



County of Santa Cruz⁰⁴⁵⁷

PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

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BARRY C. SAMUEL, DIRECTOR

March 17, 2000

AGENDA: April 4, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: LIFEGUARD STAFFING - SUMMER 2000

Dear Members of the Board:

Your Board accepted and filed the Lifeguard Staffing Ratios report from Santa Cruz County Parks on September 21, 1999. Additionally, your Board directed the Parks Department to return on this date with a report on anticipated lifeguard staffing for the summer of 2000. In the time since the previous report of September 21, 1999, staff has been able to more closely analyze the number of people who used the pool in the summer of 1999 and prepare a proposed lifeguard staffing plan for the summer of 2000.

After the experience of one summer, staff has reviewed the season by day, date, and time. This review has allowed staff to plan more appropriate staffing levels for the coming summer. As your Board is aware, it is very difficult to recruit, hire, and retain qualified staff in many positions throughout the County. The Lifeguard, Lifeguard Instructor, and Head Lifeguard series is one of those classifications. The Parks Department has hired well over 120 aquatics staff since opening the swim center. Of those 120 people, currently about 25 remain on staff. Every one of the staff hired has been put through rigorous levels of Lifeguard Training, First Aid for the Professional Rescuer, and CPR. Additionally, some of the staff either come with or attain an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) certificate.

It is easy to recognize that the Department is in a constant state of recruiting, hiring, and training. The training program takes up a great deal of one permanent staffs time over the course of a year. Upon the review of the summer and fall seasons, we are currently reviewing the conversion of extra help Lifeguard/Instructors into permanent Lifeguard/Instructor positions so that, much of the off-season (October through April) staffing difficulties will be alleviated and the need for a substantial amount of staff training time will be eliminated.

The Department has filled, with waiting lists, over 90% of the swim classes. The spring classes filled on the first day. This can be attributed to the extreme need for learn-to-swim programs in our community and the excellent reputation the County Parks Department has with its swim lesson program. It is a goal of the Parks Department to increase the number and availability of swim lessons throughout the spring, summer, and fall to help offset some of the costs of the swim centers' operating expense.

The actual operating expense at the swim center exceeded the budget in fiscal 1999-2000. The majority of this can be attributed to the staffing patterns used during the 1999 summer recreation swim season. Without any prior statistics on bather load, the center was staffed at a level that maintained the highest level of public safety and assumed maximum attendance each day. Given the experience of last summer, the Department will be able to reduce overall lifeguard staffing numbers by anticipating the days which consistently, weather notwithstanding, had the lesser number of patrons. Concurrently, the Department will be able to reduce daily lifeguard numbers by placing Aquatic Aides (entry level aquatic staff) in positions which do not require lifesaving training, such as the station at the top of the water slide.

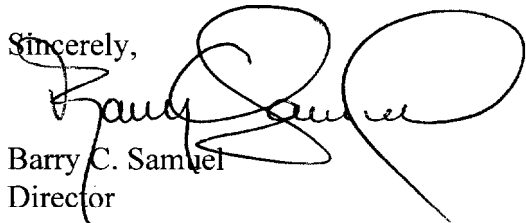
Additionally, the anticipated revenue projections for fiscal 1999/2000 was higher than actually collected. The majority of the shortfall in revenue was due to not having enough lifeguard instructors for the learn-to-swim program. As the summer season progressed, more instructors left for school and the Department did not have enough staff to teach the full compliment of fall swim lessons. The same problem will occur this spring. With the availability of more instructors we could offer additional classes and generate significantly more revenue. Parks has been working very closely with the Personnel Department to recruit additional lifeguard instructors.

Three other items have arisen at the swim center which affected revenue generation. First, the Water Aerobics program started later than planned due to some scheduling conflicts with other user groups. Second, the department took over the Adult Fitness Swim Program (Masters Swimming) midyear when the group who was renting lanes at the swim center suddenly quit teaching these classes. Lastly, it appears that the County will probably be taking over The Santa Cruz County Aquatics Swim Team in the spring or summer. Each of these items is exciting and helps to improve all of the programs and service to the public; however they also take a great deal of staff time to plan for, implement, and staff. If in the near future the extra help lifeguard/instructors are converted to permanent lifeguard/instructors, it is anticipated that the Department will be able to provide more swim lessons in the spring and fall of this year and will be able to reduce the time staff devoted to hiring and training new staff, thus increasing revenues in the future.

In conclusion, The Santa Cruz County Parks Department is developing into one of the preeminent aquatics programs in Northern California. The County has an incredible new swim center which offers youth and adult swim lessons by highly trained and motivated staff during three seasons of the year; it offers year round lap, adult fitness swim, water aerobics, a swim team for youth ages 6 – 18, and drop-in adult and youth water polo; a summer junior lifeguard program, and Saturday Night Family Fun Nights during the summer. Your Board has taken an incredible step by providing the best possible aquatics programs in Santa Cruz County.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that your Board accept and file this report.


Sincerely,



Barry C. Samuel
Director

BCS/CB

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

cc: CAO, Auditor-Controller, County Counsel, Parks, Personnel