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State closes Brighton-Allston pool indefinitely; officials cite safety concerns, cost, low use

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 3, 2012 05:08 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The state-run Brighton-Allston Swimming Pool on North Beacon Street has closed indefinitely, officials from the Department of Conservation and Recreation said.

In late June, the department [opened 24 other pools](#) it runs across the state, but officials announced that two pools that recorded the two lowest average daily attendance rates last summer – the Brighton-Allston pool and the Hall Memorial pool in Stoneham – would not open this year.

Following an influx of calls and requests, state officials are now working to reopen the pool in Stoneham this summer, state recreation department spokeswoman S.J. Port said in an e-mail.

But, the Brighton-Allston pool will remain closed for at least this summer, perhaps for good.

Officials from the state recreation department said they are committed to a public process in the fall to gather neighborhood input on the future use of the pool site, but declined to comment further on the site's potential future use.

The pool is located on a narrow strip of land, isolated by the Charles River to the north and the Massachusetts Turnpike to the south. Its physical condition is deteriorating and could pose health and safety hazards, the spokeswoman said. In the past few years, the pool has been closed frequently due to problems with the facility, including mechanical issues.

To completely address the pool's poor state, the state would need to essentially rebuild the pool, she said. Such an endeavor would require environmental remediation – a necessary step for reconstructing swimming pools built during the 1950s and 1960s. Officials estimate rebuilding the pool would cost about \$5 million.

Closing the pool will save the state agency about \$115,000 in staffing and operational costs this year, according to Port.



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In addition to financial factors and concerns about its condition, the pool's secluded location, limited parking – there are only about a half dozen spaces – and poor attendance were weighed in the decision to shut the swimming facility down, she said.

Over the past four years, the Brighton-Allston pool has averaged a daily attendance of 79 visitors, officials said. In 2011, the rate was 59 visitors – the lowest average attendance recorded among all pools the state ran that summer.

Officials said that nearby state-run pools, including the Artesani Playground wading pool on Soldiers Field Road in Brighton and the Reilly Memorial pool in Cleveland Circle, can accommodate those who visited the Brighton-Allston pool in the past.

Other swimming and wading pools within an about two-mile radius include two in Cambridge: the Francis J. McCrehan Memorial and the Veterans Memorial at Magazine Beach; the Clarence W. Dealtry Memorial in Watertown and the [soon-to-reopen Connors facility in Waltham](#).

About \$350,000 was invested at the Reilly Memorial pool and the McCrehan Memorial facility to perform modernization work, depth reduction and environmental remediation at each site, officials said.

The decision to close the Brighton-Allston pool “was not made lightly, and we at DCR recognize the affect on the communities involved,” Port said in the e-mail. “However, given our limited resources and after careful consideration of all the options, the decision was made to move forward with closing the pool.”

“DCR pools are typically 40 to 50 years old,” she added. “Additionally, they’re more susceptible to weather-related deterioration than other public facilities since they are only open for a short amount of time each year and they’re affected by whatever weather we have during the off season.”

Since 2007, the state has invested more than \$37 million, including \$11.3 in the past year, to upgrade state pool facilities.

All Department of Conservation and Recreation spray decks, wading pools, swimming pools, designated and oceanfront swimming areas are free and open to the public seven days a week, subject to seasonal hours of operation. Parking fees may apply. Information about specific locations can be found at

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The City of Boston runs its own swimming facilities and recently announced that this year, for the first time, the city will open 10 city swimming pools and a beach seven days a week. The city also said it plans to host free activities including neighborhood pool parties, a concert and movie series, and outdoor programs at local parks. For more information, [click here](#).

State reverses plan to close Stoneham pool for summer

The other pool eyed for closure, on North Border Road in Stoneham, is not in the poor shape that the Brighton-Allston pool is in.

Still, it drew an average of just 62 daily visitors the second-lowest attendance recorded among all pools the state ran last summer.

Initially, the state decided to shut down that pool, too, but to keep open the site's wading pool, playground and restrooms, which are separated from the pool by fencing.

"The decision to not open the Hall Pool in Stoneham for 2012 is because DCR is unable to operate this pool without significant cuts in programs elsewhere," the department announced in a statement last month.

"DCR's nearby Lloyd Pool in Melrose has sufficient capacity to absorb displaced swimmers from Stoneham, offers Learn to Swim programs, and is within two miles of the facility," the statement added.

But, after receiving a significant number of requests to reopen the pool, the department is now working to do just that, Port said.

Closing the pool would have saved \$51,280 in staffing and operational costs this year.

The state-run Andrew J. Petro Swimming Pool in Southbridge is also closed this summer due to a construction project.

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