



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 17, 2022
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
FROM: Dave Perrault, City Administrator
SUBJECT: Recreation Programming Update

Budgeted Amount:	Actual Amount:	Funding Source:
N/A	N/A	N/A

For Council Consideration

The City Council should consider providing direction on short-term Recreation Programming.

Background

The City currently has a vacancy for a Recreation Supervisor, and is currently in the process of trying to fill the position. A verbal update will be given regarding the status of this position at the worksession. Having the vacancy creates some short-term gaps for staffing, while other departments have been doing a great job of assisting with ongoing functions some decisions will need to occur around ice rink staffing and winter programming. The City typically puts out its Winter Recreation Guide in mid-November, this allows both City Staff and residents to plan appropriately. The 2021/22 Recreation Guide is attached for reference. We could delay the Winter Recreation Guide to later in November or even early December, but we still need to plan appropriately and want to be able to provide a realistic level of service. In working with the Public Works Department, as Recreation technically falls under their purview, Staff is seeking direction from Council either to go ahead and make these decisions administratively or have Council provide further direction on winter programming.

Ice Rink Staffing

Pre-COVID, the City would work to staff four ice rinks: Hazelnut, Cummings, Perry and Freeway Park. The staffed hours would typically be 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm Monday thru Friday, 12:00 pm to 8:30 pm on Saturday, and 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm on Sundays (Cummings was only staffed on Fridays and the weekend). Depending on the number of seasonals available to work, the City would have hired between eight and ten people to work as ice rink attendants. Their duties include unlocking and locking the warming houses, turning the lights on and off, shoveling rinks, and other maintenance duties for the warming house. For 2020/1, we did not hire any rink attendants and put

picnic tables near the rinks and a porta-potty for use. For 2021/2, we did hire ice rink attendants but they worked limited hours and access to the warming houses were limited, too. The rinks typically open in December and close mid-February, but it is weather dependent.

Currently, we only have three applicants for the rink attendant positions, the posting closes November 30th. None of the current applicants appear to be returnees from previous years. While getting enough applicants is part of the issue, the other piece is the training and supervising of these seasonal staff. Ideally, we'll have the new Recreation Supervisor on-board by mid-November and they could take over these duties, but they'll be learning the job along with the new seasonals. Lastly, our previous Recreation Supervisor anecdotally noted we have had issues with rink attendants previously, such as, not locking the buildings, not showing up for shifts, or leaving the rink lights on. Staff has discussed options and is considering the following (staff recommends either the first or second option):

-Not having the warming houses open and putting picnic tables and porta-potties out for people that use the rink. The negative is obviously the warming houses won't be open for the public to use, the benefit is we do not need to manage additional seasonal staff and then would also not need to order the temporary warming house Hazelnut Park (approx. \$5,000 to \$6,000).

-Another option considered is having a Public Works Seasonal employee during the winter. They could act as a roving ice rink attendant, opening the warming houses, turning lights on, shoveling the rinks. This person could also assist with flooding rinks and other winter duties, such as, City Hall snow removal and trail plowing. This would be contingent on the seasonal working a different schedule (afternoons/nights and weekends), and if they were absent a day we may not open the warming houses. If we were to go this route and hire someone for about four months it would cost around \$11,520, the typical total ice rink attendant cost is around \$10,000.

-The last option discussed is proceeding with the normal rink attendant plan and try to hire enough attendants and schedule them accordingly. Staff will do our best to accommodate and schedule accordingly, but we'll need to be clear in the rec guide and other publications that warming houses will be open based on staffing, and we cannot guarantee availability.

Winter Recreation Programming

The other item needing discussion on is winter programming, this mostly comes down to timing of communication and getting a new Recreation Supervisor hired. We have reviewed programming and believe we can continue with many of the outside instructor led classes, such as, fencing, yoga, dance, etc. However, the programming that requires seasonal hiring, training, and oversight present an issue. Again, while we are hopeful we'll have a Recreation Supervisor on-board by mid-November, we still need to work on the development of programming that starts the beginning of January. This mainly consists of before and after school programming, camps, one-time events (snowshoeing), and ice skating lessons. If we are going to continue these programs, we would need to start looking for seasonals late October and early November; however, we would need to identify and have these programs planned for a Winter Rec Guide. It should be noted for the before and after school programming, Shoreview runs programming at Island Lake and we typically share their info in our Rec Guide, but we run the program at Valentine Hills. If we didn't offer one it would only be the Valentine Hills program, assuming Shoreview lets us continue to advertise their

program at Island Lake. Also, it should be noted that the we did not hold any winter after school programs in 2022 as they did not meet the minimum requirement of six participants. For ice skating, we had 17 participants this past winter. Staff would recommend we forego the classes this winter that we cannot effectively plan for, such as, before and after school programming at Valentine Hills and skating lessons but we would continue with the outside instructor led classes. We would also not plan on holding events, such as, gingerbread house decorating, letters to Santa, or breakfast with Santa.

For reference Attachment B and Attachment C give a listing of the classes from November through March, Attachment B is classes that were held while Attachment C is classes that were cancelled likely due to low enrollment but could have been for other reasons. Please be aware that it is likely the November and March months might be picking up fall and spring classes, winter classes typically start in December, January, or February.

Once Staff is able to make decisions regarding programming, or Council gives sufficient direction, we can craft the Winter Recreation Guide. Depending on offerings, we may make this Winter Rec Guide a smaller insert into the newsletter or it could be a standalone mailing.

Budget Impact

There will be a budget impact on the General Fund as all Recreation revenues and expenditures flow through the General Fund, but exact impacts will not be known until decisions are made on programming. It should be noted that winter programming does not represent a significant portion of the budget, as most programming happens in the summer months.

Attachment

Attachment A: 2021/22 Winter Recreation Guide
Attachment B: Completed Classes November thru March
Attachment C: Cancelled Classes November thru March