




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: April 11, 2023

SUBJECT: Summer Employee Recruitment and Retention Bonus Program and
General Hiring Process Improvement Updates

This memorandum serves as a second update to [Council Member Ellis' Budget Rider 2 \(PARD Summer Employee Bonus Program\)](#) and to provide a general update to the Parks and Recreation Department's temporary hiring process improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) provided an [initial update on March 24, 2023](#) regarding CM Ellis' Budget Rider 2 which directed the City Manager to:

- provide an initial status report on PARD vacancy savings available to fund recruitment and retention bonuses for PARD summer employees, including lifeguards and camp counselors, with the goal of offering bonuses at least as generous as the FY22 incentives, and
- provide regular reporting related to hiring progress and vacancies.

Recruitment and Retention Bonuses

As directed by Council, PARD calculated a restructured bonus program estimated between \$800,000 and \$1,000,000. After careful analysis of winter storm expenses and following the close of the 2nd fiscal quarter, PARD has determined there will be sufficient vacancy savings this fiscal year to move forward with the full employment incentive plan.

Summer seasonal employees, which include lifeguards and camp counselors, will now be eligible to earn up to an additional \$750 throughout the summer. The bonus structure is tied to hours worked, meaning an employee must work a certain number of hours between May 21st and August 12th to be eligible. The payouts are as follows:

- 200 hours worked = \$250 bonus
- 300 hours worked = \$250 bonus
- 400 hours worked = \$250 bonus

PARD has also allocated funds to recruit and incentivize summer employment as follows:

- Dedicated funding to marketing and advertising summer positions with an emphasis on lifeguard positions
- Dedicated funding to absorb uniform costs
- Dedicated funding to eliminate training fees to reduce barriers of entry for employees

Implementing the full array of incentives at this point in time will allow the Department to expand and capitalize upon the marketing campaign currently underway, increasing the likelihood of a successful recruiting season. Finally, PARD is exploring additional reward and recognition programs that will be designed to increase employee retention.

Summer Employee and Vacancy Status

The Aquatic Division continues with recruiting and hiring on all fronts for temporary employees. PARD launched a marketing and recruitment campaign in early March including but not limited to social media, radio advertisements, city banners, traffic sign messaging and in-person recruiting events.

For context, through a tiered opening schedule, all PARD pools are scheduled to open by June 12th. To operate all pools, PARD requires 850 lifeguards for the summer season. As of April 7, 2023, PARD received 621 applicants for lifeguards. All applicants have been contacted with next steps and are in various stages of hiring. Additionally, PARD has a total of 278 lifeguards on our ready to work list. PARD received 13 FTE lifeguards as part of the FY2023 Budget, and all 13 full-time lifeguard positions have been on-boarded and are working in a full-time capacity.

As it relates to other summer youth programming, PARD is working diligently to hire and on-board 275 positions in time for the start of summer camp sessions on June 5th. To date, 45 individuals have completed the hiring process and an additional 85 are in the process of being hired.

The Parks and Recreation Department is on pace to hire the necessary seasonal staff to operate swimming pools, summer camps and service the park system. PARD evaluates the hiring progress weekly and is committed to additional interventions should additional interventions be required to meet the summer operational goals.

Summer Employment Hiring Process Improvements

The PARD Human Resources Division worked cooperatively with the City's Human Resources Department (HRD) to implement summer employment hiring improvements as follows:

- Provide virtual completion of the pre-employment processes. Additionally, HRD has implemented a pilot program for PARD Summer Seasonal Temporary employees to expand the in-person verification process to multiple locations, various times of the day, and various days of the week at no cost to PARD or the applicant;
- Track the various stages of hiring for seasonal employees including but not limited to payroll location codes, supervisor, completed training dates, completion of employment paperwork, work schedules, etc. through PARD's Temporary On-boarding Process Simplified (TOPS) Program;

- Extended the length of time an employment posting is open to provide additional time to notify candidates in the selection process;
- Ensure all automated messages from existing applicant tracking systems encourage applicants to take the next steps in the hiring process.

PARD recognizes the value and importance of offering safe swimming opportunities and activities for the community and is eager to return to full capacity. PARD continues to monitor and evaluate the pace of hiring and the need for work-related bonuses as an employment incentive. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Stephanie Hayden Howard, Assistant City Manager