Hot Wells Health Resort Could Be Revamped
To Provide New Kind Of Physical Therapy

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ALEXANDRIA — The Hot Wells Health, Resort is a familiar name to a lot of Louisianians. But how many people have visited it lately and seen the condition it’s in? Or know that the state government had been considering its closure?

Hot Wells has been in operation over the years, and a main feature — the bath house — has not been operational for some time. The inoperability of the bath house and the decrepitude of the other facilities attracted the attention of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, which is jurisdiction over the resort. The department conducted a study to determine whether it was feasible to keep the resort open.

The study outlined two options: begin a six-year phased renovation of the resort at a cost of approximately $10 million, or close it. The report indicated that without the major renovations, the resort, which opened only part-time now due to its condition, would continue to deteriorate.

In reply to the report, the governor, Dave Treen, indicated that other programs had greater priority, and refused to grant the money needed to keep it open. This caused consternation among the people who wished to see the state facility kept open. Sen. Armand J. Brinkhaus, expressing concern in a letter dated April 24, indicated that other programs had greater priority, and refused to grant the money needed to keep it open. This caused consternation among the people who wished to see the state facility kept open.

Hot Wells itself was discovered in 1913 when an oil company exploration found a mineral water well 3,000 feet below the surface with water at 116°F. In 1915, the Louisiana Hot Wells Sanitarium was opened there. Numerous reports and case histories indicated that bathing in the water had therapeutic value for the temporary relief of arthritis and skin disorders. Despite the fact that research on the subject failed to find scientific or medical evidence to support these claims, people continued to flock there.

In 1925, another well was drilled. By 1947 the existing bath house had been built. Ten years later a restaurant and pool were added. While under the jurisdiction of the Department of Hospitals during the 1950s, the area became known as the Hot Wells Health Resort. It was a favored vacation spot of many people, whether they had health problems they hoped the water would cure, or they sought only rest and relaxation.

Everyone used to go there,” said Kirk Carney of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, “from people with crippling arthritis to people with basically nothing wrong.”

According to Dr. Jonathon Roberts of the Office of Hospitals, the committee has recommended the proposal, but the House and Senate must still approve it.

Roberts said the Office of Hospitals wants to appropriate $1.4 million from the capital outlay budget of the legislature to restore the bath house, re-dig the well that has been clogged with mineral deposits, dig another well called a “disposal well” that will put the used water back into the ground, and remodel the hotel and grounds.

“When this remodeling can put Hot Wells back on a selfscoping basis,” Roberts said, “our dream is to build a physical rehabilitation center as well, with 20-30 beds for the patients.”

“It seems to me as though it takes something more than the usual reasonable demands to get something like this done,” Brinkhaus said. “It was only after some of the media gave this coverage and some scathing letters were written that this was accomplished.”

“Any arrangement will be fine with me,” Brinkhaus continued. “Anything that keeps Hot Wells open and operating for the people in our region has my approval.”

Hot Wells will continue to operate on a part-time basis as it has in the past, according to Thompson, until the renovations are completed. At that time, it will be open full-time again.