

City of Nanaimo

BUSINESS CASE – Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan

CURRENT OVERVIEW

The Aquatics section of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Division provides services to the community at the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre (NAC), Beban Pool, Kin Pool and Westwood Lake.

The section currently consists of:

- 1 Manager
- 2 Recreation Coordinators
- 6 Head Lifeguards
- 80+ Lifeguards, including:
 - 26 full-time and part-time positions
 - 54+ casual, temporary and auxiliary positions.

The Aquatics section provides service at 2 major facilities, 7 days/week (with the exception of some statutory holidays). This is a total of 112 operating hours/week at NAC, and 85.5 operating hours/week at Beban Pool, for a total of 197.5 operational hours/week. In addition, lifeguarding is provided at Westwood Lake for the summer season and a co-management agreement is in place with the Nanaimo White Rapids Swim Club for the operations of Kin Pool. To provide this level of service, solid supervisory skills are required to be in place at all times.

The Recreation Coordinator positions are intended to provide a layer of supervision between the Manager and the Head Lifeguards. In practice, most of their time is spent on planning, implementing, and evaluating aquatics programs and events, staff aquatics training and certification, budgeting, marketing, and record-keeping.

The Head Lifeguard positions were created in 2017 recognizing that an additional layer of supervision and customer service was required to effectively run operations. The intent of these positions is to provide supervision, leadership, mentorship, assistance with staff scheduling, performance development of Lifeguards, and consistent service to the public.

BUSINESS ISSUE

The department is working to develop in three main areas:

1. Creating a team-based environment that supports a high-functioning team to provide great customer service.

Although there are many strengths within Aquatics, there are long-standing challenges which render the section's workplace culture very challenging to manage and operate. Contributing factors include:

- a. Large volume of staff operating facilities that are open 7 days a week for 14-16 hours per day with a wide variety of programming;
- b. Wide spectrum of experience across the 80+ staff within the department;
- c. Limited capacity for Head Lifeguards to provide support and direction for newer and inexperienced staff, respond to public enquiries, or receive supervisory-related training;
- d. Limited opportunity for cross-communication and knowledge sharing between shifts;
- e. Unclear roles, responsibilities, and expectations between team members; and
- f. High turn-over rate within the temporary and casual employee group, requiring a large investment in staff recruitment, orientation, training and assimilation into the workplace culture.

2017-2019 statistics compiled by Human Resources indicate, that on average for the 80+ permanent, temporary, and/or auxiliary staff in Aquatics:

- There is a 10.9% staff turnover rate with permanent staff (City overall average 6.1%).
- There is a 46.6% staff turnover rate with temporary, casual and/or auxiliary staff, which requires an average of 20 new hires each year.
- There is an absenteeism rate of 10.7% with permanent staff (City overall average 8.6%).

The goal is to create a supportive environment of high morale and work satisfaction for staff resulting in a higher retention rate and decreased in absenteeism.

2. Increasing capacity for Head Lifeguards to provide supervision, leadership and mentorship to lifeguarding staff.

Head Lifeguards work a total of 240 hours/week. Currently, only 50 hours/week for off-deck duties are budgeted for Head Lifeguards: 35 hours at NAC, and 15 hours at Beban. This time is inadequate to allow the Head Lifeguards to perform the intended functions of their role. The majority of their time off deck is spent arranging for shift coverage. As a result of the high absenteeism the Head Lifeguards often have to give up their limited off-deck time to backfill lifeguards that are absent.

With the current turn-over rate and the wide range of experience and skill, more time is needed to prepare staff for the variety of programs offered in the facilities. Enabling the Head Lifeguards to work with newer and less experienced staff will improve the quality of the programming offered to the community and increase the skills of our staff to better support the facilities.

3. Increasing capacity for Aquatics Manager to spend more time on strategic customer and community development needs.

As Head Lifeguards currently spend the majority of their time on non-supervisory duties, the majority of the human resource-related issues for a staff of 80+ falls to the Aquatics Manager.

Addressing the high volume of human resource challenges along with other customer needs significantly reduces the manager's ability to explore other managerial responsibilities such as:

- Strategic planning
- Service and facility design and development
- Facilitating community development
- Performance development of supervisory team
- Licensing and scheduling of facilities
- Liaising with user groups
- Responding to complaints and grievances
- Liaising with facility maintenance crew
- Recommendations and report writing
- Ensuring compliance with the Public Health Act
- Budgeting and cost control.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The purpose of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan is to create a high-functioning leadership team within Aquatics, to equip staff with the tools needed to create and sustain an enhanced team-based workplace environment, and to reduce absenteeism and turn-over rates. This includes:

- Clearly defining job roles and responsibilities
- Dedicating time for adequate supervision of staff
- Creating a cohesive leadership team with enhanced leadership and supervision skills
- Enhancing communication skills for all staff
- Improving morale of all staff
- Enhancing staff retention
- Improving attendance
- Creating a more effective and efficiently run operation.

Aquatics Staff began the process of working to create a values-based culture in March of 2020, unfortunately, this work was interrupted by the pandemic but was restarted when staff resumed working in the fall.

Work completed to date:

Spring 2020	One-on-One Interviews with FT/PT Aquatics Staff
July 2020	Data Sort from Interviews
September 2020	Vision and Values Creation
October 2020	Aquatics Stewardship Group established – meeting monthly
March 2021	Living Our Values Impact Assessment – Interviews and Online Survey
April 2021	Data Theming from Impact Assessment
June 2021	Communications Training for Aquatics Stewardship Group

An Aquatics Stewardship Group has been formed, with members representing both aquatic facilities, union, management, Lifeguards, Head Guards, and Coordinators. This group meets monthly and is tasked with carrying forward the values-based culture work.

The proposed Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan includes the following:

Timeline	Actions
Ongoing	Additional off-deck hours for Head Lifeguards
Bi-Weekly	Meetings with Manager
Bi-Weekly	Meetings with HR Manager
Monthly	Meetings with Aquatics Stewardship Group
June 2021 - December 2021	Communications Training –Phase 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with the Aquatics Stewardship Group, includes support between the meetings to practice the skills learned.
January 2022 - June 2022	Communications Training – Phase 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extending out to all staff, with the trained Stewardship Group members co-facilitating training and providing support to staff to practice skills learned.
January - May 2020	Leadership Development Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> occurs over 5 months, with the “Leadership Team” (Manager, Coordinators, Head Guards), with support between meetings to practice the skills learned.
January – October 2022	Informal Check-ins
November/December 2022	Formal Check-in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> check-in to ensure that the training and skills acquired have been operationalized on a day-to-day basis, that the work has enhanced the workplace culture, and to discover what further work may be required to maintain the shift in culture

The plan requires:

- An increase in the operating budget to support additional on-deck hours for lifeguards, which in turn will allow for Head Guards to be off-deck 100% of the time to perform supervisory duties (Despite 100% of hours to be allocated for off-deck time, it is inevitable that a portion of Head Lifeguard time will be required to be on deck to provide coverage for lifeguards unable to make their shifts).
- An increase in the operating budget to support additional training time for all staff.
- A combination of training and support from the department Manager, Director and consultants.

OPTIONS

Option #1 - Fully implement of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan in 2022

Full implementation of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan includes:

- 100% of Head Lifeguard time to be scheduled as off-deck hours in 2022 (190 hours/week of additional off-deck time)
- Communications training for all staff training in 2022
- Completion of the Leadership Development Program by all supervisors in 2022
- Ongoing annual training in 2023 and subsequent years.

Benefits:

- Head lifeguards will have time to focus on the provision of leadership, supervision, and training requirements.
- Head Lifeguards will be more available to provide more direct customer service and to better support pool and weight room clientele.
- Head Lifeguards will have transition time together between shifts to update on current issues, changes, operational needs, and problem solving.
- Manager will spend less time focusing on HR related issues and more time on other managerial responsibilities.
- Providing all staff with communication training will foster effective communications.
- Providing all supervisory staff with leadership training will allow them to more effectively manage staff.
- Providing leadership and support to the lifeguards will increase the quality of programming offered to the community.
- Workplace culture, will be enhanced leading to better rates of employee retention and satisfaction, lower absenteeism and a higher functioning work environment.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to operating budget of section.

Financial Analysis:

- Budget impact is estimated at \$312,000 in 2022 and \$297,000/year plus inflation for 2023 and subsequent years
- See appendix A for additional details

Option #2 - Phased implementation of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan 2022 to 2024

Phased implementation of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan includes:

- 50% of Head Lifeguard time to be scheduled as off-deck hours in 2022 (70 hours/week of additional off-deck time)

- 75% of Head Lifeguard time to be scheduled as off-deck hours in 2023 (130 hours/week of additional off-deck time)
- 100% of Head Lifeguard time to be scheduled as off-deck hours in 2024 (190 hours/week of additional off-deck time)
- Communications training for all staff training in 2022
- Completion of the Leadership Development Program by all supervisors in 2022
- Ongoing annual training in 2023 and subsequent years.

Benefits:

- Impact to operating budget spread over three years
- The benefits attained in Option #1 will be attained in this option over a period of three years.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to operating budget of section.
- A more gradual approach to getting to the ultimate supervision scenario will slow down the rate at which significant change can be made to the workplace environment.

Financial Analysis:

- Budget impact is estimated at \$145,000 in 2022, \$214,000 in 2023, \$302,000 in 2024 and \$308,000/year plus inflation for 2025 and subsequent years
- See appendix A for additional details

Option #3 – That Council direct staff to come up with alternate solution

Benefits:

- It may be possible to come up with a cost neutral solution.

Weaknesses:

- A reduction in service level within the Recreation and Culture department may be necessary to provide the support needed in Aquatics.

RECOMMENDATION

Option 1 is recommended: fully implement the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan in 2022.

APPENDIX A – Financial Analysis

Option #1 - Fully implement of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan in 2022

		2022	2023 onward
Additional off-deck hours for Head Lifeguards	190 hours/week	\$ 268,000	\$ 274,000
Additional lifeguard training hours	91 staff x 8 hours/year	22,000	
Additional lifeguard training hours	91 staff x 4 hours/year		12,000
Communications training (consultant)		10,000	
Leadership Development Program (consultant)		10,000	
Ongoing training (consultant)			10,000
Training materials		2,000	1,000
Total		\$ 312,000	\$ 297,000
Estimated impact on tax rate		0.26%	0.00%

Option #2 - Phased implementation of the Comprehensive Aquatics Growth and Development Plan 2022 to 2024

		2022	2023	2024	2025 onward
Additional off-deck hours for Head Lifeguards	70 hours/week	\$ 101,000			
Additional off-deck hours for Head Lifeguards	130 hours/week		191,000		
Additional off-deck hours for Head Lifeguards	190 hours/week			279,000	285,000
Additional lifeguard training hours	91 staff x 8 hours/year	22,000			
Additional lifeguard training hours	91 staff x 4 hours/year		12,000	12,000	12,000
Communications training (consultant)		10,000			
Leadership Development Program (consultant)		10,000			
Ongoing training (consultant)			10,000	10,000	10,000
Training materials		2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total		\$ 145,000	\$ 214,000	\$ 302,000	\$ 308,000
Estimated impact on tax rate		0.12%	0.06%	0.07%	0.00%