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## May Board Cycle

**Milwaukee County Parks**

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Wauwatosa, WI 53226

(414) 257-PARK

Date: April 16, 2021  
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors  
From: Guy Smith, CPRP, Executive Director  
Subject: **Aquatics Staffing Update for Summer 2021 (INFORMATION)**

### Issue

Lifeguard staffing challenges and the impact on facilities and water safety in Milwaukee County Parks.

### Background

An ongoing shortage of lifeguards continues to threaten the ability to adequately staff all Milwaukee County Parks facilities. The Parks Department has for the last few years had to be creative and has strategically planned hours of operation for pools, staggered night hours across the aquatics facilities, and reduced hours based on attendance, all in order to maximize our limited number of lifeguards at as many facilities as possible.

The Milwaukee County Parks Aquatics Division is responsible for the safe oversight and operation of year-round aquatics facilities, deep well pools, and Bradford Beach during the summer. The Division is managed by three full-time employees who hire and manage all seasonal lifeguards and seasonal park workers to staff numerous facilities. There are also two full time Head Lifeguard positions that oversee day to day management at the Noyes and Pulaski indoor pools. Each year Milwaukee County Parks needs to hire approximately 210 seasonal lifeguards and 77 seasonal park workers for the safe operation of the entire aquatics system.

The declining trend in the lifeguard workforce is a national issue. Various factors are contributing to this, including competition from summer internships, wages that are uncompetitive with other seasonal positions, national immigration policy limiting work visas, and a high barrier to entry due to training and swimming requirements. In Milwaukee the school year begins in mid-August which results in seasonal lifeguards going back to school before the pools close later in the month. Milwaukee County Parks staff will continuously recruit and pursue innovative strategies to lower the barriers of entry for seasonal lifeguards, but the policy makers at Milwaukee County should be aware of the



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increasing challenges in maintaining a safe level of staffing at our aquatics facilities and the impact this has on the ability to open facilities.

Public safety is a primary concern of the Parks Department and without adequate staff in place, certain facilities may not be able to stay open consistently throughout the summer months. As we approach the outdoor swimming season, Parks staff will closely monitor staffing levels and in case of a lifeguard shortage will adjust each facility's hours of operation as needed.

### **Trends and Current Lifeguard Staffing Level**

- 2019
  - 135 lifeguards
    - 4 Head Lifeguards
    - 14 Assistant Head Lifeguards
    - 35 Rookie lifeguards
    - 75 experienced guards
- 2020
  - 80 Lifeguards committed to coming back and we had 10 new recruits after the first training class, for a total of 90 guards.
  - All training classes were stopped after March 14<sup>th</sup> due to the COVID-19 pandemic
    - 9 returning Headguards
    - 8 returning assistants
    - 63 experienced guards
- 2021
  - 52 lifeguards
  - 42 returning lifeguards
    - 32 returning passed and 10 committed to future test
    - 15- 3rd year and above
    - 12- 2ndyear (worked one summer -2019)
    - 3 Headguards returning, 2 assistants – Zero beach experience
  - 10 new Recruits have passed testing
  - Best case 4 returning Headguards and 2 returning assistants

We will still need to recruit many more new guards but as far as Head Lifeguards – potential for 5 facilities.

### **Attendance at 2021 Training Classes for New recruits**

- Class #1 – 7 signed up, 7 Attended, 5 passed

- Class #2 – 14 signed up, 8 attended, 6 passed
- Class #3 - 14 signed up, 5 attending, Only 1 can currently pass the swim test- Test day April 17th
- Class #4 – 26 signed up
- Class #5 – 10 signed up

### Recruitment efforts

- Outreach to all previous staff from 2019 (Lifeguard and Park workers)
- Emailed all high school guidance counselors, gym teachers, and athletic directors
- Emailed interested candidates from Handshake
- Posters designed and delivered to all schools in Greater Milwaukee Area (not MPS).
- Continued Instagram posts to promote training classes
- Attended virtual job fairs for MPS, Cudahy, MATC
- Emailed all 2019 and 2020 potential candidates for upcoming training sessions.
- Virtual Information Meetings- Set times for pop in sessions.
- Emailed high schools with virtual meeting flyers and information brochures on lifeguards and park workers. Some have requested flyer to supplement the brochures. Developed those and emailed those when requested. Requested individualized meetings to talk with students.
- Set up virtual session with Gym classes
- Developed new Facebook page to recruit lifeguards. Weekly posts to community pages and shared on job sites in colleges and schools. High schools and Colleges in greater Milwaukee area as well as all colleges in areas that lifeguards primarily have attended or high number of Milwaukee area students go (Twin Cities, Mankato, etc)
- Instagram post for general lifeguard training sessions.
- Worked with our Marketing Dept. to have an ad on Facebook and to have a preset calendar for promotional purposes.

### Lifeguard Training Requirements

Minimum requirements to begin the Milwaukee County lifeguard training program:

- Must be at least 15 years of age to train and 16 years of age by the time of employment
- Resident of the State of Wisconsin
- Able to swim 100 meters in 1:45 or less

Additional Milwaukee County Lifeguard requirements:

- Must Pass Civil Service exam - Skills taught in 12 hours of in-water training
- Must obtain Emergency Medical Responder Certificate - Obtained through 40-hour Emergency Medical Responder Course
- Must obtain CPR and AED Certification - Certification as AHA BLS for Healthcare Providers

## Recommendation

There is no recommendation at this time, this report is for informational purposes.

Approved By: Guy Smith, CPRP, Executive Director *Guy Smith*

## Copy

- David Crowley, County Executive
- Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
- Sheldon Wasserman, Parks, Energy & Environment Chair, Supervisor District 3
- Steven Shea, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee Vice-Chair, Supervisor District 8
- Felesia Martin, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee Member, Supervisor District 7
- Sylvia Ortiz-Velez, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee Member, Supervisor District 12
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- Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board
- Sherri Jordan, Interim Director, Department of Administrative Services
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- 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
- Emily Peterson, Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller
- Anthony Rux, Budget & Management Analyst, DAS-PSB



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