funds and we cannot guarantee our process will end in a purchase. That said, we believe the potential economic growth and growth of community wellness outweigh the delay. As a potential solution, we hope you'll consider backfilling the short-term BGS funding gap that the delay in the sale might create in FY18 with revenue from the sale of other properties listed in the biennial capital bill.

Thank you.



Jump & Splash Task Force Members



Chris Hancock

Day Job: Proprietor of a software design and development business.

Expertise: Education and human development; proposal-writing; business planning.



Dot Helling

Day job: Retired attorney; volunteer; columnist in the Bridge.

Expertise: Real estate law; networking skills. I spearheaded the public meeting that resulted in the formation of this task force.



Gianna Petito

Day Job: 2017 Legislative Intern for the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

Expertise: Community outreach, group meeting facilitation, grant writing.



Emmanuel Riby-Williams

Day Job: Teacher, Montpelier Public Schools.

Expertise: Physical Educator, Soccer coach, Soccer official.



Karen Schwartz. *Day Job:* Airbnb host; recently retired as Executive Director of the VT Developmental Disabilities Council. *Expertise:* Advocacy; budgeting; public relations; grant writing and program administration. I helped launch several organizations including the Johnson After-School Program and workplace unions.



Kelly Theroux

Day Jobs: Financial Analyst, Green Mountain Care Board; Head Coach, Central Vermont Swim Club. *Expertise:* Swim coaching & competition; teaching swimming; budgeting, fundraising, planning.



Sandy Vitzthum

Day Job: Architect for State of Vermont Buildings & General Services.

Expertise: Design, & programming; project development, facilitation