



**RECREATION  
AND FITNESS  
RESOURCES**

**URGENT: SAVE OUR BAYFIELD REC CENTER**

**To the Bayfield Recreation Center Community:**

We have just learned that at their next board meeting on Monday **April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6 pm** the Bayfield School Building and Grounds Committee will be recommending to the full Board to sell the Bayfield Rec Center. Losing the Bayfield Recreation Center would be an enormous loss to the communities it serves, and it would not likely ever be replaced. The Rec Center serves the local communities of Bayfield, Ashland, and Iron counties, as well as summer residents and visitors from across the country. It also serves our schools. It houses the only pool within an 80-mile radius.

**ALL OF THIS WILL BE LOST IF WE DON'T ACT NOW!!!**

If you believe that the Rec Center should remain a vibrant part of our community, it is imperative that you make your voice heard by the school board, either through email and/or showing up to the School Board Meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in-person or via zoom. We encourage you to do both if you can. There will be a time for public comments at the beginning of the meeting.

**Suggested text for email (feel free to change or edit if you prefer):**

My name is X. My address is Y.

I strongly oppose the sale of the Rec Center because it is vital to our communities. It is the only pool anywhere in the area. It fosters community, our children can learn to swim, and our residents have gym and pool access which promote health and fitness.

ADD YOUR OWN MESSAGE HERE.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

You will need to cut and paste your message into each email contact listed here:

<https://www.bayfield.k12.wi.us/district/schoolboard.cfm>

**Meeting time, location and zoom information**

April 25<sup>th</sup>, 6pm

Bayfield School

300 N 4th Street, Bayfield, WI 54814

Zoom Link to follow:

## **What We Do**

Since 1986 the Bayfield Recreation Center has been a true community center serving all ages in a widespread rural region in Bayfield, Ashland and Iron Counties. Losing the Rec Center means losing the only public pool within 80 miles. It means no more swim lessons in our community. No additional physical activity education to area students. No more classes for aging gracefully. No controlled and safe environment for guides to train their staff. No more training space for the Coast Guard or Park Service. No more Pointe to LaPointe Swim. No Polar Plunge and no more introduction to sailing for our youth. The community loses a safe environment for children. No more community access to a sauna and whirlpool. Losing the rec center means losing a place to help with recovery for injury.

The Bayfield Area Recreation Center (the Recreation Center) is a true community center that serves all ages and layers of our population in many vital ways. Our facility features a full-size pool, whirlpool, sauna, fitness room, racquetball court and classroom. Children take Red Cross swim lessons, come to skateboard, swim and play basketball after school. Adults exercise to maintain their health and take classes in fitness, aerobics, kayaking, CPR and ballroom dancing. Seniors do physical therapy to recover from surgery or injury and gather to socialize and exercise. Families spend quality time together away from the television. The Recreation Center provides access to activities and programs that are important to general community wellness as well as specific health issues like child obesity, diabetes, stroke, heart attacks, and orthopedic rehabilitation. Special Olympics utilize our facility for training. In our rural, economically challenged area, there are few affordable and accessible facilities where community members can exercise to maintain or restore their health.

## **History of the Bayfield Recreation Center**

In 1986, with the commitment of her parents, Mary Rice built the Bayfield Recreation Center as a gift to the School District of Bayfield. What a vision she had for the Bayfield community of 500 to dream up the marvelous facility that houses a pool, fitness room, and racquetball court! Always devoted to expanding opportunities for the local children, Mary fostered the Rec Center to its current state.

From 1986-2006 the Bayfield School District operated and financed the Recreation Center. Management by the school district back then cost taxpayers \$150,000 per year in the school budget and the school district decided to close the facility. In response, a group of concerned citizens hoping to save the Rec Center created RFR, which took over operations in 2006. RFR boosted Rec Center use and membership by 40%, implemented "green" practices to cut the facility's energy use by 50%, created new fundraisers, raised money, wrote grants and has miraculously completed sixteen fiscal years with no debt. The school's budget now includes \$40,000 annually for facility repairs and maintenance and modest in-kind service. The Recreation Center has gone from albatross to community success story.

When RFR assumed financial responsibility for the Recreation Center in 2006, it was unclear whether the Bayfield Area Recreation Center could operate without significant taxpayer support. RFR applied a practical business model to the Recreation Center and transformed a money-losing operation into one of financial viability. We attribute our success to many factors – increased use and membership income, cost cutting, creative fundraisers, donations, and grants. We have expanded our fundraising events successfully to provide over \$125,000 towards our annual budget. Donations have continued and we have obtained some grants (generally in amounts between \$1,000 and \$10,000).

## **Who We Are Today**

Our organization consists of a volunteer board of eight members, one full-time executive director, three full-time directors, and twenty part-time lifeguards, instructors, and membership liaisons. Our current annual budget is \$400,000. We also have dozens of volunteers who provide their time throughout the year, helping with teaching, staffing, maintenance, and events.

The key factor in the Recreation Center's success has been reaching out to involve the entire spectrum of the community. A wide variety of local organizations use the Recreation Center for their programs and needs. The Bayfield Schools teach their students (grades 1-12) swim lessons and personal fitness as part of their physical education curriculum. Other area schools use the Rec Center for summer, in-school and after-school programming. Agencies including the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission use the Recreation Center for employee training and testing. Local hotels, campgrounds, tour companies, and realtors rely on the Recreation Center as a draw, offering a swimming and exercise facility to their customers. The Special Olympics utilizes the Recreation Center for training. Guides and many community organizations including the Madeline Island Ferry rely on the Recreation Center for training. The Boys and Girls Club of Gitche Gumee utilize the pool while school is out. High School Sports teams throughout the region utilize the Recreation Center as part of their training programs. The Rec Center has sponsored a very successful Community Swim Team that has allowed hundreds of our young citizens to stay healthy, learn to work as a team and become leaders in our communities.

RFR has worked hard to pay back the community that supports us. We have raised over \$100,000 to provide scholarships so that low-income families can afford to use the Recreation Center, most for as little as \$14 per month. Over 1000 families (more than 3000 people) have used these scholarships since 2006. Our two biggest fundraisers - the Bayfield Winter Festival and the Point to LaPointe Swim to Madeline Island - are major community events, bringing thousands of participants and spectators to Bayfield that make a significant economic impact in our small town. When it was clear that Bayfield children needed a skateboard park, RFR led the effort to fundraise and get one built in our parking lot. When North Coast Community Sailing, a non-profit youth sailing program, was struggling and in need of administrative help, we merged to the benefit of both organizations. RFR established a fundraising program called 1% for Recreation, where businesses collect small donations from customers when they make purchases. This fund supports not only the Recreation Center, but also provides dollars to other non-profits that promote recreation around Bayfield.

Now we are asking for your help! All we ask at this time is to make your voice heard and speak or write to the school board and let them know that the Bayfield Recreation Center is worth Saving!

## **School Board Email Information**

<https://www.bayfield.k12.wi.us/district/schoolboard.cfm>