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Swim club to relocate

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After 40 years, the San Mateo Master Marlins swim club is leaving the Joinville Swim Center for new digs at the College of San Mateo.

The move is in response to the city's budget crisis last year that indicated the Parks and Recreation Department might not be able to keep the Joinville pool open full time, said Nancy Littlefield, president of the club.

The Marlins have been working with the city for about three years to restructure it into an independent club. It has operated under the Parks and Recreation Department and leases pool space from the city.

The swim club was warned last year that if two tax measures failed on the November ballot, the city would have to look hard at reducing services, including at the Joinville pool.

The Marlins eventually lost its head swim coach over the city's uncertain finances and started looking at other facilities. It decided to leave Joinville to find a more secure location.

"It will be difficult to leave," Littlefield said. "It will be sad. Joinville is familiar and comfortable."

The Marlins will start swimming at CSM's new Athletic Club and Aquatic Center starting June 1.

The move, along with the city's declining revenue, will make the city consider whether to keep Joinville open year-round or convert to a seasonal-only operation, said Paul Council, the city's Parks and Recreation manager.

"The Marlins represented a significant part of the programs at Joinville," Council said. "The swim club has been a significant part of the reason we have operated Joinville pool on a year-round basis. They also held workouts in the most desirable times," Council said.

In the short term, the city will take advantage of the time-slot openings and shift lap swim hours. The schedule change will begin Monday, June 14, the beginning of the aquatics summer calendar, Council said.

The Parks and Recreation Department will conduct an assessment to see if the pool will remain open year-round. There are program, operational, organizational and employee implications to these questions, Council said.

The Marlins were the first masters swim team in the United States when it became a club in 1971 and has called Joinville home for four decades.

The recently opened aquatic center at CSM offered the Marlins a corporate charter membership package and most of the swim club's 120 members are expected to migrate to the new facility.

The aquatics center has a 50-meter pool with a full range of training and exercise options and membership rates will be comparable to what club members currently pay at Joinville, Littlefield said.

Members of the swim club range in age from 19 to 93. The Marlins compete against other master swim clubs in both pool and open water events. One of its champion swimmers, Audrey Etienne, is also its oldest at 93.

The Marlins see CSM as a better long-term option for its swimmers.

"The city's finances were a wake-up call for us," Littlefield said. "One door opens and another closes."



Andrew Scheiner/Daily Journal

Virginia Jonsson practiced Tuesday with her Marlin Masters teammates in San Mateo at the Joinville Swim Center. Due to city budget cuts, the swim club is leaving the center for new digs at the College of San Mateo.

The Parks and Recreation meets tonight, 7:30 p.m., conference room C, City Hall, 330 W. 20th Ave., San Mateo.

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