



AGENDA REPORT

City Council Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: December 6, 2024

MEETING DATE: December 18, 2024

TO: Sandpoint City Council and Mayor

FROM: Jason Welker, Planning & Community Development Director and Maeve Nevins Lavtar, Parks Planning & Development Manager

SUBJECT: Approval to apply for IDPR Grants for City Beach boat launch and RV Park improvements

Proposed Resolution

Directing staff to apply for grants from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) Waterway Improvement Fund (WIF) and the Recreational Vehicle Fund (RV Fund) to support improvements to parking, boat launch, and RV Campground facilities at City Beach Park. - **Action Item**

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND:

The Sandpoint RV Campground and boat launch are critical components of the City Beach area, serving both recreational users and emergency response needs. The RV Park, located at the entrance to City Beach, includes 21 seasonal sites and has generated between \$79,000 and \$109,000 annually in revenue for the Parks Capital Improvement Fund since the City acquired it in 2022, making it the second most valuable contributing source to Parks Capital Improvement Funds after moorage at the City Beach and Windbag marinas. The City Beach boat launch, situated approximately 100 yards southeast of the RV Park, provides vital access to Lake Pend Oreille but has operational limitations, particularly during low-water conditions in fall and winter.

Recent developments have underscored the need for significant improvements to the boat launch. Structural defects in the spillway gates of the Albeni Falls Dam, reported by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are expected to result in lower lake levels for the foreseeable future. These lower water levels will extend the low-water season, further restricting access to the lake. Repairs to the dam could take over a decade, intensifying the urgency to ensure year-round lake access for both recreational users and emergency responders.

In response to this situation, Idaho State District 1 Representative Mark Sauter has requested upgrades to the City Beach boat launch, emphasizing its importance for both early and off-season recreational users as well as for emergency and first responder access to incidents on the Pend Oreille River and the three bridges just west of City Beach. Currently, the nearest alternative low-water access points are in Hope and Laclede, both requiring significant travel for boaters and emergency personnel. Sauter also suggests the possibility, through dredging and improved launch facilities, of off-season moorage facilities for Bonner County Sheriff Office's Marine Division and Sandpoint Fire Department.

The economic implications of these improvements are significant. Ray Pipella, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Waterways Improvement Fund (WIF) representative for District 1, highlighted data from Bonner County showing a 40% increase in watercraft inspections at local checkpoints over the past five years, with over 26,000 inspections in 2024. Many of these boaters travel from out of state,

contributing to local tourism and economic development. Enhanced facilities at City Beach, including year-round boat launch access, would solidify Sandpoint as a premier destination for boaters, supporting local businesses and the broader community.

The proposed RV Park improvements further complement this vision, addressing current deficiencies and enhancing visitor experience. Planned upgrades include:

- Adding restrooms (currently, there are none).
- Installing updated electrical systems.
- Possible addition of sewer connections to RV sites.
- Adding Wi-Fi service.
- Improving the day-use parking area at the campground entrance.
- Implementing a full landscape plan.
- Developing and implementing a way-finding plan.
- Enhancing accessibility to meet ADA standards.

Together, these projects aim to modernize City Beach's infrastructure, ensuring it meets the needs of residents and visitors while adapting to the environmental challenges posed by the Albeni Falls Dam defects.

PROPOSED PROJECTS AND FUNDING

RV Park Improvements

- **Grant Program:** [Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation RV Fund](#)
- **Purpose:** Enhance the existing RV campground facilities to improve visitor experience, accessibility, and revenue generation.
- **Details:** If awarded, grant funds would be used for design in 2025, with construction anticipated in 2026.

Boat Launch Enhancements

- **Grant Program:** [Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Waterway Improvement Fund \(WIF\)](#)
- **Purpose:** Enable year-round usability of the City Beach boat launch for recreational as well as emergency and first responder watercraft. Provide low-water moorage for Sheriff and Fire Department watercraft.
- **Details:** Proposed work includes dredging to improve water depth and extending the concrete apron to ensure functionality during low-water conditions, with possible addition of a new dock for use by emergency watercraft while lake is at winter pool level. Depending on preliminary cost estimates, this project is likely to be phased over two years, with design and construction beginning in 2025 using that year's grant funds and continuing in 2026 with another WIF grant applied for in January 2026.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The timing of these projects depends on several factors, including the phasing of hotel development at 56 Bridge Street, grant approvals, and availability of funds.
- Other improvements envisioned at City Beach include resurfacing and restriping the parking lot, with potential funding from the City's Parking Improvement Fund.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the resolution directing staff to apply for the IDPR RV Fund and Waterway Improvement Fund grants to support enhancements to the City Beach RV park and boat launch facilities.

ACTION:

Staff is requesting approval for:

- Submission of an IDPR RV Fund grant application to improve the City Beach RV Campground.
- Submission of an IDPR Waterway Improvement Fund grant application to perform dredging and other upgrades to the City Beach boat launch, supporting emergency response and year-round usability.

Approval of the resolution would authorize staff to apply for these grants and proceed with necessary planning efforts.

WILL THERE BE ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT? YES HAS THIS ITEM BEEN BUDGETED? NO

Both the WIF and RV Fund grants require a 5% match, which can be budgeted in the FY26 Parks Capital Improvement Budget. Engineering and permitting would likely begin after grant award notification in late spring 2025 to build in spring of 2026. These “soft costs” would require some initial funding to get a concept level engineering design started so the permit applications can be submitted through IDL and Army Corps of Engineers in time for 2026 construction. Since the actual construction work for both projects is scheduled to begin after the start of FY26 on October 1, 2025, the required match can be planned for and incorporated into the FY26 budget.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Powerpoint presentation including images of current conditions
- December 11th, 2024 Parks & Recreation Commission meeting minutes where grant proposal was presented and discussed.