

To: Mueller Master Board
From: Mueller Swim League
Re: Proposal for One-Season Pilot Swim Team Program at Ella Wooten Pool

Request for Approval

The Mueller Swim League is a community organization formed by Mueller families to provide neighborhood children with a safe, active, and socially-enriching swim program.

The proposed Mueller youth swim team will:

- Equip children with critical swimming skills that enhance lifelong safety, health, and fitness
- Improve safety and support the upkeep of Mueller's pools by staffing lifeguards during hours that are currently unguarded
- Offer families meaningful opportunities to build lasting friendships and deepen their connections within the neighborhood

Across Austin and the country, it is considered best practice for neighborhood swim teams to formalize pool usage agreements with their POAs. These agreements establish:

- A clear and agreed-upon schedule for pool use
- Defined safety rules and procedures
- Transparent communication with residents, including those participating in the swim team
- Appropriate insurance coverage that names the POA as an additional insured
- Additional lifeguard coverage during team practices

Following these best practices, the Mueller Swim League respectfully requests the Master Board's approval to direct Cohere to execute a pool usage agreement for a pilot season from April 27 to June 19, 2026.

We are prepared to operate under several possible usage scenarios for this pilot, outlined in the pages that follow. Our priority is ensuring that all community members continue to enjoy access to Mueller's pools while introducing a children's program that many residents have long desired. This proposal reflects months of careful planning, feedback from community stakeholders, and a commitment to both safety and inclusivity.

By approving this program, the Master Board can help launch a neighborhood swim team that embodies Mueller's values while ensuring that our pools remain a resource enjoyed by all.

Pilot Season Options

The Mueller Swim League is committed to working with the POA to find the best solution for the 2026 season. We are open to several possible pool usage agreements, outlined below in order of preference. The range of options reflect feedback from residents, Cohere, insurance experts, and swim team professionals.

- **Option 1: Shared Usage at Ella Wooten.**

- **How it works:** Practices occur alongside resident swim, with the team using 3–4 lanes of Ella Wooten Pool during designated hours.
- **Safety & insurance:** Insurance experts, Lifeguard4Hire management, Capital City Swim League representatives, and swim team professionals have confirmed this option is safe and fully insurable.
- **Lifeguard coverage:** MSL funds lifeguards for every practice, including hiring extra Lifeguard4Hire guards on six days when practices overlap with public pool hours (5/26, 5/28, 5/29, 6/2, 6/9, 6/16).

Community alignment: This option aligns with the preferences expressed by a majority of resident survey responders, Cohere corporate, and the swim team.

- **Proposed fees:** Usage fees of up to **\$10/swimmer**, with fees waived for children in the affordability program.

- **Option 2: Swim Team Practices on Cleaning Days Only.**

- **How it works:** The swim team practices Mondays at Ella Wooten and Wednesdays at John Gaines in the afternoon when pools are cleared for use by Mueller's pool maintenance company.
- **Safety:** Both pools are deep enough for diving under supervision per USA Swimming; beginner divers are limited to practicing in Ella Wooten (6+ ft depth).
- **Exclusive use:** The swim team would have sole use of the pools during these times without impacting typical resident access.
- **Limitations:** Restricts the program to only two practices per week, while most summer league teams practice 4–5 times weekly.
- **Proposed fees:** Usage fees of up to **\$5/swimmer**, with fees waived for children in the affordability program.

- **Option 3: Swim Team Rents Entire Ella Wooten Facility.**

- **How it works:** The swim team rents the entire facility during practice hours. The swim team funds the lifeguards and insurance necessary to keep the pool open for resident swim during practice.
- **Benefits:** Keeps practices in one central location and guarantees uninterrupted resident access.
- **Insurance:** Insurance professionals consulted agree this arrangement provides the POA little added liability protection compared to Option 1.
- **Costs:** Estimated **\$11,000** in lifeguards and insurance, which would raise fees for resident participants.
- **Proposed fees:** Swim team's lifeguard and insurance costs credited as the usage fee.

- **Option 4: Swim Team Forms as Resident Club.**
 - **How it works:** An informal resident-led club where families self-organize lap swimming at Mueller pools.
 - **Drawbacks:** No formal POA usage agreement, no insurance coverage naming the POA, no coordinated lifeguard and practice scheduling, no usage fees collected, and unpredictable participation.
 - **Impact:** While simple to administer, this option lacks the safety, structure, and accountability of a true partnership between the swim team and the POA.

The table on the following page provides a side-by-side comparison of the four options. Additionally, swim practice **hours** and **days** can be altered from what is shown in the table.

- **Hours:** May swim practices can occur any time between 4:30-8:00 p.m. June practices can occur between 7:00-9:00 a.m. (excluding Mondays) or between 4:30-8:00 p.m.
- **Days:** Swim practices can occur on any combination of weekdays. We ask that the total number of practice hours per season be 45-60.

Pilot Season Options Side-By-Side Comparison

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Description of Usage	Swim team practices happen alongside resident swim	Swim team practices only on pool cleaning days	Entire pool facility “rented” to swim team; swim team allows resident swim during practice	Swim team is an informal resident club
Usage Type	Shared	Exclusive	Exclusive	Shared
Facility	Ella Wooten	Ella Wooten - Mon John Gaines - Weds	Ella Wooten	Ella Wooten and/or John Gaines
Dates	4/28 - 6/19	4/28 - 6/19	4/28 - 6/19	TBD
Practice Days*	Mon (exclusive), Tues, Thurs, Fri	Mon, Weds	Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri	TBD
Total Practices	30	15	30	?
Hours*	4/27-5/29: 5:00-7:00 p.m. 6/1-6/19: 5:00-7:00 p.m. on Monday & Tuesday 7:00-9:00 a.m. on Thursday & Friday	4:30-7:30 p.m.	4/27-5/29: 5:00-7:00 p.m. 6/1-6/19: 5:00-7:00 p.m. on Monday & Tuesday 7:00-9:00 a.m. on Thursday & Friday	TBD
Usage Agreement	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Insurance Coverage, POA Named as Additional Insured	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Expected Number of participants	125	150	150	?
Expected Cost per Participant	\$250 \$50 affordability rate	\$215 \$50 affordability rate	\$275 \$50 affordability rate	-
Lanes Used	3-4	4-6	4-6	3
Proposed Usage Fee	Up to \$10/swimmer waived for scholarship swimmers	Up to \$5/swimmer waived for scholarship swimmers	Usage fees = cost of lifeguards & insurance: ~\$11,000	None
Diving?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Meets Hosted?	No	No	No	No

Research Conducted for Impact Assessment

The Mueller Swim League has conducted extensive research, drawing on expert guidance and community input, to evaluate the potential impact of a neighborhood swim team on residents, the POA, and the Ella Wooten and John Gaines pool facilities. Key findings and sources are outlined below:

- **Lifeguard4Hire, Mueller's lifeguard staffing and pool maintenance company:** LG4H confirmed that in all outlined scenarios, the pool(s) can be safely staffed with lifeguards. Additionally, the pools can support the proposed swim team practices without additional maintenance or operational costs. The pool's pump and filtration system are fully equipped for this usage.
- **K&K insurance:** K&K is an insurance firm that specializes in sport, recreation, and venue insurance. K&K confirmed that all swim team pool usage scenarios can be appropriately insured. Mueller Swim League plans to carry a general liability insurance policy naming the POA as an additional insured. This policy ensures both the team and POA are protected.
- **USA Swimming:** USA Swimming is the national, non-profit governing body for competitive swimming in the United States. It oversees all levels of competitive swimming in the U.S., from youth summer league athletes up through Olympians. Per USA Swimming rules, swimmers may be taught to perform a racing start (a swim team dive) in water 6 ft. deep or deeper. Ella Wooten Pool is 6-8 feet deep in the three currently installed lap lanes. Swimmers who have passed a racing start certification may dive in water that is 4 ft. deep or deeper. Ella Wooten Pool is 4 ft. deep or deeper in all lap lanes, and John Gaines pool is 4 ft. 10 in. deep in its lap lane section.
- **Assessment of Pool Facilities (Ella Wooten and John Gaines):** Swim League members conducted a physical inspection and determined:
 - Ella Wooten has five striped lanes plus one un-striped lane; John Gaines has four striped lanes
 - Anchors exist for six lanes at Ella Wooten and four at John Gaines (one set of broken anchors at John Gaines will be repaired this winter)
 - Existing storage at Ella Wooten is sufficient for limited equipment needs
 - Custom starting blocks for swim team use are already stored on site at Ella Wooten
 - Parking around both facilities is adequate; families will receive instructions for courteous use
- **Community Survey:** Conducted to assess resident attitudes toward pool usage. Residents opposed full pool closure for exclusive swim team practices (5–7 p.m. from April 27 - June 19), but expressed strong support for **shared usage** and for moving some or all June practices to **morning hours** when resident demand is minimal.
- **Austin-Area Summer League Teams (April–June):** Interviews with established neighborhood teams (Shady Hollow, Western Oaks, Dell JCC, Travis Country, Circle C) confirmed that:
 - Shared usage is standard and workable
 - Insurance coverage is routine
 - The proposed team size, practice times, coaching model, and budget align with Austin norms
- **City of Austin Summer League Teams (June–July):** MSL's affordability program is modeled after the City's most generous scholarship offerings, ensuring equitable access for children from all backgrounds.

Community Need for a Swim Team

Water Safety and Drowning Prevention

Drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death for children in the United States, including those aged 5–14. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) emphasizes that swim lessons and swim skill-building activities are a critical layer of protection against drowning. By offering structured practices led by certified coaches and lifeguards, the Mueller Swim Team will help ensure that neighborhood children acquire the life-saving skills needed to be safer in and around water.

Benefits of Youth Sports to Communities

Participation in organized youth sports provides children with benefits far beyond athletics. Research demonstrates that children who participate in sports have improved physical health, stronger mental health outcomes, and higher academic performance. A report by the President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition found that youth sports foster resilience, teamwork, and leadership skills, while also lowering risks for obesity and chronic disease. On a neighborhood scale, studies by the Aspen Institute's Project Play show that youth sports increase community cohesion, provide opportunities for parent engagement, and contribute to overall community identity and well-being. A neighborhood swim team embodies these benefits while remaining inclusive of children with a wide range of abilities.

Maximizing Use of Shared Amenities

Mueller homeowners contribute significant dues each year toward maintaining the community's pools. A swim team program enables families to make fuller use of this shared investment by activating Ella Wooten Pool in the spring season—during hours that otherwise go unprogrammed and underutilized. Families participating in swim team become natural stewards of the pool, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility for the safety, cleanliness, and upkeep of one of the neighborhood's most valued amenities.

Addressing Gaps in Access on the East Side

While Austin offers a number of spring swim programs on the north, south, and west sides of the city, very few exist in East Austin. The nearest City of Austin swim teams at Bartholomew and Patterson Pools are small, proficiency-based programs that fill quickly and require prior stroke mastery before participation. This leaves many families without access to swim instruction or team opportunities in the spring. Nearly 240 Mueller children have already expressed interest in the proposed swim team, demonstrating strong demand and highlighting the need for more programs serving our side of the city.

Additional Community Benefits

Beyond water safety and athletic development, the swim team provides children with confidence, discipline, and the experience of healthy competition. It also creates leadership opportunities for teenagers serving as junior coaches or volunteers, strengthens neighborhood identity, and fosters multi-generational connections as residents come together to support young swimmers.