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## 6-year-old drowns in closed pool

### Neighbors want hazard filled in

By **Cindy Schroeder**  
The Cincinnati Enquirer

**COVINGTON** — A lawyer for the parents of a 6-year-old boy whose body was found early Thursday in a Latonia pool closed three years ago said the city could have taken steps to avoid the tragedy.



**Dylan Roberts**

"This was a tragedy that didn't need to happen," said lawyer Eric Deters. "We don't have all the facts yet, but it seems that the city of Covington had money since 1997 to take care of that pool, and failed to do so."

Mr. Deters made his comments just hours after divers retrieved the body of Dylan Roberts from Rosedale Pool. The pool, closed in June 1997 because of flood damage, is at the end of Virginia Avenue in Covington's Latonia neighborhood, and it borders the Rosedale Mobile Home Park, where Dylan lived.

Mr. Deters said he was retained by the victim's parents to investigate their son's death and determine if the city should be held liable.

Within hours of the tragedy, neighbors began circulating petitions calling for city officials to fill in Rosedale Pool, fix up the flood-damaged park, and re-name the facility Dylan's Park.

At a press conference Thursday, Covington City Manager Greg Jarvis said officials were "deeply saddened by (the) tragedy," and had immediately initiated an investigation into the circumstances of Dylan's death, as well as the history of any problems that may have existed at Rosedale Pool and the surrounding park.

"We're going to do everything that we can to make sure that this never happens again," Mr. Jarvis said of the drowning.

After the 1997 flood, Mr. Jarvis said, Covington received \$86,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to repair or replace Rosedale Pool, a figure that Assistant City Manager Tom Steidel said fell short of the \$500,000 needed to repair the facility, or the minimum \$750,000 required to build a new pool.



**Thomas Gardner, 18, of Latonia who helped search for drowning victim Dylan Roberts at the Rosedale Pool, stands next to a hole in the fence that surrounds the closed pool.**

(Patrick Reddy photo)  
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Mr. Jarvis, who described Rosedale Pool as "closed, but not abandoned," said city employees had studied alternative sites for a pool serving Latonia residents since the flood prompted city officials to close the 20-year-old pool, but had not expected the process to take so long.

Geoff Warneford, director of general services for Covington, later said his employees check the pool's water levels and fencing "probably at least once a week." He said the fencing is repaired as holes are found and that the pool is drained "whenever it looks like it needs it."

"Couldn't the city have taken a dump truck and filled the pool for a couple of thousand dollars?" Mr. Deters said Thursday.

"When we gather all the facts, we'll be glad to respond," said Covington City Solicitor Joe Condit.

A spokes person for

Kentucky's Public Protection and Regulation Cabinet said there are no state regulations for municipal pools. They are handled at the local level.

In Cincinnati, the city's pools are completely drained when they are closed for the season, said Julie Isphording, Cincinnati Recreation Commission spokeswoman.

Ms. Isphording said maintenance crews constantly check for holes that need to be repaired in pool fencing and that the city has a neighborhood pool watch program.

Dylan was last seen about 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, when a neighbor spotted the boy and a friend playing inside the pool. Lt. Col. Bill Dorsey of Covington Police said authorities responded after Dylan was reported missing about 10:20 p.m.

Two hours later, Sgt. Tony Wilson of Boone County Water Rescue recovered Dylan's body from about six to seven feet of murky water at the deep end of the pool.

Mary Louise McKinley, 77, a long-time Virginia Avenue resident who lives across the street from Rosedale Park, said she saw two boys walking around inside the fencing of Rosedale Pool about 7:30 p.m.

"They were in the pool hitting on the sides, then they were beating on the fence with two sticks," Mrs. McKinley said. "I had no idea there was any water in the pool."

She and other neighbors said they had complained to the police about kids playing near the pool in the past.

Lt. Col. Dorsey said that police respond when they receive complaints. He said he is aware of "less than a dozen complaints" about Rosedale Pool this year.

Other neighbors complained that the city had regularly cared for a ball field in the park, but seemed to do little maintenance to the pool and the surrounding fence.

"If they're not going to fix the pool, they should fill it in," said Virginia Avenue resident Kathy Riddle.

Dylan's mother, Carla Roberts, said she had never known her son to play in or near Rosedale Pool. She said Dylan routinely played outside in the evenings, but checked in regularly.

"We had talked about the pool and the (Licking) river (near Rosedale Park)," Miss Roberts said. "I had said never to go in there, because you can drown."

Miss Roberts said she last saw her son about 7 p.m. Wednesday. She added that she left Dylan in the care of his 18-year-old brother, Michael Cole, when she and Dylan's father, also named Michael Cole, went to dinner and a friend's to celebrate the senior Michael Cole's birthday.

"It's a tragic thing that Dylan died, but hopefully (the city) will fill the pool in," Miss Roberts said. "Hopefully, it'll save another kid."

*Donations to a fund to cover funeral expenses for Dylan Roberts can be made at Firststar Bank of Northern Kentucky.*

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