

FAQ response on ADA Grants for Town Swimming Pool Construction or Renovations

Some responders to the Southbury Pool Task Force have questioned whether we could obtain material ADA grant money to help offset the estimated \$4.1 million cost of re-building the Ballantine Pool complex. These notes represent our investigations to date.

Based on our research, which is summarized below, there does not seem to be a precedent, or a CT state or national grant program targeting ADA compliance in town pools.

It is noteworthy some other states DO have grant programs in this space (e.g., MA). Hence, there might be some precedent for proposing the idea to CT, but chances seem slim in these times without a more concrete state precedent that the State would be open to this suggestion.

After reaching out to both the ADACC (ADA Coalition of Connecticut) and the New England ADA Center, we had a detailed discussion with Valerie Fletcher, the Executive Director of the Institute for Human-Centered Design (which is the primary sponsor of the New England ADA Center). She mentioned the following:

- The MA program is a pilot program on the state level, but she knows of a few other states following the MA lead yet, and she knows of no comparable programs in CT
- She notes that it will be difficult for any state, in these times, to launch such a program
- She knows of no other state or national ADA grant programs right now that could provide material grant aid to us relative to a pool project
- She suggests our best bet is to seek private corporate or individual sponsorship rather than government grant money

Further, we have tried to talk to other towns that are or have embarked on similar pool projects (e.g., Newington, Wallingford, etc.), to see if we could find some leads about where we might pursue ADA related money to help re-build the Ballantine Pool. All the people we talked to knew of no ADA grant money that might be materially relevant for pool construction.

Finally, we have tried to tap into Hugh Sullivan's experience in this case – his opinion is stated below in detail, but summarized by sentence:

“I could not imagine for a moment that the Town of Southbury would ever qualify for a grant associated with creating ADA compliance for a recreational pool and Pool house that is a seasonal use facility.”

More broadly, the town has not had a positive experience with grant money of any sort because of the additional cost strings that come attached. For example, a grant would likely require us to contract with higher cost companies, engage in complex and cumbersome review and approval processes, pay for extra insurance, and comply with the Davis Bacon Act. The added costs incurred by these requirements will offset the financial benefit of the grant. Thus, even if we found grant programs that may be relevant in this case and received the funds, there is no guarantee that this will save us any money.

In conclusion, despite many hours of research, we found no evidence of any substantive grant programs that might provide financial assistance for the Ballantine Pool renovation. Hence, the Pool Task Force cannot anticipate or expect help from Grants if we have to face the \$4.1 million cost of the re-build project in next year's budget (assuming the town continues to want to support a town pool at that time).

Thomas Connor – Vice Chair Board of Finance

Hugh Sullivan commentary on ADA Grants for Town Pools

The regulations set forth in all 50 State building codes assert that any new building or renovation of an existing building must comply with current ADA regulations and guidelines. The only reason for a variance granted on an ADA regulation is for a “certified historic structure,” such as the Bullet Hill School, which has a registered docent program providing assistance to any person requiring access to the building, but it requires an appointment.

Since most building projects are privately funded through real estate development, I have never heard of a private developer seeking grants for new projects for ADA compliance. Its automatically required for a building permit, and the cost associated with the total building construction cost for ADA compliance is relatively small.

I certainly have seen redevelopment grants based on bonding for state and federal redevelopment projects for urban design, planning, and infrastructure projects. When these projects are being completed due to their scope and size, they automatically adopt and implement the federal ADA guidelines and regulations as part of their grant and bonding requirements.

My primary architecture license is in Massachusetts, and the Commonwealth has always had grant funding programs for various projects based on an individual town’s economic need or their inability to pay for a project through their local municipal tax collection efforts.

I could not imagine for a moment that the Town of Southbury would ever qualify for a grant associated with creating ADA compliance for a recreational pool and pool house that is a seasonal use facility.

Also, as I have stated before, the grant triggers all types of higher labor rates and insurance coverages, Davis Bacon Act rules, bidding and procurement procedures, and a higher level of contract documents and specifications. Grants also compel you to contract the work to companies that only operate in this type of grant and construction environment, and they tend to be more costly.

It has been our experience that if a project done with traditional bank construction financing costs \$100 and takes a year to construct, the project with federal or State funding costs \$200.00 and takes two years to construct.

These are my thoughts and recommendations based on my experience as an architect.