

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 19, 2024
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Subject: Aquatics Update
File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This report provides an update regarding Parks' lifeguard recruitment efforts and anticipated 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. In the current recruitment cycle, we have partnered with the Milwaukee Parks Foundation and local businesses to provide incentives for training opportunities. We have also worked closely with our marketing and recruitment teams to provide additional support and resources for training.

Related File No's:	
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

Recruitment Efforts

The aquatics and marketing team at parks began recruiting in mid-November of 2023 for the 2024 season. Their recruitment efforts include direct communication with school counselors, coaches, athletic directors, and administrators. The communication included our Lifeguard training program brochure, Lifeguard hiring poster, and Seasonal Park Worker brochure. Additionally, there were 23 in-person visits in which a representative spoke with students directly about summer employment opportunities. A total of 11 hiring events were attended, along with 4 school presentations given to select groups of students. Milwaukee County parks has also hosted 2 job fairs that included

the aquatics team and plans to host an additional job fair in May.

With every in-person event attended, follow up communication, including Lifeguard training dates, incentives, and bonus information was sent either via email or via text message to those who signed up for further communication. Approximately 430 individuals were followed up with as new leads for lifeguarding. 151 of those were signed up for training and did not show up, they received additional communication through email and text.

Along with our aquatic teams' efforts, our marketing team has done social media, YouTube Ads, and additional press releases. We have worked with all of the major media outlets on stories regarding lifeguard training and the importance in our community. We have invested an additional \$10,000 in marketing efforts to aid in recruitment.

In partnership with the Milwaukee Parks Foundation, we have recruited and hired an Aquatics Recruitment and Administrative Coordinator. This position will be a huge asset in continuing our year-round recruitment and programming.

With the returning 60 lifeguards and 3 head lifeguards, and new guards, our current total of summer lifeguard commitments is estimated at 90. We are hopeful that this number increases due to additional training and certification sessions being offered in late April, but we may lose some prospective employees due to other opportunities and employment choices. We are estimating that we will have a 10% increase in lifeguard recruitment from 2023 season putting our lifeguard total at 110 for the 2024 season.

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 2024, additional wading pools and splash pads are anticipated to open this summer.

There are 30 wading pools and splash pads located throughout the Milwaukee County Parks system. In 2023, approximately 20 of these sites were opened. This summer, we are on track to open the vast majority of our facilities as staffing levels allow so all residents of Milwaukee County have a place to enjoy 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 number of lifeguards we bring onboard along with a focus on equity - striving 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

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PowerPoint

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