

Sunset Hills Outdoor Aquatic Facility Closed for 2020 Season

May 15, 2020

After careful consideration, the difficult decision has been made to close the Sunset Hills outdoor aquatic facility in Watson Trail Park for the 2020 outdoor swimming season.

We know many of our residents, guests, swim teams and others look forward to the summertime and activities at our aquatic facility. This is yet another hardship because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several important factors went into this decision.

St. Louis County COVID-19 Plan – Under the current stay at home order issued by St. Louis County, municipal pools are not allowed to open at all. This restriction will remain in place when the order is partially relaxed on May 18th. Even when the restriction is lifted, we have been informed by the County to expect strict protocols including limits on capacity, 6' social distancing, and requirements for additional filtration systems (which we do not currently have). These protocols will be very difficult for the City to follow and still provide a safe and enjoyable experience.

Health and Safety - Whether it's the Covid-19 pandemic or City operations in general, the health and safety of Sunset Hills residents, guests, and our staff team are always our number one concern. That's why we make sure we always have safe working conditions for our staff team, and we repair and maintain City facilities and amenities like parks and trails so that our residents and guests can be safe. When considering whether to open our aquatic facility, health and safety issues like keeping restrooms, tables, lounge chairs and other common areas clean and sanitized are a nearly impossible challenge when we have hundreds of people visiting the pool every day. Maintaining social distancing in these areas would also be very difficult. Even if we were able to meet County requirements, we could not guarantee the health and safety of our patrons.

In addition, lifeguards are first responders. When the aquatic facility is open, our lifeguards typically average at least one emergency response weekly where a lifeguard enters a pool to assist a guest who is in distress. Lifeguards also respond to about five to seven First Aid cases each day when the pool is open. Each response would expose our lifeguards to an unprotected situation and place them in jeopardy. Oftentimes, more than one lifeguard responds to an incident.

Finances - Like every other local or state government, we are facing significant sales tax revenue losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy. Our City elected officials and our management team are looking at all options to continue to provide the high level of essential services Sunset Hills residents expect while maintaining our low fees and property tax rates. That is our goal.

The Aquatic Facility is not a self-funded facility and relies on sales tax generated in the City. The fees and memberships we collect from pool users do not cover the costs of running our operations. City tax dollars are being focused to provide essential services like street repairs, our outstanding Police Department and our 8 parks and 12 miles of paved trails.

Anyone that purchased a 2020 aquatic membership will be refunded within the next couple of weeks. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please contact the Parks & Recreation office at 314.842.7265

This Covid-19 pandemic is forcing us to make tough choices. We will always try to consider the options that will benefit our City residents now and looking towards the future stability and success of Sunset Hills. We look forward to resuming a normal pool season in 2021.