

Greenwich High School Pool Capital Project Questions & Answers

BACKGROUND

1. Why is the Greenwich High School pool being evaluated for major work?

Facilities staff observed water seepage, loose tiles, and safety issues during Fall 2024 inspections. A formal architectural and engineering review identified multiple code, safety, and systems-failure concerns that require significant intervention to ensure safe operations. The [report is available online](#).

2. What are the biggest safety concerns identified?

Key issues include:

- Non-compliant main drain system (risk of suction entrapment; three of four drains not functioning)
- Overhead obstructions above the diving board, violating required clearances
- Narrow pool decks limiting emergency access
- Aging, failing filtration equipment
- Filtration not connecting to the Town of Greenwich sewer system and emptying into the open water stream

3. Is the pool currently safe to operate?

Temporary mitigation (e.g., emergency shutoff) was installed, and the diving board is not accessible for use. The Town's Risk Manager and Board of Education believe appropriate mitigation strategies have been implemented to maintain pool operations. However, the pool could fail at any time.

4. What is wrong with the pool's main drains?

The existing sumps and buried piping do not meet updated Virginia Graeme Baker (VGB) Act requirements. Drain covers have expired, pipe velocity exceeds state limits, and three of four drains have little to no flow due to internal corrosion.

5. Why can't the pool simply replace the drain covers?

Replacing covers alone does not bring the system into compliance because the underlying sump and piping configuration no longer meets federal and state standards. New, compliant assemblies must be installed, which requires substantial demolition of the pool floor and portions of the deck.

6. What are the problems with the diving area?

A steel girder and other overhead mechanical components sit within the required safe-clearance zone above and ahead of the diving board. These obstructions violate NCAA/CIAC standards, making the space unsafe and non-compliant.

7. Is it possible to keep diving at Greenwich HS?

In the current state, no. Only with major structural changes. Diving has been removed completely from the pool. Options include raising the roof or constructing a new compliant diving well addition. Each option requires detailed design, cost estimating, significant construction, and community/Board decision-making. There is also a concern that a piecemeal approach would discover more infractions than already known and costs would escalate as singular issues emerged. The pool is at the end of its life in every area.

8. Why are the pool decks considered unsafe?

Decks are too narrow in several areas and do not meet the required five-foot continuous perimeter width. There is also no full separation between spectators and swimmers as required by health codes. These issues hinder emergency access and increase risk during events.

9. What issues exist in the filtration and mechanical room?

Filters are at the end-of-life and deteriorating; backwash currently discharges to a brook rather than the sanitary sewer. Electrical panels are not rated for corrosive environments and lack required clearance.

10. Why was water seen pooling on the deck earlier in the year?

Water seeping from the gutter line and loose tile areas collected on deck surfaces where drainage is limited, creating slip hazards until the pool was drained for inspection and temporary repair.

11. Is the pool structurally sound?

Structural engineers observed the natatorium's primary steel framing, concrete columns, and walls to be in good condition. Major concerns are mechanical, safety, and compliance related rather than structural instability. There is also an issue with the depth of the pool to meet the programmatic needs. One end of the pool is too shallow.

12. What interim options are available for swim, dive, and water polo programs?

Programs may need to relocate temporarily to other pools. Specific arrangements will be developed once a renovation decision is finalized. There are very few options available given the demand for pool time in the lower region. Losing the Greenwich HS pool would have significant impacts on all aquatics programs, and come with a hefty cost to rent facilities across Fairfield County, not to mention additional transportation costs to get students to off-site locations.

OPTIONS & RECOMMENDATION

13. How were the renovation and replacement options developed?

Consultants completed a full assessment of the pool shell, decks, diving area, mechanical systems, and code compliance. Options were built by testing whether deficiencies could be corrected within the existing footprint, whether diving could be preserved, and how to meet Department of Health (DPH), Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act (VGBA), and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and building code requirements.

14. Why can't a "small fix" option address the major issues?

Most deficiencies are interconnected. Limited fixes do not bring the pool into full compliance and would leave liability risks unresolved.

15. What general categories of options were considered?

Options include:

- a. VGBA compliance-only fixes
- b. Partial renovation (drains, decks, mechanical)
- c. Renovation plus additions for diving or circulation
- d. Full replacement to meet all codes and program needs

16. Why is diving such a major factor affecting the options?

The diving area violates overhead clearance standards. Fixing this requires either major structural changes, a compliant addition, or eliminating diving in the current space.

17. What is Option 5, and how does it differ from the other options?

Option 5 proposes a new facility that expands lap-lane capacity, resolves all drain, deck, diving, filtration, and circulation deficiencies, and creates fully compliant spectator separation. In addition, building a new facility allows the existing pool to remain open, minimizing disruption to the programming and use.

18. Why is Option 5 considered the strongest long-term solution?

It is the only option that fully resolves every deficiency without operational compromises, supports program growth, and provides a modern, durable facility for multiple decades.

19. How did cost influence the recommendation of Option 5?

Although not the lowest-cost scenario, less expensive options fail to resolve key issues and risk repeated capital spending. Option 5 offers best lifetime value by addressing all items comprehensively.

20. Does Option 5 eliminate the need for future major renovations?

Yes. It replaces critical systems and resolves compliance issues in a single integrated project, positioning the facility for decades of use before needing another major capital renewal.

21. How does Option 5 handle environmental and site constraints?

The site has had extensive soil remediation during the last several years. AECOM was involved from the start of the study to consult on potential issues. Option 5 is sited where the ledge is close to grade and chances of encountering contaminated soil are less.

22. How long will repairs or renovations take?

A preliminary schedule estimates 12 months for engineering and funding, followed by 24 months of construction, then reopening after regulatory inspections. These durations may change after final design and bidding.

23. Will the pool need to close during construction?

No. Option 5 allows the pool to remain open. All other options require major demolition and system replacement, so the pool cannot operate during construction.

TENNIS COURTS

24. Why do the tennis courts need to be relocated?

Originally, the feasibility committee tried to keep the courts on campus. One option was to build the tennis courts at field 6. Then install artificial turf at the softball and baseball fields. This would allow tennis to remain on campus, maintain continuous pool operations, and not lose any turf playing fields. The cost was a prohibitive \$18 million.

25. Do you need eight courts?

Yes, for high school competition, the cluster of eight courts is necessary.

26. How was North Street School selected for tennis courts?

Numerous locations were explored, including all school sites, but North Street School provided the closest location to the high school with the best opportunity to add eight courts. Central Middle School was explored; however, eight additional courts would not fit on the campus. GPS is working with the Town's Parks & Recreation to refine site selection.

27. Will the tennis program be negatively impacted?

With the construction of a driveway, the courts would need to be relocated. This is not a new concept, and was noted in the long range Facilities Master Plan in 2018. The pool project provides an opportunity to install bathrooms/storage facilities with new post-tension concrete tennis courts. Currently the courts have no adjacent building for bathroom or storage. It is important to note that the tennis teams already travel to other court facilities in town to practice.

DRIVEWAY

28. Does the pool project require new driveway access?

No. However, the siting of the pool will require coordination of tennis courts relocation and driveway construction.

29. Why does the high school need a new driveway?

This project has been discussed for years. It predates the pool issues. The project was originally included in the Cardinal Stadium project, however, it was removed due to budget constraints. A secondary egress would relieve congestion on Hillside Road. In addition, only having one road access to get off campus in an emergency does not meet current safety thinking for a high school of our size.

PROJECT COST

30. How were the cost estimates created?

A professional cost estimator evaluated each pool option based on concept plans.

31. Is the project eligible for school construction reimbursement from the state?

No. Natatoriums are not eligible for school reimbursement from the state.

32. Are private donations available for the project?

Option 5 has the most potential to raise private donations. The pool program remains operational. Concern is any disruption of pool programming will have a negative impact on operations and fundraising. The Board of Education will be asked by administration to support a robust capital campaign led by members of the community.