

REPORT

Parks & Recreation

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: February 27, 2023

From: Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation
File: 2227779

Item #: 2023-119

Subject: 2023 Outdoor Pool Extended Season Aquatics Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to: present key findings from the 2022 outdoor pool season and 2023 outdoor pool public engagement survey results; and present the preliminary 2023 outdoor pools operating schedules.

BACKGROUND

In 2022 the City operated with its first extended outdoor pool season from April 23 to October 10 at Moody Park Pool and June 30 to October 10 at Hume Park Pool. The extended season was implemented in response to the unexpected permanent closure and subsequent deconstruction of Canada Games Pool in late 2021/early 2022. The closure of the indoor pool created a significant gap in recreation services delivery to the community. In an attempt to keep the community whole, the Parks and Recreation Department consulted, analyzed and partnered with, community members and partners to assess whether or not an extension of the outdoor pool season would help to mitigate the loss of indoor aquatic services. The support for an extended 2022 season was well received and Aquatic Services staff moved forward with new and enhanced services at the outdoor pools as a response to the *Be Heard New West* community engagement results (see archived 2021 project, [Outdoor Pools Season](#)).

Upon on the conclusion of the 2022 extended season, Aquatic Services re-engaged the community for the upcoming 2023 outdoor pool extended season via the *Be Heard New West* community engagement platform ([Outdoor Pools: 2022 Season Feedback](#)). This survey focused on issues related to the refinement of the outdoor pool services from last season and extensively on last year's reservation system and whether or not the community was still in support of this model or would prefer to return to a drop-in model.

DISCUSSION

Key information from the 2022 Outdoor Pool Season

Aquatic staff compiled statistical information and findings that informed the decisions related to the upcoming 2023 season. Key findings from the 2022 outdoor pool season operations are listed below noting that "reserved swimming" references leisure, lane and aquafit sessions, and "registered programs" references swimming lessons.

Spring 2022 – Moody Park Pool			
Service	Maximum Capacity	Actual Participation	Utilized Capacity
Reserved swimming	39,829	4,916	12.3 %
Registered Programs	548	520	95.4%

Summer 2022 – Moody Park Pool			
Service	Maximum Capacity	Actual Participation	Utilized Capacity
Reserved swimming	43,813	16,949	38.7%
Registered programs	812	776	95.6%

Summer 2022 – Hume Park Pool			
Service	Maximum Capacity	Actual Participation	Utilized Capacity
Reserved swimming	26,585	9,566	36%
Registered Programs	421	415	98.6%

Fall 2022 – Moody Park Pool			
Service	Maximum Capacity	Actual Participation	Utilized Capacity
Reserved swimming	21,197	4,153	19.6%
Registered Programs	237	231	97.5%
Fall 2022 – Hume Park Pool			
Service	Maximum Capacity	Actual Participation	Utilized Capacity
Reserved swimming	3,450	779	22.5%
Registered Programs	Not offered at this location		

The statistics shown above indicate that there was a significant amount of underutilized capacity for reserved swimming services during the shoulder seasons (spring and fall), while registered programs (e.g. swim instruction) were near capacity throughout the entire season.

Aquatic Service staff also identified some additional learnings associated with the shoulder seasons in 2022. Hume Park pool has minimal lighting within the park and pool deck areas. As the sun sets earlier each passing day in the fall season, the pool lighting became insufficient for safe operations (visibility requirements). In addition, the current boiler system is an older model and has challenges in maintaining adequate pool water temperatures in the cooler months. Also, during the shoulder season, attendance levels for Hume Park Pool drastically dropped in the month of October. As a result, in order to maintain services, ensure safety and manage operating efficiencies, operating hours were reduced at that site for the late fall 2022.

After the review of the internal findings and statistics, the Aquatic Services team started to prepare for the 2023 Outdoor Pool season. Concurrently, a public survey was undertaken in order to determine if current services and reservation systems needed further refinements or adjustments.

Public Engagement Findings

Key findings from the *What We Heard: Outdoor Pools Survey Summary* (Attachment A) note:

- 65% of participants in regards to Moody Park Pool and 57% of participants in regards to Hume Park Pool are in favor of keeping a reserved system for general pool admissions (public swimming).
- 63% of participants in regards to Hume Park Pool and 70% of participants in regards to Moody Park Pool wanted swim sessions to be between 1-1.5 hours in length.
- 46.8% of participants would like to keep lane capacities to 3 people per lane, followed by 27.7% supporting an increase to 4 people per lane.

- For aquafit, participants ranked a reserved system on a class-by-class basis as their top choice.
- For swimming lessons, participants ranked a twice per week program on weekday evenings as their top choice for the spring, summer and fall seasons.

Key themes that emerged from the optional open-response question (198) were used in outdoor pool planning:

- i. Support to continue with a reserved system (32)
- ii. Support for keeping expanded operational hours (22)
- iii. Opposed to continuing with reserved system (17)
- iv. Facility-related comments: lights, temperature and equipment (14)
- v. Accessibility and equity of the reserved system (13)

Please see the Engagement Summary report (Attachment A and on the Be Heard platform) for more information about the engagement process, what we heard from participants, and demographic information about participants.

NEXT STEPS

The Aquatics Services team has responded to the attendance data from the 2022 season and community input collected through *Outdoor Pools: 2022 Season Feedback* by implementing the following service adjustments for the upcoming 2023 Outdoor Pool Season. A further detailed listing of the response is outlined in Attachment B:

- A hybrid approach to provide options for all of the community and increase accessibility to participants who do not have access to registering online or over the phone. This includes a reserved system available online and over the phone, as well as 20% of swim session capacity held for drop-in options at both Moody and Hume Park pools.
- Ability to fill “no show” reservations with drop-in customers.
- Increasing swimming sessions from 1 hour to 1.5 hours.
- Increasing lane swimming capacity from three to five spots.
- Allow for spectators on the pool deck, free of charge when supervising a participant.
- Increasing swimming lesson and aquafit services offerings
- A prerequisite registration system for swimming lessons, which will align aquatics with skating and gymnastic lessons.

The prioritization of New Westminster residents through resident registration priority day for both reserved swims and registered swimming lessons will be continued for the 2023 outdoor pool season.

The 2023 Outdoor Pool operating season is planned as outlined below:

Moody Park Outdoor Pool

Moody Park Pool will operate with an extended season from April 22 to October 1, 2023. Hours of operation for this facility will be as follows:

Spring and Fall: April 22 – June 30, and September 5 – October 1, 2023

Monday-Friday 7:45-11:00 am and 12:30-9:00 pm

Saturday 9:15am – 7:15pm, Sunday 12:30-7:15 pm

Lessons - weekday afternoons/evenings and Saturday mornings

Hyack Swim Club rental of swimming lanes - Tuesday/Thursday early mornings and Monday/Wednesday/Friday late afternoons

Summer: July 1 – September 4, 2023

Aquatic Services staff are in the planning phase. Hours of operation will be similar to the 2022 season noted below.

Monday – Friday 8:45am – 9:00pm

Saturday 12:30-9:00pm

Sunday 10am – 9:00pm

Hume Park Outdoor Pool

Hume Park Pool will be opening slightly later in the spring season than Moody Park Pool. As shown in our attendance data from 2022 above, both outdoor facilities have an abundance of attendance capacity during the shoulder seasons. Also, due to insufficient lighting and boiler capability limitations noted at Hume Park Pool from last season, it was decided that a staggered opening for the facilities would occur for the 2023 season. Hume Park Outdoor Pool will open with an extended season from May 20 – October 1, 2023.

Spring: May 20 – June 30, 2023

Friday 4:00-7:15pm

Saturday and Sunday 12:30- 7:15pm

Summer: July 1 – September 4, 2023

Aquatic Services staff are in the planning phase. Hours of operation will be similar to the 2022 season noted below.

Monday – Friday 8:45am – 9:00pm

Saturday 12:30-9:00pm

Sunday 10am – 9:00pm

Lessons – weekday afternoons/evenings and weekday mornings

Fall: September 5 – October 1, 2023

Aquatic Services staff are in the planning phase. Hours of operation will be similar to the 2022 season noted below.

Monday – Friday 3:30-7:00pm

Saturday 11:45am -7:00pm

Sunday 11:45am -7:00pm

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2022, Council approved a net operating budget subsidy of \$303K for the regular outdoor pool season and an additional subsidy of \$103K for the extended season. Net operating subsidy for 2022 finished at \$466K with an unfavorable budget variance of \$60K.

In 2023, staff propose to build on the 2022 extended season by adding 4 extra weeks to outdoor pool operations. The 2023 extended season requires an operating budget subsidy of \$200K in addition to the \$321K base budget subsidy for regular outdoor pool operations. The \$200K additional operating budget subsidy will be offset by incremental rental and program revenues estimated at \$25K and the remainder managed through re-allocation of 2023 operating budget.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff from Parks and Recreation with support from the City's Public Engagement team and Finance Department contributed to this report.

CONCLUSION

Based on the feedback and the range of preferences we heard from participants related to reserved vs. drop-in access to the outdoor pools, the City is responding by introducing a hybrid approach for the upcoming 2023 outdoor pool season. This will include a reserved system for those who want a guaranteed swimming spot, while also retaining 20% of swim spaces for drop-in visitors in order to reduce barriers to access. Swim times will also be extended to 90 minutes (up from 60 minutes in 2022), while still ensuring the facility is available for many people throughout each day. The City recognizes that providing as many swimming lesson sets and aquafit program offerings as possible, while also balancing access to leisure and lane swimming, is important. Staff will continue to address spring, summer, and fall schedules based on prior community input and public demand. New flexible outdoor pool facility guidelines will also be introduced to ensure increased access, including free parent/guardian access on deck to supervise children, the ability for drop-in options and no-show spots to be filled.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – *What We Heard: Outdoor Pools: 2022 Season Feedback Summary*

Attachment B – *What We heard: Outdoor Pools: 2022 Season Feedback Response*

APPROVALS

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