

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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April 10, 2012

“Central Park Wading Pools to Close”



It was a difficult and unavoidable decision. Earlier this week, City of Norfolk Park Superintendent Pat Mrsny recommended that the Central Park wading pools be closed.

“After much deliberation with City of Norfolk staff and water recreation professionals I officially ask that the City of Norfolk not open and operate the Central Park wading pools for the 2012 season. The facility was built prior to 1950 and is unsafe for future use. It does not meet federal and state safety guidelines, regulations

and codes. These guidelines include the new American with Disabilities Act mandates that take effect March 15, 2012,” Mrsny wrote in a memo to city administration officials.

Mrsny had consulted with Dave Burbach, president of Burbach Aquatics, Inc., the company that has been working extensively with the City on the Memorial AquaVenture Water Park. He agreed that the Central Park pools are no longer safe to operate. The company did a technical evaluation of all of the Norfolk pools in 2005 and at that time determined that the Central Park pools needed to either be closed or be totally rebuilt.

The new ADA guidelines in particular contain more stringent standards that would require substantial upgrades to the pool facility.

Mrsny pointed out that the concrete in the pools' holding vessels are deteriorated with full depth cracks. The water circulation system does not meet current federal safety code. The piping of the recirculation system, pool pump and pool filter are undersized and are inadequate to meet current gallons per minute recirculation requirements. There are many uneven concrete patches in the decking where repairs for leaks in the system have had to be made over the years.

Current safety codes require that each pool have a separate chlorinator and there is only one at the Central Park pools. The mechanical/storage building on the site is not big enough to house all of the code-required equipment. Because the depth of the two pools is different, one is classified as a wading pool and the deeper one is classified as a small pool.

“The new ADA mandates require that the wading pool have a zero depth entry. There is not sufficient property around the wading pool to make the modification practical, “ Mrsny said.

Also, in order for the deeper pool to be ADA compliant, it would need to have a lift installed.

“We cannot keep the Central Park water facility open without a great deal of added expense. There would be costs of well over \$30,000 just to meet the March 15, 2012 deadline for ADA compliance. Those costs do not take into account the water quality issues of the pools,” Mrsny said.

He recommended that staff immediately remove the pool vessels, fencing and other items, fill in the area and sow it to seed so that the area is available for park use this summer.

“The wading pools have provided Norfolk citizens with decades of recreational water activity but are no longer viable for safe entertainment for children. Fortunately, those who have regularly used the wading pools in the past can now use the new water park which is just a few blocks away from Central Park and has water activities for all ages,” Mrsny said.

The Memorial AquaVenture Water Park is expected to open in mid-June.