



PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION 20220328-B2-1

Date: March 28, 2022

Subject: Parks and Recreation Department Lifeguard Shortage

Motioned By: Board Member Sarah Faust

Seconded By: Vice-Chair Richard DePalma

Recommendation

Pursue all available measures to increase staffing to sustainable levels for all aquatics facilities, with particular emphasis on Barton Springs.

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board Financial Committee “Financial Committee” reviewed a presentation regarding Aquatics Budget and Staffing at its February 28, 2022 which demonstrated that hiring of lifeguards has been difficult due to previous pandemic induced hiring freezes and other economic factors; and

WHEREAS; the Parks and Recreation Department notified the Finance Committee that it will be offering an incentive bonus to temporary life guards that join the staff and stay through the summer season;

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Department subsequently announced that Barton Springs Pool will be closed indefinitely for two days a week due to a staffing shortage of approximately 20 open water certified life guards needed in order to safely guard Barton Springs Pool and to provide training to newly recruited life guards; and

WHEREAS, the Finance Committee is concerned with the closure of any swimming pools during the spring and summer swim seasons due to staffing issues because swimming is a critical form of exercise and outdoor recreation for our community; and

WHEREAS, the Finance Committee is especially concerned with the closure of Barton Springs Pool during the entry fee season, as the closure of Barton Springs in the spring season is estimated to cost \$9,000.00 per day in lost revenue and would cost much more during the summer season; and

WHEREAS, the Finance Committee finds that staffing at the swimming pools that are open-year round and in particular Barton Springs, which requires specially trained open water certified lifeguards, has become especially difficult due to rising costs of living in Austin and wages for part-time and temporary employees that have not risen proportionally;

THEREFORE, the Parks and Recreation Board Finance Committee recommends to the Parks and Recreation Board that it recommend that the Parks and Recreation Department and Austin

City Council pursue all available measures to increase staffing to sustainable levels for all aquatics facilities, with particular emphasis on Barton Springs, including but not limited to the following measures:

- 1) increasing pay rates to a starting livable wage of \$22 an hour for staff and an additional bonus for lifeguards that transition to open water lifeguards at Barton Springs Pool for the summer of 2022;
- 2) increasing the number of year-round full time employee open water certified lifeguards to ensure continuous open operation of Barton Springs Pool;
- 3) increasing staff support positions to ensure lifeguards are available for guarding Barton Springs Pool;
- 4) waiving training fees required to become a lifeguard;
- 5) allocating additional funding as needed to the Parks and Recreation Department to fulfill the items described above and the items described as Under Resourced Service Expectations for Aquatics in the February 28, 2022 presentation given to the Finance Committee; and
- 6) any other measures found by the Austin City Council or Parks and Recreation Department to be effective in training and retaining lifeguards and staff in order to ensure all City of Austin Pools are fully open and operational year-round or for their respective seasons, for the full the use and enjoyment by the public.

Vote: Board Member Sarah Faust made a motion to recommend Council pursue all available measures to increase staffing to sustainable levels for all aquatics facilities, with particular emphasis on Barton Springs; Vice-Chair Richard DePalma seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 10-0 with one vacancy

For: Chair Dawn Lewis, Vice-Chair Richard DePalma, Board Members Nina Rinaldi, Anna Di Carlo, Patrick Moore, Sarah Faust, Lisa Hugman, Nancy Barnard, Kim Taylor and Laura Cottam Sajbel

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

Tim Dombek
