



Vancouver Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services • P.O. Box 1995 • Vancouver, WA 98668-1995  
[www.vanparksrecculture.org](http://www.vanparksrecculture.org)

## **M E M O R A N D U M**

**DATE:** November 14, 2023

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

**FROM:** David Perlick, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Interim Director

**RE:** **Response to Recreation Program Staffing Challenges**

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### **Overview of the Situation**

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services (PRCS) has been working through staffing challenges that have impacted our ability to maintain important community services. Following national trends, the City of Vancouver is seeing fewer job applicants for entry level recreation program roles, particularly lifeguards. Additionally, PRCS has been working with Human Resources throughout 2023, to better define the limits of part-time work and ensure compliance with employment laws. These two factors combined have resulted in reduced staffing in a number of recreation program areas.

The loss of staff is most apparent in the City's aquatics programs, due to the large number of staff required to operate the pools and the year-round nature of these programs.

### **Community Impacts**

In October, pools at Firstenburg and Marshall Community Centers announced reduced schedules, which are anticipated to continue at least through end of 2023. The Firstenburg Pool is now open 33.25 hours and Marshall Pool is now open 26.5 hours per week. To give you a sense of what those numbers mean from a public access standpoint, pool hours have been reduced by about half compared to what we were able to offer in January 2023. To maintain equity in services to the greatest extent possible, schedule adjustments have been made in a way that preserves a variety of services, considering both types of programs as well as days, times and locations.

## What We Are Doing

A work team has been formed with staff from City Manager's Office, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, Human Resources and Law to look at these issues and develop recommendations for a more sustainable staffing approach in Recreation. We are looking at short-term and long-term strategies to support services and minimize community impacts – some high level details are shared below.

### *Short Term*

We are looking at every option to maintain as much service as possible. Some of the actions we are taking to respond to the lifeguard shortage include:

- Adjusting all community center memberships to provide full access to both pool locations at no additional cost to members.
- Full time aquatics staff are adjusting their work schedules to cover lifeguard shifts and prioritize keeping pools open as much as possible.
- Hiring two vacant full time aquatics positions to further support pool needs.
- Implementation of a wage increase for part-time lifeguard staff to help retain existing staff expertise.
- Recruiting new part-time lifeguard staff by attending job fairs and other events.
- Increasing the frequency of lifeguard classes to streamline the training, certification and onboarding process.

### *Longer Term*

We recognize that the City will need to pursue more substantial and longer term strategies in order to restore the full set of aquatics services and maintain other Recreation programs. Therefore, the project team is actively reviewing staffing models from other cities and park districts in our region and considering changes to our staffing approach. This could include creation of new classifications for flexible, part-time regular employees to support Recreation services. This work takes time to fully vet and ensure it will meet our needs. Our goal is to develop recommendations by February 2024 that could be addressed through the spring supplemental budgeting process.

We are regularly communicating with the community through our email lists and the aquatics webpage at [www.cityofvancouver.us/aquatics](http://www.cityofvancouver.us/aquatics) and other channels. We remain committed to a thoughtful and transparent process that includes:

- Ongoing communication to Firstenburg and Marshall members and the broader community.
- Inclusion of our labor groups in this discussion at the appropriate time.
- Thoughtful examination of increases in costs and how this may impact program fees and community affordability.

I will continue to share updated information as it becomes available. Please contact me if you have any immediate questions or comments.