



CITY OF KIRKLAND
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager
From: Lynn Zwaagstra, Director of Parks and Community Services
Date: May 19, 2020
Subject: PCS COVID Slow the Spread this Summer

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council reviews and approves a resolution establishing an summer operating framework for parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. The resolution balances complex competing factors, including: protecting community and employee health and safety; community needs during the pandemic; new financial challenges faced by the City from the pandemic; staff capacity to support programs and services; and the need for certainty to allow families, organizations and vendors to plan for the summer.

BACKGROUND

The City Manager proclaimed an emergency to exist in Kirkland as a result of COVID-19 on February 29, 2020. That proclamation was ratified by the City Council on March 3, 2020.

Parks and recreation programs and services throughout Washington have been impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Since Kirkland became one of the most immediately impacted communities in the United States, Kirkland's parks and recreation programs and services experienced closures early in the pandemic response. On March 7, 2020, the community centers closed, and recreation programs were cancelled. In response to proclamations made by Governor Jay Inslee, recreation program closures have been extended through Memorial Day weekend. Athletic fields and picnic shelters closed on March 13 and sports courts, playgrounds and restrooms closed on March 25, 2020.

Parks and recreation department directors throughout Washington and from Oregon have been participating in twice-weekly calls to discuss the response and action plans as they pertain to facility closures and program offerings. Most parks and recreation departments currently have parks, trails, open spaces, piers and boat launches open; however, most agencies have kept restrooms, athletic fields, sports courts and playgrounds closed. All agencies have cancelled programs and special events. A handful of agencies have been able to offer day camp programs for children of some essential employees.

Parks and recreation departments have also lost significant fee revenue due to the closure of facilities and cancellation of programs. The current status and future plans of each organization is dependent upon their governing structure, revenue sources, fiscal reserves, debt levels,

reliance upon fees for service, and the specific needs of their community. In some cases, organizations have seen sweeping program closures, furloughs and layoffs. For most organizations, part time and seasonal staff work has been suspended, full time staff are working from home or in the field if deemed essential, and expenses have been reduced.

For Kirkland Parks and Community Services, the anticipated 2020 year-end revenue loss from facility closures and program cancellations expected in March through August is projected to reach up to \$1,300,000, a 63.5% reduction. Offsetting expense savings, primarily minimal hiring of seasonal workers and program staff, range from \$700,000 to \$1,000,000.

MOVING FORWARD

The most pressing question for parks and recreation is how and when to move forward. Organizations are working to interpret guidelines coming from the CDC, DOH and Public Health: Seattle & King County in order to plan and prepare for future re-openings. **Table 1** below represents the best-known information on the current status of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services in the surrounding area.

Table 1: Current Known Status of Parks and Recreation Facilities, Programs and Services

	Parks, Trails, Beaches, Open	Restrooms	Playgrounds	Sports Courts	Athletic Fields	Special Events	Programs	Summer Camps
Kirkland	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Suspended through June	Cancelled through May 25	Being evaluated
Redmond	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Suspended through summer	Cancelled until June 30	Taking registration
Bellevue	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Suspended	Cancelled through May	Being evaluated
Bothell	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Suspended through summer	Cancelled through summer	Cancelled through summer
Kenmore	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	N/A	Suspended through 2020	Cancelled through summer	N/A
Mercer Island	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Suspended through summer	Cancelled indefinitely	Cancelled indefinitely
Woodinville	Open May 9	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Unknown	N/A	N/A
King County	Open May 8	Closed	Closed	Closed	No team sports	Suspended	Closed	N/A

As seen in **Table 1**, some organizations have already made decisions about summer services while other organizations have not yet made decisions. Operating decisions are extremely complex, and the parks and recreation industry are partnering to help analyze a variety of factors. Some service level decisions are straightforward within the guidelines of state-issued requirements. For example, group size and social distancing requirements clearly indicate that special events are not currently viable. In the case of Washington, parks and recreation services are eligible to resume in Phase 3 of the Governor's Safe Start approach. Industry professionals have been discussing important decision-making factors, many of which are listed below.

Key Decision-Making Factors

- How to plan for an unknown start date given a short summer season
- Risk assessment and liability
 - How to protect participants
 - How to protect staff
 - Exposure of lifeguards during rescues with no personal protective equipment
 - High touch surfaces are everywhere
 - Maintaining physical distancing in activities that revolve around interaction
- Financial impacts to the organization
- Physical space appropriateness and ability to alter the space
- Program format and ability to alter format
- Group size and social distancing requirements
- Availability of staff
 - All summer programs and services rely on seasonals
 - Seasonals tend to be college students, many leave in mid-August
 - Some instructors left for other opportunities
 - Some program contractors ceased business operations
 - Some staff are unable or unwilling to work in a high-exposure environment
- Ability to train staff
 - Potential requirement to train large numbers of staff in small groups
 - Unknow protocol for CPR
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees
 - Ability to obtain enough PPE
 - Ability of staff to perform all day in PPE
- Unknown timeline for Phase 2 and Phase 3
 - Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 are likely to be extended based on the Governor's required metrics
 - Programs and services cannot operate until Phase 3, the date of which is unknown
- Unknown requirements
 - CDC has routine and new COVID guidelines for childcare, events and aquatics
 - No other recreation guidelines have been issued
 - No Washington guidelines have been issued for potential requirements for recreation activities to operate in Phase 3
 - Contact tracing may be a requirement
- Bargaining unit considerations

Potential COVID-19 Liability

Throughout the pandemic, the City has striven to adhere to evolving best public health and safety practices articulated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Public Health: Seattle & King County. Those evolving practices, including those related to safe social distancing, hygiene, and the use of face coverings, as examples, have obvious implications for City parks and recreation programs and services. In addition to the primary objectives of helping protect the health and safety of the public during COVID-19, continued adherence by the City to the health directives of relevant bodies and officials helps minimize City liability during the pandemic by limiting and discouraging unhealthy practices and activities. In addition, as the City considers programming and facility use options, the city must be mindful that members of the public might conclude that by offering a City service or activity, the City is representing to individual members of the public that they are "safe" in this complicated and evolving pandemic environment.

Parks and Recreation Options

The CDC has flagged mental health as a top concern associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, social distancing and restricted activities have an added negative impact. Being in parks and open space has been demonstrated to reduce stress and improve mental health. Participation in recreation activities positively impacts health and wellness. The industry's mission revolves around health, wellness, conservation, and social equity. Therefore, staff are inherently committed to offering as many programs and services as is feasible.

Parks and Community Services staff analyzed the variety of programs and services offered over previous summer seasons with the goal of bringing forward options of what could be offered "safely" this summer. Continuing to offer programs and services that ultimately cancel is detrimental to the community and adversely impacts staff and the department's financial viability. Therefore, staff looked at options that were realistically feasible and did not rely on best-case scenarios. Based upon extensive discussion of the decision-making factors listed above, 2 options were brought forward. After discussion with Department staff, department directors and the City Manager, Option 2 was recommended.

Option 1 Mission Approach

- Phased re-opening of park amenities such as restrooms and sports courts as indicated by Phase 2 and 3 of the "Safe Start" plan
- Re-opening of select recreation programs and camps at a date that is reasonably feasible given a rough timeline for Phase 2 and 3
- Cancellation of summer special events as indicated by the "Safe Start" approach
- Cancellation of specific high cost services heavily reliant on transient seasonal staff
- Offering high-need social services that can be safely provided

Option 2 "Slow the Spread" - Recommended

- Phased re-opening of park amenities such as restrooms and sports courts as indicated by Phase 2 and 3 of the "Safe Start" plan
- Cancellation of all recreation programs for the summer in order to slow the spread of coronavirus, allow staff time to retool for fall, reallocate staff to community needs
- Cancellation of summer special events as indicated by the "Safe Start" approach
- Cancellation of specific high cost services heavily reliant on transient seasonal staff
- Offering high-need social services that can be safely provided
- Close the pool and community centers for the summer

SERVICE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Parks Services

Currently Open

- Parks
- Trails
- Beach fronts
- Dog parks
- Cemetery
- Docks and piers
- Marina moorage
- Boat launches
- Marina Park Restroom

Open When Phase 2 Begins

- Restrooms
- Park vendors
- Picnic shelters
- Sports courts: pickleball and tennis

Open When Phase 3 Begins

- Park pavilions
- Sports courts: basketball and volleyball
- Playgrounds

Delayed Opening

- Athletic fields open September 1 for formal / organized use, allow some informal use at start of phase 3
- Green Kirkland Partnership restoration events will be scheduled beginning September 1

Recreation Programs and Services

The "slow the spread" approach cancels all summer recreation programs and camps in order to retool for the Fall season.

Services Currently Being Offered

- Meals on Wheels
- SHIBA one-on-one consulting
- Resource specialist and connection to services

To Remain Closed for Season

- All recreation programs, except for the ones listed below, with a start date in June, July or August
- *Peter Kirk Pool (**See "Lifeguards" in the next section.*)
- *Lifeguarded swim areas will not be guarded (**See "Lifeguards" in the next section.*)
- Peter Kirk Community Center will be closed for general use through August
- North Kirkland Community Center will be closed for general use through August

Special Events

- All third party-organized special events through August will be cancelled, allow rescheduling for Fall with the 2-event limit per park waived for economic driving events
- Juanita Friday Market will begin operating June 5

Programs to be Offered

- Select senior services will be offered with a modified format
 - CCS free lunch program 2x per week beginning May 18 as “to go” lunches (this requires staff time to run lunches out to vehicles, 2 people @ 2 hours each 2x per week)
 - Meals on Wheels
 - SHIBA one-on-one consulting
 - Resource specialist and connection to services
- Current program offerings moved to a virtual platform
 - Top Notch infant safety class
 - Voice overs
 - IncrediFlix filmmaking camp
 - Happy Seeds family yoga
- New online instructional programs will be offered beginning June 1 (free of charge)
 - How to teach your kids to swim
 - Stroke development
 - Water exercise
 - Safe swimming practices
 - How to fit lifejackets
 - Weekly swim workouts
 - Dry land conditioning for swimmers
 - Preschool/youth cooking class
 - At home science projects
 - Armchair travel
 - A variety of 10-minute workout and stretching classes
 - Birding
 - GKP and parks staff videos on landscaping, gardening & pruning
- New community building virtual events will be offered beginning June 1 (free of charge)
 - Walking contest
 - 5K and 50K challenge
 - Create a nature walk in Kirkland parks
 - Kirkland parks coloring contest
 - Parks treasure hunt
 - Online recipe exchange
 - Virtual volunteering
 - Virtual dog show
 - Neighborhood zoo
 - Mascot contest
 - Family training for a 5k
 - Summer camp t-shirt design contest
 - Virtual tennis & pickleball leagues (phase 2, singles only)
 - Virtual volleyball & basketball leagues (phase 3)
- Pop up programming when phase 3 begins
 - Yard games in the parks
 - 1-day tournaments

Lifeguards

Opening the Peter Kirk Pool or the lifeguarded beaches poses a unique challenge. Neither service can operate in Phase 2. Both are allowed in Phase 3 but at a reduced capacity, a size limit of 50 people, and with social distancing. The earliest potential date of operation is June 22. This is a full month past the previously scheduled onboarding date for lifeguards. Currently, the Red Cross has paused all "full certification" programs, including first aid, CPR and lifeguarding. Online coursework can be completed but certifications require in-person skill checks, which are paused as of the time of this writing. This means that the Department would need to rely on returning lifeguards, of which there are 54 in the application system. These 54 individuals have been placed on hold indefinitely and may or may not continue to be interested in employment. Operating both the pool and beaches requires at least 80 guards; operating the beaches only could be done with 40 guards. At this time, there are 30 open-water certified lifeguard applications.

Current hurdles that must be overcome include the ability to train staff with social distancing and strict group size restrictions, PPE protocol, risk and exposure mitigation, and the ability to control participation to 50 people while enforcing social distancing. Also, a large equipment order would need to be placed to avoid lifeguards sharing equipment.

A specific consideration for the Peter Kirk Pool is the expected reduced revenue. Area swim teams have already been cancelled. Swim lessons would need an entirely new format for the preschool and learn-to-swim programs, which typically require significant physical contact. The open-swim sessions would have limited capacity. All of these factors combine to significantly reduce the revenue, making the pool a net loss instead of an annual net positive revenue source.

A specific consideration for the lifeguarded swim areas at the beaches is the ability to have an additional week of in-depth open water training under the above-mentioned restrictions and the ability to secure and control access to the beach front. One unknown factor remains, which is the possible requirement to collect the names and contact information of everyone entering the beach area.

If lifeguarded swim areas at the beaches are desired during the summer, the Aquatics Program Coordinator will shift all efforts to training and overseeing the lifeguards, making her unavailable for other assigned duties. Lifeguards would be hired, onboarded in mid-June and trained in late June with a start date of June 29, regardless of the Phase 3 start date as that will likely be unknown until after staff are hired. The City would likely need to guarantee employment. Lifeguards could be allocated to help with other parks needs while waiting for Phase 3 to occur. Expanded staffing is likely necessary; Phase 3 has a 50-person group size limit that would be challenging to enforce at the beach fronts. This crowd control function will require overstaffing with 2 extra lifeguards per site and strong presence by professional staff. An approximate cost of direct expenses to operate the 3 lifeguarded swim areas for July and August is \$167,819.

Staff will be seeking direction from the Council on whether to pursue lifeguarding for the beaches.

Staff Assignments

Given the change in conditions and levels of service, staff have different performance expectations. Some staff will be working at capacity and other staff will have availability to serve in other needed roles along with their regular assigned work.

The parks will see a tremendous patron load with expected violations of “stay home stay healthy” restrictions. This will be particularly challenging at the waterfront and community parks. Maintenance staff are unable to carryout “educate and disperse” functions as they are otherwise occupied with general parks maintenance. Community members are already expressing strong concerns with the current crowding occurring each time the sun comes out and residents flock to the beaches. Therefore, the Department recommends using identified staff capacity to serve in a highly needed role as “Park Ambassador” to rove the parks to carryout education, disperse crowds, and encourage overall compliance to City or Governor rules and restrictions. The Park Ambassador position is described in more detail below.

After analyzing workloads, financial impacts and new operating requirements, the following is recommended.

Parks Management Staff

Park restroom, sports court and playground openings significantly impact the workload of the maintenance staff. A typical summer requires all full-time staff and approximately 20-30 seasonal staff. With a reduced slate of amenities for the summer, full-time staff may be able to shoulder the load. One exception would be athletic fields.

Currently, athletic fields and other lawn spaces are only receiving a basic level of upkeep, enough to prevent damage from the turf going dormant. Should the fields open in mid-summer, the maintenance staff would need to increase irrigation and mowing. The fields would require several weeks to bring up to a healthy condition. This could be done by beginning the process as soon as Phase 2 is announced. Some of the anticipated savings for reducing irrigation, mowing and general turf management would be reduced.

Should the preference be to open athletic fields for rental use and organized sports leagues as soon as Phase 3 begins, seasonal staff will need to be hired and trained at the start of summer. They will take on the basic maintenance of the fields and then increase the level of care while learning how to carryout the daily maintenance required to make the fields playable.

An approximate direct cost to open athletic fields for 4-6 weeks in mid-summer is roughly \$81,000; this includes reinstating full irrigation, mowing at fields, aeration and overseeding, and hiring seasonal staff to handle some of the daily maintenance. Possible revenue generation could range from \$10,000 to \$19,500 depending on how much field use is booked.

The more fiscally conservative option is to align athletic field re-opening with other Department programs and services, targeted for September 1. This is the date Lake Washington School District begins the fall term and is the start date for the Department’s fall service level.

Grounds Staff

- Hire minimal seasonal staff (125 fund and 128 fund)
- Eliminate the Wednesday “ready day” overlap and move to staggered shifts

Green Kirkland Partnership Staff

- Reallocate to serve as Park Ambassadors

Harbor Staff

- Do not hire seasonal harbor masters
- Operate the marina moorage and boat launch by rotating three current full-time staff with limited commissions granted by the Police Chief

Special Events Staff

Special events will not be permitted from now through August. Events may be rescheduled after September 1 as allowed by the Safe Start program. The 2-event limit per park may be waived for events determined by the City Manager to generate economic benefit to City businesses. This division plans the Juanita Friday Market; Staff is planning to operate the Friday Market only if it can be done in compliance with safety guidelines and solely to provide food and support local farmers. However, no program assistant will be hired to assist.

- Special Projects Coordinator to plan and implement a safety compliant Friday Market
- Do not hire the summer On Call Program Assistant
- Utilize Program Assistant capacity from the recreation division to assist

Administration and Human Services

Staff in administration and human services are functioning above 100% capacity but will continue to carry out current responsibilities.

Recreation Division Staff

Service levels for the recreation division are altered significantly from a typical summer. A typical summer sees a doubling of programs and services and approximately 50% of annual revenue is received during these months. In addition to offering programs and operating the community centers, recreation staff carryout the customer service needs of the entire department, including staffing the counter in City Hall, renting facilities & fields, selling boat launch cards, processing moorage, and overseeing vendors and concessionaires. Many of these duties will continue, even with limited summer programs and closed facilities.

Postponing recreation programming to the fall allows staff time to work through the logistics associated with operating under new and different requirements. Staff will spend a portion of their time on the logistics listed here.

- Signage for facilities, parks and park amenities
- Sanitation supplies for cleaning facilities, parks and park amenities
- PPE for all staff (including contingents)
- Screening materials for staff entry to work environments
- Entry procedures for participants attending offered programs
- Altered waivers for program participants
- Comprehensive, documented COVID procedures
- Comprehensive, documented COVID training for staff
- Facility isolation space for someone filling ill (employee or participant)
- Addendum to vendor and concessionaire contracts requiring adherence to and enforcement of State requirements

- Facility space alterations
- Fall program planning: redesign program formats, locations, group size and equipment requirements

In addition to regular duties and working through the new operating parameters, additional staff capacity will be allocated as indicated below.

Recreation Supervisor, Customer Service

- Department communications plan for summer and fall
- Serve as harbormaster

Recreation Supervisor, PKCC and NKCC

- Create and implement new virtual programming
- Serve as Park Ambassador

Program Coordinators

- Create and implement new virtual programming
- Serve as Park Ambassador
- Meal assistance and "delivery" for CCS lunch program
- Serve as onsite coordinator for Juanita Friday Market

Program Assistants

- Create and implement new virtual programming
- Serve as Park Ambassador
- Serve as onsite coordinator for Juanita Friday Market
- Serve as onsite coordinator for Juanita Friday Market

Park Ambassador Role

Park use has been robust and the community is showing increased frustration with restrictions. Staff are encountering difficult situations daily. The expectation is that this will escalate as the weather continues to improve and restrictions remain. Once Washington moves into Phase 3, more travel will occur and Kirkland parks will become a destination. Summer patron loads combined with limited amenity use and social distancing requirements will create further tension.

Park Ambassadors will help educate the public about how to use the parks safely during this COVID period. They will roam the high traffic parks and engage community members in conversation. Ambassadors will have educational materials about COVID, safe use of parks and all the different programs and services available. This serves as a good conversation starter. The Ambassadors will be in pairs, appear in an official uniform shirt, wear appropriate PPE and have cell phones. Park Ambassadors have no enforcement capabilities and will rely on interpersonal skills and a friendly and educational approach. They will be instructed to call 911 should they encounter serious violations, unsafe or threatening situations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT TO GENERAL FUND

The Parks and Community Services Department began working on budget reductions immediately upon the cancellation of programs in March. The Department will see a significant revenue loss since peak season is June through August. This revenue loss adds to the overall stress on the General Fund from this recession.

Staff have implemented some budget reductions and recommended other additional actions. These cost savings actions will mitigate the revenue loss but cannot completely make up for it. Rough projections are listed here and will be refined over the next few weeks.

Approximate Revenue Loss Projection: \$1,300,000

- Program cancellations March through August
- Closure of the Peter Kirk Pool
- Cancellation of the spring athletic field season
- Cancellation of picnic shelter and pavilion rentals

Approximate Expense Savings: \$1,000,000 (Savings are reduced if any services are added)

- Cancellation of the KTUB contract extension
- Postpone the Synthetic Turf Strategic Plan
- Do not hire harbor master contingent employees
- Do not hire lifeguards and water safety instructors
- Minimal hiring of parks summer seasonals
- Contingent staff were unscheduled in March, this will last through August
- Reduction in professional services due to cancelled program contracts
- Reduced irrigation at parks and general water use in restrooms
- Defer public art cleaning
- Elimination of travel and training
- Elimination of the department planning retreat
- General expense savings in supplies & equipment due to decreased service levels

NEXT STEPS

Staff is requesting that City Council review and approve the attached resolution outlining summer service levels to be offered by Parks and Community Services.

ADDENDUM: Resolution R-5424