

>>> "Kelly Culver" <[kculver@comcast.net](mailto:kculver@comcast.net)> 04/17/08 10:20 AM >>>

Dear Salem City Manager and City Council,

It has been published that there will be a City budget meeting on April 30 where it will be proposed that Salem's two public pools be closed for good at the beginning of September. Please reconsider this for the sake of current student athletes and younger children in our community, and keep Salem's only two public pools open.

Without Walker and Olinger pools, Salem's six high school aquatics programs will have NO pool facilities available. All six of the area high schools have swim teams, and already all have to share only ONE pool for daily practices and swim meets. How can a school district operate an aquatics program without any pools? Students participating in other school-sanctioned sports are allowed to represent their high school in interscholastic competition, and I feel it is important for students in water polo and swimming to be able to do the same. Can you imagine a football or volleyball player working at their sport for years, only to have the field or gym "closed for good", and having to tell the student that they wouldn't be playing anymore, especially in their senior year? That is the position which many of our students are in if Olinger and Walker pools close.

Further, the high school aquatics program is one in which any student can participate, skill level notwithstanding. If a student isn't a top swimmer, he or she is not cut from the team, but instead swims at the JV level and improves. What a great opportunity for kids to develop skills, build self-confidence, and stay fit! Eliminating Salem's only public pools eliminates these crucial programs from our schools.

The new Boys and Girls Club facility is located adjacent to Walker Middle School, but if Walker Pool closes, there will no public pool available for after-school programs. As we all know, the summer months in Salem begin in July and end in October. Wouldn't it be great for the kids that the Boys and Girls Club is serving to have an alternative to the Willamette River on a hot August afternoon?

The quality of a community is measured by the quality of life it offers to its citizens. The availability of public pools - pools open to all - is an important component of the recreational facilities offered by most cities to their residents. When companies consider locating a facility in a community, they consider the availability and quality of such facilities for their employees. Public pools are at the core of the recreational opportunities offered by many other - and much smaller - Oregon cities than Salem.

It is true that there will be another pool opening in Salem in approximately two years. However, if Olinger and Walker pools are not kept open, the Kroc Center pool would simply replace the services already being provided by the existing

pools, maxing out its capacity and schedule almost immediately upon opening. A growing city of this size needs more than one public pool. Let's please make pool operation a priority in the City and School District's budgets.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelly Culver

Parent of high school swimmers and water polo players, Salem tax payer,  
Salem business owner

503.588.1691

**MEDIA ALERT:** For video footage, there will be a water polo practice at the Albany Community Pool this evening (Thurs., April 17), which is currently the only indoor pool for 20 miles at which Salem high school and middle school students can practice/play water polo during the winter months.

>>> Brent DeHart 4/17/2008 11:19 AM >>>

Dear Kelly Culver and others-

I appreciate this opportunity to clear up some misunderstanding and misinformation regarding the pools. We have received many emails about this, and most writers do not have the correct information. Once you get your questions answered and the correct information, I would appreciate it if you do your part in halting misconceptions.

It is not likely the city will be able to fund city pool programs or continue to maintain these school district-owned facilities. Please keep in mind that these are NOT municipal pools. They are the schools' pools, and therefore we are not ending the school water polo or swimming programs in the public schools. You write, as others have, about the pools being "closed for good" and "Salem's six high school aquatics programs will have NO pool facilities available." This is not true; these pools are not being closed by us. We don't own them and couldn't close them if we wanted to. The high school aquatics programs will swim in the same pools as they do now.

The city has been paying a large share of Salem-Keizer School District's maintenance costs in exchange for allowing the city to have parks and recreation programs in the pools. While these city-run operations will be cut back or go away, we are hopeful that the non-profit community, such as the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club that you mentioned, will serve this need in a new partnership with the schools.

It is a shame Salem has no municipal pool. That is why we are so happy that the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Community Center (Kroc Center) is being built with a wonderful new aquatics center. Mayor Taylor and city leadership put a lot of effort in securing this \$30 million facility for that very reason. It soon to be under construction, and includes warm-water recreation pool and a 10-lane competitive lap pool as well. On the way is the best aquatics facility Salem has ever had.

While having aquatics programs in a city is important, it is not essential that it be the civic government that provides them. We are trying to collaborate with the School District and other community partners to keep the school programs and swim lesson programs available.

Brent DeHart  
Salem City Council Ward 7

>>> "Kelly Culver" <[kculver@comcast.net](mailto:kculver@comcast.net)> 4/17/2008 12:42 PM >>>

Hello Brent,

Thank you very much for your response. I (and the many aquatics sports supporters) do know that the schools own the pools, but also know that the City helps fund and manages the operation of the pools. Whenever we want to reserve pool time, we have to go to the City offices to do so, not the schools. The aquatics parents are already avid supporters of the future Kroc Center and helped push for the inclusion of a competition pool. My husband, Brent Culver, has met with a City manager, Bruce Bolton, and the Boys & Girls Club executive director, Doug Thompson, in an effort to start some discussions about the possibility of bringing the operation of the pools under a non-profit organization.

We do appreciate the City's efforts to work with the schools and community on this issue. Perhaps you could let me know: Who is the best person at the school district to talk to about the pool situation?

Thank you,

Kelly Culver