

Future Community Pool at Melrose Frequently Asked Questions

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Why are we publishing this document?

The Board of Commissioners has received many thoughtful questions regarding the future of Conklin Pool and the proposed new community pool at Melrose.

This document is intended to answer the most common questions we've heard from residents and provide factual information about the project, the public process, and the agreements approved by the Township. It should not be interpreted as replacing or modifying any approved Township agreements or official actions.

One of the clearest messages we've heard from residents is a desire to better understand how the Township arrived at this proposal. We hope the information below helps explain both the long-term planning surrounding Conklin Pool and the more recent public process associated with the Melrose redevelopment

Because litigation is currently pending, some legal questions cannot be discussed in detail at this time. This document will continue to be updated as additional information becomes available.

Guiding Principles

The Board's objectives throughout this process have been to:

- Maintain access to a public community pool for future generations.
- Be responsible stewards of taxpayer resources.
- Replace an aging facility with a modern, accessible pool.
- Maintain continuous public access by keeping Conklin open until the replacement facility is ready.
- Position the Township for long-term financial sustainability.



Ownership & Operations

Is the pool being privatized?

No. The proposed pool will remain a Township-owned and Township-operated public facility. Although it will be located within the larger Melrose redevelopment, the Township will own both the land and the completed pool. The fact that the pool will be located within a larger mixed-use development does not change its ownership or operation. The facility will remain a public community pool owned and operated by Cheltenham Township.

Who owns the land?

The Township owns the land. The land for the pool was conveyed to Cheltenham Township as part of a Deed of Dedication that the Township accepted in December 2025. The Ground Lease that the Township approved in July 2026 allows the developer to enter the land to construct the pool. At all times, the Township will continue to own the land and will own the pool after it makes the payment outlined in the Ground Lease.

Who will own the pool?

Once construction is completed and the Township makes the payment outlined in the Ground Lease, the pool will be owned by Cheltenham Township.

Who will operate the pool?

Cheltenham Township will operate the facility just as it currently operates Conklin and Glenside Pools. The pool will be staffed by Cheltenham Township employees and Township contractors—not by the developer.

Who will be able to use the pool?

Township residents will continue to purchase pool memberships through Cheltenham Township, just as they do today. The Township, not any developer or third party, will establish membership policies, admission fees, hours of operation, and programming.

Why Replace Conklin?

Why isn't the Township simply repairing Conklin?

The Township has invested in maintaining Conklin Pool for many years, and the Public Works, Property Maintenance, and Parks & Recreation Departments have done an outstanding job keeping the facility operational. In recent years, they have implemented operational improvements that have allowed both Township pools to open on Memorial Day weekend—earlier than in previous seasons. Those efforts have extended the life of the facility, but they have not eliminated the underlying structural and mechanical issues identified in multiple engineering studies.



Additional challenges include:

- A substantial leak in the pool shell that significantly increases annual operating costs and cannot be permanently repaired without replacing the pool itself.
- Mechanical systems that have become increasingly unreliable.
- Infrastructure that does not meet current accessibility standards.

The Township's 2017 Pool Feasibility Study also concluded that the long-term solution would be replacement rather than continued reinvestment in the existing facility. Since that time, Township staff have continued to work closely with experienced pool professionals to keep Conklin operational. While these discussions have not resulted in formal written reports, the pool professionals who regularly inspect, maintain, and repair the facility have consistently concluded that Conklin is at the end of its useful life.

In addition to the structural issues identified by engineers, Conklin has also become increasingly expensive to operate. The Township currently estimates annual operating costs for Conklin at approximately \$426,000. Based on current projections, operating a new pool at the Melrose site would reduce those annual costs by approximately 40%, resulting in estimated annual savings of roughly \$170,000.

Those projected savings are driven by several factors, including:

- Approximately \$121,000 in annual utility savings because the existing Conklin pool loses significant amounts of water, must be continually refilled throughout the season, and is drained and refilled each year. A modern pool equipped with a pool cover would substantially reduce those costs.
- Approximately \$26,000 in annual facilities labor savings, with Facilities staff currently spending an estimated 20% of their annual time maintaining Conklin. A modern pool is projected to reduce that commitment to approximately 5%, allowing staff to focus on other Township infrastructure and maintenance needs.
- Reduced annual spending on repairs, maintenance supplies, and contracted services because the new facility would not require many of the ongoing repairs associated with Conklin's aging infrastructure.

The Township's 2023 Facilities Study (prepared for the Township by consultants and professional architects KCBA/Revision) estimated that renovating Conklin to meet current code requirements would cost approximately \$3.2–\$4.3 million while extending its useful life by only about five years. Constructing a comparable new standalone pool at the Conklin site was estimated at \$6–\$8 million—a figure that is likely higher today given increases in construction costs since the study was completed.



Why Melrose?

Why was the Melrose location selected?

The Township has known for many years that Conklin Pool would eventually require replacement. As the Enclave at Melrose redevelopment advanced, it presented a unique opportunity that had not previously existed: the opportunity to create a new Township-owned community amenity as part of a larger mixed-use development.

Before selecting the Melrose approach, the Township considered continuing to repair Conklin, renovating the existing facility, constructing a new standalone pool at Conklin, and other concepts identified through the facilities planning process. The Board ultimately concluded that the Melrose proposal provided the best combination of long-term value, public ownership, and modern amenities.

Throughout the Township's facilities planning process, residents consistently emphasized the importance of creating amenities that are more walkable, bicycle-friendly, and better connected to surrounding neighborhoods. The Melrose location provides an opportunity to advance those community goals in a way that would be much more difficult along the existing Church Road corridor.

This approach allows the Township to:

- Receive the land for a new Township-owned public pool as part of the redevelopment agreement.
- Deliver a modern aquatic facility at substantially less cost than constructing a comparable standalone municipal pool.
- Integrate the pool into a broader network of public amenities, including planned trail connections, open space, retail, commercial services, and improved pedestrian access.
- Support the Township's long-term vision of a more connected, walkable, and bicycle-friendly community through expanded trail connections and improved access to public amenities.

The Board considered this opportunity in the context of nearly a decade of public discussion regarding the future of Conklin Pool. After reviewing the available information, the Board concluded that this represented the best long-term value for taxpayers while maintaining a modern public pool for Cheltenham residents.



Construction & Procurement

Why wasn't this project bid like a traditional Township construction project?

Because litigation is currently pending regarding this issue, the Township cannot comment further on the legal questions surrounding the procurement process at this time. The Township intends to provide additional information on this topic if and when it is appropriate to do so.

How will the Township ensure the new pool is built to its requirements?

The Township will play an active role throughout the design and construction process.

Under the Ground Lease and related agreements:

- The Township has established the requirements for the public pool and its amenities.
- The Township has inspection rights throughout construction to verify that the project is being built in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.
- Township staff, consultants, and other professionals will monitor the project as appropriate during construction.
- The developer is responsible for constructing the pool in accordance with the agreed-upon plans and applicable codes and regulations.
- Upon completion, ownership of the land and the public pool will rest with Cheltenham Township, and applicable construction warranties will transfer to the Township.

As with any major public project, the Township will work closely with its engineers, consultants, and legal counsel throughout the construction process to help ensure the completed facility meets the Township's expectations before it is accepted.

Financial Questions

Why is the Township paying \$4.5 million?

The Ground Lease provides that Cheltenham Township will purchase the completed public pool for \$4.5 million.

Prior to the Melrose opportunity, the Township's 2023 Facilities Study estimated that constructing a comparable standalone replacement pool would cost approximately \$6–8 million. The Board concluded that acquiring a completed Township-owned public pool for \$4.5 million represented a significantly lower cost than constructing a comparable facility independently.

What is the Township's plan regarding the \$4.5 million improvement payment?

The Board's objective is to acquire the completed facility as a Township-owned public asset in the most fiscally responsible manner available at the time construction is complete. Financing



decisions will be made as the project progresses and will occur through the Township's normal public budgeting process.

How does the \$4.5 million pool investment fit into the Township's overall budget? (added August 23, 2026)

The \$4.5 million investment is a capital expense, meaning it is part of the Township's long-term program for major infrastructure, facilities, and other significant public investments. It is different from the Township's day-to-day operating budget, which pays for things like staffing, public safety, and regular services.

Each year, the Township develops a capital budget that includes a number of major projects and infrastructure needs. The pool is one of many capital priorities that must be considered as part of that overall process.

The Board's decision to pursue the Melrose pool was based in part on the conclusion that \$4.5 million is an investment the Township can responsibly consider within its overall capital program, particularly when compared with the significantly higher cost of constructing a comparable standalone replacement pool and the continued cost of maintaining and operating Conklin. The Board has every intention of fully funding the \$4.5 million pool investment through the Township's 2027 capital budget. Funding for the Melrose pool was allocated in the Township's five year capital plan (see the Township's [2026 Budget Book](#) for details) and the project expenses will be further reviewed and refined in the upcoming budget process.

The Township must also continue to plan for and invest in other important community facilities and infrastructure. Projects such as the La Mott Community Center and Rowland Community Center are separate priorities with their own planning, budgeting, and potential funding opportunities. The existence of those projects does not mean the Township can only pursue one capital investment at a time. Like many municipalities, Cheltenham must evaluate and prioritize multiple long-term needs within an overall capital plan.

Why is this financially advantageous?

Constructing the pool as part of a larger coordinated redevelopment allows the Township to benefit from efficiencies that would not exist if it were constructing a standalone municipal project.

These include coordinated:

- Site preparation
- Grading
- Utility installation
- Infrastructure improvements



- Construction scheduling
- Project mobilization

The Township has received estimates from multiple pool consultants indicating that constructing a comparable standalone replacement pool would cost approximately \$6-8 million, and those estimates continue to increase as construction costs rise.

Additionally, this opportunity allows the Township to open a newer pool facility years earlier than planned, helping reduce the substantial annual operating costs of Conklin Pool, much sooner than it would were it to redevelop Conklin Pool.

Is the Township subsidizing the developer?

No. The Township is purchasing a Township-owned public facility.

In return, the Township secures:

- Ownership of the land
- Ownership of the completed public pool
- Modern aquatic facilities
- Lower overall construction costs than a comparable standalone municipal project

Will residents of the Melrose development receive preferential access to the pool?

No. Memberships, fees, policies, and operations will continue to be established by Cheltenham Township.

The New Community Pool

What amenities are currently planned?

In addition to the aquatic facilities themselves, the project includes a modern bathhouse, family restrooms, ADA accessibility improvements, updated mechanical systems, concessions, and support spaces designed to better serve today's users.

Current plans include:

- Recreation pool with dedicated lap lane area
- Children's pool
- Diving area
- Modern bathhouse
- Men's and women's locker rooms
- Family/ADA restrooms
- Lifeguard office
- First aid area



- Check-in building
- Concession area
- Modern mechanical systems
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Energy-efficient infrastructure

(Final design remains subject to completion of design and permitting.)

Is the new pool smaller than Conklin?

The proposed facility is designed differently than Conklin and includes multiple aquatic areas serving different users, including recreation, lap swimming, children's programming, and diving. Rather than comparing only acreage, the Township evaluated the overall visitor experience, accessibility, programming opportunities, and long-term sustainability of the facility. And, while the parcel the Township acquired is smaller (2 acres) than the Charles D. Conklin, Jr. Recreation Area (6.7 acres), the areas dedicated to the pool are roughly the same. The Township's parcel at The Enclave at Melrose also features open space that can be developed and programmed for recreation activities.

Conklin Property

Will Conklin remain open?

Township staff will work diligently to keep Conklin open until the replacement pool is ready, which is currently anticipated for the 2027 pool season. However, if construction is significantly delayed due to litigation or other unforeseen circumstances, the Township will need to evaluate whether it remains fiscally responsible to continue investing substantial resources in a facility that has exceeded its useful life.

What will happen to the Conklin property?

Any future discussion regarding the Conklin property will occur through the Township's normal public process. No decision has been made to sell, redevelop, or otherwise dispose of the property.

Is East Cheltenham losing amenities?

The Township recognizes concerns about the future of community amenities in East Cheltenham. In addition to the proposed new community pool, ongoing and planned investments include the Tookany Creek Trail extension, planning for renovations to Rowland Community Center, new public open space associated with nearby developments, and expanded trail connections intended to improve access to recreation throughout the community.



Litigation and Project Timing

Are Township taxpayers paying directly for the Township's legal defense? *(added August 23, 2026)*

The Township maintains insurance coverage that provides coverage for legal defense in matters such as the current litigation, subject to the terms, conditions, and limits of the applicable policies. As a result, it is not accurate to suggest that every dollar of legal work associated with the current lawsuits is being paid directly from the Township's day-to-day operating budget. In fact, the attorneys who are defending the litigation filed by Mr. Thacker have been appointed by, and are being paid by, the Township's insurance carrier.

Because litigation is pending, the Township cannot discuss the specific legal issues or strategy in detail.

Can the lawsuits affect the timeline for the new pool? *(added August 23, 2026)*

Yes. Ongoing litigation, additional court filings, and efforts to delay the project can affect the construction timeline.

Like any major construction project, the Melrose pool requires coordination among engineers, contractors, regulatory agencies, and other parties. Development and construction take time, and not every stage of the process is immediately visible to the public. The construction of the new pool is not currently "behind" simply because all aspects of the project are not yet complete or publicly finalized.

However, delays have real consequences. Delayed construction will increase costs, postpone the opening of the new facility, and could jeopardize the Township being able to continue to maintain two swimming pools in future seasons, as costly repairs at Conklin could shutter the pool at any time, especially in light of the fact that it has already exceeded its useful life.

Public Process & Community Engagement

Why does it seem like this decision happened so quickly?

The discussion about whether Conklin Pool would eventually need to be replaced has been ongoing for nearly a decade through public studies, facilities planning, Board meetings, and budget discussions. The specific opportunity presented by the Melrose redevelopment emerged much more recently as that project advanced through the Township's land development process. As a result, the discussion shifted from whether Conklin should be replaced to how that replacement could best be accomplished.



On April 15, 2026, the Township publicly announced its intention to replace Conklin Pool with a new Township-owned community pool at the Melrose redevelopment. The announcement was made during the Public Affairs Committee meeting, published as an official Township press release, shared through the Township's website and social media channels.. At that time, the Township also announced its intention to keep Conklin Pool open until the replacement facility was ready.

Following that announcement, the proposal continued through the Township's public review and approval process, including Building & Zoning review and consideration by the Board of Commissioners at publicly advertised meetings.

The Township also has ongoing concerns about its ability to continue operating aging pool facilities, with maintenance needs and operating costs increasing each year. Because the pools are valued community amenities, the Board believed it was important to pursue an opportunity that would provide a modern public pool while also being fiscally responsible.

Why weren't residents asked to vote on the Melrose proposal before the Board acted?

Cheltenham Township's form of government places responsibility for land development approvals, contracts, and capital projects with the elected Board of Commissioners. Those decisions are made at publicly advertised meetings following the procedures established by law; they are not decided by referendum or public vote.

Residents had the opportunity to attend public meetings, provide public comment, contact Commissioners, and submit written comments throughout the process.

The Board also recognizes that many residents first became aware of the specific Melrose proposal much more recently than the long-term discussions surrounding Conklin Pool. While the need to replace Conklin has been discussed publicly for nearly a decade, the Melrose opportunity emerged as the development project advanced through the Township's land development process. One purpose of this document is to provide additional context regarding both the long-term planning for Conklin Pool and the more recent public actions related to the Melrose redevelopment.

How did the Melrose opportunity develop?

Many residents have asked how the Township arrived at the proposal for a new community pool at the Melrose redevelopment. Like many significant municipal projects, this proposal did not emerge from a single meeting or decision. Rather, it developed over time through ongoing discussions among Township staff, consultants, legal counsel, the developer, and individual Commissioners as the Melrose redevelopment itself evolved.



Throughout that process, a variety of concepts were explored. Early conversations considered different public amenities, including combinations of a community center, library space, and aquatic facilities. Ideas changed as additional information became available, project costs were evaluated, engineering concepts were refined, and the broader redevelopment continued to take shape. Some concepts advanced in conversation, while others were ultimately not pursued.

Because these discussions involved preliminary concepts rather than formal Township action, they occurred over many months and often paused while additional information was gathered. Under Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act, formal decisions could only be made by the Board of Commissioners at publicly advertised meetings. No agreement was reached until the proposal had been sufficiently developed to be presented for public consideration through the Township's normal approval process.

By the time the proposal reached the Board, Commissioners were evaluating a specific agreement—not beginning the conversation for the first time. That is consistent with how many municipal projects are developed: staff and advisors evaluate opportunities, refine proposals, and conduct due diligence before elected officials consider them in public.

How did the Township decide that a community pool was the right amenity for the Melrose site? (added August 23, 2026)

The Township did not begin with a predetermined decision in this regard. As the redevelopment advanced, a number of potential public amenities and combinations of amenities were considered, including community space, library-related uses, and aquatic facilities.

At one point, the possibility of locating a new community center at the Melrose site was also explored. However, as the Township learned more about the significant costs associated with that proposal, it became clear that a new community center at Melrose was not financially realistic. That led to a renewed conversation about the value of keeping and investing in Rowland Community Center in its current location, where it continues to serve Cheltenham Village and East Cheltenham.

At the same time, the Township had been discussing the future of Conklin Pool for many years. Engineering and facilities studies had identified significant long-term challenges at the existing facility, and the Township knew that a major decision about Conklin would eventually be necessary.

As discussions about the Melrose redevelopment continued, the opportunity to address the Township's need for a future community pool while also securing land and benefiting from infrastructure being built as part of the larger development became increasingly compelling.



The Board ultimately concluded that a modern Township-owned pool provided the greatest opportunity to address a known long-term need while making responsible use of the redevelopment opportunity.

How does the new pool at Melrose affect the Township's commitment to amenities in East Cheltenham and Cheltenham Village? (added August 23, 2026)

The Township recognizes that community amenities are important not only because of what they provide, but also because of where they are located and the communities they serve.

The new pool at Melrose is intended to serve the Township as a whole while taking advantage of a unique redevelopment opportunity. That does not diminish the value of maintaining and improving community assets in Cheltenham Village and East Cheltenham.

The Board is also considering the future of facilities such as Rowland Community Center and other investments in the area. Planning feedback received by the Township has reinforced the importance of preserving community assets and access to amenities in East Cheltenham. These are complementary conversations, not competing ones. The question of where a new Township-wide pool makes the most sense is different from the question of how the Township should continue to invest in and strengthen amenities within individual neighborhoods.

