

23 June 2025

Dear Menlo Park City Council,

I am writing to express my emphatic support for Menlo Swim and Sport and Team Sheep. I have become aware that there are concerns about the operations at Burgess Pool and Belle Haven Pool and would like to share my experiences with the operators at both locations.

Though we live in Redwood City, both my sons attended Alto International School and one child still attends Silicon Valley International School in the Willows neighborhood. Due to the school's close proximity to Burgess Pool, our sons started participating in swim lessons at Burgess Pool over a decade ago. It was a great program with a positive and welcoming atmosphere and both kids thrived in their group lessons.

My own journey with Menlo Swim and Sport began around 2017, when a friend convinced me to try a triathlon. I feared my swim skills were inadequate and hesitantly joined Menlo Masters fearing I would be turned away for not being good enough. Instead, I was blown away by the kindness of my lane mates and the encouragement by the coaches, who were clearly interested in everyone's journey in the pool and not just the fast lanes with the former collegiate swimmers. Tim Sheep would come over to my slow lane and give us a huge smile and a skill-tailored goal. At the annual swimmer of the year Menlo Masters team party, Tim pointed out that this is one of the few places where people spanning 7 decades (age 20 to 90) regularly interact. Indeed, that is a gem. Tim clearly sets the tone with the team, with the coaches, for inclusion and kindness, for each swimmer's growth, and for community. And after a recent year abroad coming back to Menlo Masters was one of the biggest highlights for me.

So, when my older son was looking for his first job, I was quick to recommend lifeguarding at Menlo Swim and Sport, despite the distance from our home in Redwood City, because I was confident in the role models he would encounter there. My son is now lifeguarding at Burgess, Belle Haven, and Rinconada pools. According to him, Belle Haven is "the coolest facility" and my hope is that usage will grow and the vibrant programming I have experienced at Burgess will expand to Belle Haven with time and support.

While I do not know the details of the financial situation or contracting, I do know that Menlo Swim and Sport has been a wonderful aquatic provider at Burgess Pool and I would be devastated to see it go away. Based on my experience with Team Sheep, I can say with confidence that they have the best intentions to provide quality aquatics and community at both facilities and are clearly not in it for profit but for sustenance.

I sincerely hope the City of Menlo Park can find a way to both maintain the current Burgess operations and give the Belle Haven facilities time to grow their usership. There is nothing comparable up and down the Peninsula.

Kind regards,

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