

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 26, 2023

From: City Manager Department/Recreation Division

Subject: Lifeguard Program Update

Recommended Action: Receive report on plans to establish a Capitola Lifeguard Program beginning in summer 2023.

Background: On June 23, 2022, the City Council approved the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget which included the development of a City-run Lifeguard Program. Previously, the City held an agreement with the City of Santa Cruz Fire Department (Santa Cruz) for lifeguard services, which began in 2012 and ended in September 2022. Under the agreement, Santa Cruz provided tower lifeguard services on Capitola Beach with lifeguards trained consistent with United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) Certification. The agreement included lifeguard services beginning Memorial Day weekend and concluding Labor Day weekend. In February 2022, Santa Cruz requested an increase to the contract citing increased costs due to increases in wages. Additionally, the geographic distance between Capitola and Santa Cruz presented a challenge for Santa Cruz to provide supervisors to the entire region during high traffic months.

The City entered a separate contract in 2019 with Central Fire District (CFD) to provide lifeguard training services to Capitola Junior Lifeguard Instructors. As a Fire District with marine emergency response responsibilities, CFD has been an excellent partner to provide training services that meet or exceed the USLA standards for Open Water Lifesaving. As part of the 2019 Agreement, the City and CFD had discussed plans for CFD to provide lifeguard tower services, however, CFD is in the process of developing a strategic plan and is unable to allocate resources for a Capitola Beach lifeguard program. During the 2022 season, CFD participated in Santa Cruz's supervisor training and assigned staff to Capitola towers as supervisors to support Santa Cruz lifeguards.

On July 28, 2022, the City Council approved a permanent position in the Recreation Division, Recreation Coordinator: Beach Lifeguard Services, to assist in the development and supervision of the Capitola Lifeguard Program.

Discussion: The City intends to apply for USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification in April 2023. USLA is a national organization that certifies lifeguard agencies and ensures that their training program meets or exceeds USLA standards. The application process includes development of a training program appropriate for the conditions and geographic features of the area, development of agency policy and procedures that support USLA guidelines, verification of required equipment, and verification of staff qualifications for implementing training and supervision of the operation.

In order to successfully obtain USLA certification, staff identified a need to bridge training services between Santa Cruz, CFD, and Capitola. Past experience has highlighted the benefits of regional partnership between Santa Cruz, CFD, and the City. On January 13, 2023, staff entered into an agreement with Santa Cruz to provide USLA training to Capitola lifeguards. This will allow the City to ensure current and seasonal staff are properly trained for this season and gain necessary experience for the long-term operation of Capitola's Lifeguard Program. CFD staff will support Santa Cruz by providing qualified trainers as well. This agreement also supports the City's goal to be an independent USLA certified lifeguard agency, as Capitola supervisors will participate in the training program alongside Santa Cruz trainers.

Fiscal Impact: The adopted FY 22/23 budget included \$17,000 intended for a continued contract with CFD for training services. The agreement with Santa Cruz is under \$15,000 therefore sufficient funds are available.

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Reviewed By: Julia Moss, City Clerk

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