

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: March 17, 2023
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Subject: Lifeguard and Recruitment Update
File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This report provides an update regarding Parks' lifeguard recruitment efforts to date.

POLICY

None.

BACKGROUND

The recruitment and hiring of Parks seasonal staffing positions has been a great challenge in recent years. This is more noticeable with skilled positions such as lifeguards, as they are the key to providing safe pool facilities for the community to utilize. With both local and national trends showing that lifeguard numbers are declining, the recruitment and retention of this specialized staff is essential. Since 2021, there have been several actions taken by the County Board to assist in recruitment and retention, including increasing wages and implementing bonus compensation to incentivize people to pursue lifeguarding opportunities with Parks.

While the peak season for recruitment of lifeguards is late winter, spring, and summer, efforts to recruit take place continuously throughout the year. Regular recruitment strategies include on site visits to schools, swim meets, and recreational clubs, outreach via Parks' website and community partners, media interviews, social media, posting of physical information at County facilities, radio and podcast advertisement, and hosting job fairs. In addition, Parks has hosted more seasonal hiring events and participated in more job fairs than in recent years, as well as continued a seasonal incentive program that could net any lifeguard an additional \$1,000 in bonus compensation.

Parks has recruited in more ways and using more tools than in past years to recruit lifeguards.

Related File No's:	21-1040, 21-992, 21-937, 21-556, 21-415, 19-347
Associated File No's	

(Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

Seasonal Recruitment

As of the date that this report was submitted, Parks has commitments from 51 returning lifeguards, while approximately ten of these individuals are awaiting on answers for internship possibilities, which could in turn decrease this number. Additionally, we have the equivalent of 3 head lifeguards scheduled to return this summer.

As of March 3rd, Parks has conducted three lifeguard training sessions with limited results:

Class #1: 6 signed up, 0 attended.

Class #2: 26 signed up, 7 attended, 3 had swim ability and also completed the training.

Class #3: 44 signed up, 22 attended, 11 had some swimming ability, 7 completed the training.

This results in 10 new lifeguards for the upcoming season. With the returning 51 lifeguards and 3 head lifeguards, our current total of summer lifeguard commitments is 64. We are hopeful that this number increases due to additional training and certification sessions being offered in both March and April, but again we may lose some prospective employees due to other opportunities and employment choices.

It should also be noted that the number of lifeguards that are needed at each facility varies based on amenities that individual pools offer. Pool facilities that are designed for lap swimming require less lifeguards, while aquatics facilities that provide additional amenities such as recreational toys, slides, and water-based obstacles require additional lifeguards to keep patrons safe but are more popular with families and children.

For comparison, as of April 2022, Parks had hired 29 total lifeguards. Having a commitment for 64 lifeguards in March 2023 is a small step forward and we hope to increase this number by using all our recruitment and retention efforts for the upcoming summer season.

Parks anticipates using final lifeguard employment numbers, along with consideration for amenities offered, and equity to drive our facility opening schedule to provide programming to as many patrons as possible.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government – Parks strives to recruit a diverse workforce that reflects the community that we serve.

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions – Parks ability to open community pools

will be determined by the amount of lifeguards we bring onboard alongside a focus on equity that will strive to provide open aquatics facilities and programming to all areas of Milwaukee County.

FISCAL EFFECT

This report is for informational purposes only. The inability to fully staff Parks lifeguard corps may mean that some pool facilities would potentially remain closed, thereby meaning a reduction in earned revenue for these sites.

TERMS

None.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Jim Tarantino, Deputy Director, Milwaukee County Parks

PREPARED BY:

Jeff Orlowski, Director of Recreation and Business Services, Milwaukee County Parks

APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks *Guy D. Smith*

ATTACHMENTS:

None.

CC:

David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Sheldon Wasserman, Supervisor District 3, PEEC Chair
Steven Shea, Supervisor District 8, PEEC Vice Chair
Felicia Martin, Supervisor District 7, PEEC Member
Juan Miguel Martinez, Supervisor District 12, PEEC Member
Steve Taylor, Supervisor District 17, PEEC Member
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Mgr, Office of the County Clerk
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services
Joseph Lamers, Fiscal & Budget Director, DAS
Vince Masterson, Fiscal & Strategic Asset Coordinator, DAS
Pamela Bryant, Capital Finance Manager, Comptroller's Office
Justin Rodriguez, Capital Finance Analyst, Comptroller's Office
Kelsey Evans, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Ciara Miller, Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller
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