

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 21, 2023
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Subject: Aquatics Facility Opening Update
File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This report provides an update regarding Parks' lifeguard recruitment efforts and anticipated aquatic facility openings.

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.

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):	

Lifeguard Numbers

As of April 14th, Parks has conducted three lifeguard training sessions and has one in progress 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.

Class #4: 43 signed up, 18 initially attended, 7 anticipated to complete the training.
Class #5: Begins on May 1.

With 51 lifeguards and 3 head lifeguards returning, and a small number of new guards, our current total of summer lifeguard commitments is estimated at 65. We are hopeful that this number increases due to additional training and certification sessions being offered in both April and May, 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.

Opening Summer Aquatic Facilities

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.

Water Parks and Deep Well Pools

As of the date that this report was written, Parks is focusing on opening our signature Water Park facilities first using the lifeguards that we have on staff. This decision means that more guards will be needed for these sites, but these facilities provide more recreational opportunities for all ages and all levels of swim ability. If a sufficient number of additional lifeguards are hired, more deep well pools will open to provide opportunities for swimming and programming.

Wading Pools and Splash Pads

While not all deep well pools will open in 2022, additional wading pools and splash pads are anticipated to open this summer.

There are 31 wading pools and splash pads located throughout the Milwaukee County Parks system. In 2022, approximately 17 of these sites – including both Grant and Underwood Wil-o-ways - were able to be opened due to staffing shortages and hiring challenges. This summer, we are on track to open at least five (5) to eight (8) additional facilities, for a total of 22 – 25 that allow for residents of Milwaukee County have a place to enjoy an aquatic facility this summer.

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
Peter Bratt, Director of Operations and Skilled Trades, Milwaukee County Parks

PREPARED BY:

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

APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks *Guy 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
Anthony Rux, Budget & Management Analyst, DAS-PSB