



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

For more than 70 years, kids and adults in Imperial have trudged up West 6th or 7th Street to Imperial's swimming pool.

But, this summer, swimmers will head to the east part of town to swim in the new pool, which is set to open Memorial Day weekend, just south of Chase County Schools on East 9th St.

As the new pool is set to open in just over three months, residents are saying good-bye to the old one.

Work on its demolition started last Wednesday by Koellner Enterprises of Imperial. Early this week, the buildings were all gone and removal of the old sidewalks was underway.

The demolition will also include removal of all of the old pool bottom, filling it in and then leveling of the ground.

Park board members are discussing use of the old pool site once it is filled and leveled. They have looked at such options as a Veterans Memorial there, a flower garden, fountains/benches or a combination of those.

Koellner Enterprises received the demolition bid for \$23,585. His was the low of two received.

City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said they don't have a lot of paperwork on the origin of the pool, but it was a WPA (Work Projects Administration) effort in the 1930's.

Created by Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of his New Deal, the WPA employed millions of people and affected most localities in the U.S., especially rural and western mountain populations. Such projects as building Imperial's pool helped provide jobs during the Great Depression.

In recent years, Imperial public works staff had to deal with some major water leaks from the pool, Leyland said, with thousands of gallons of water "disappearing."

From some of the exploratory digging that could be done around the pool, some severe rusting of pipes was discovered. Some sections of pipe had completely rusted away, she said.

It was evident there was water loss underneath, as the pool deck was settling in several places, as well.

After joining in an inter-local effort with Chase County Schools, the \$2.144 million pool complex, bathhouse, lockerrooms and concession stand was built, largely finished last year.

Hopes were to open the pool last summer, but some of the work didn't get finished, so the old pool was used for one more year in 2008.

The \$2.144 million price tag also includes the parking lot, sidewalks, drainage work and landscaping.

There are a few items left to finish before the pool opens, Leyland said, by Simon Contractors of North Platte.

The biggest item is testing the equipment including the chlorinator, pumps and heater, she said. Some other punch list items also remain.

Grand Opening in May

Tentative plans are for a Grand Opening at the new pool in May, possibly over Memorial Day weekend, Leyland said.

Since a lot of donations for the pool were received from Chase County alumni, Leyland said

park board members felt that would be a good time for a Grand Opening when alumni return for the annual banquet.

Names of groups and individuals donating \$100 or more to the pool project will be listed inside the pool complex building as a special recognition, she said.