



# Administrative Report

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N.4., File # 21-2294

Meeting Date: 4/13/2021

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**To:** MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

**From:** LAURIE KOIKE, INTERIM COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

## **TITLE**

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND DIRECTION REGARDING WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH THE OPENING OF SEASIDE LAGOON FOR SUMMER 2021

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Seaside Lagoon serves as an important special events venue and regional recreational aquatic facility. It offers a large saltwater lagoon with trained lifeguard supervision, sand areas for sunbathing, children's play equipment, volleyball courts and a luau shelter for day and evening events. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and prohibition of all gatherings in March 2020, and as part of both the City Manager Proclamation of a Local Emergency and the Countywide Order by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health ("LACDPH"), Seaside Lagoon ("the Lagoon") did not open for the 2020 season, which runs from Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day totaling 101 days of normal operation to the public.

On April 5, 2021 LA County moved into the less restrictive Orange Tier. On April 6, 2021 Governor Newsom announced that, based on California's low rate of positive COVID-19 case rates and increasing vaccination rates, schools and businesses would be able to fully re-open at their pre-pandemic capacities starting June 15, 2021. The State has indicated they are going to allow outdoor events and private gatherings starting April 15, 2021 but the County is still in the process of clarifying protocols. According to the February 17, 2021 LACDPH protocol, outdoor pools may be open for routine use provided that all employees and pool users maintain a physical distance of six feet from non-household members and that employees and pool users wear a face mask when not in the pool. Outdoor swimming pools include municipal pools, recreational pools and special purpose pools. To ensure social distancing, use of the pool must be limited to a maximum of 50% of pool user capacity. Pool capacity at Seaside Lagoon is estimated at 500; overall park capacity is 2,000.

At this time, staff is looking for direction from Council regarding whether to proceed with the opening of Seaside Lagoon. If Council, at the April 13, 2021 meeting, approves the Lagoon to open, Community Services will work with Public Works on facility operations for an opening date of July 1, 2021, which would then allow for a possible Independence Day event, if Council gives direction to move forward with a fireworks event at the Lagoon (also being brought forth for Council consideration on April 13, 2021). The modified summer season would be approximately 68 days instead of the usual 101 days of operation and could possibly be further shortened if the BeachLife Festival is held in the fall.

Given that the City would incur the same start-up costs for a limited season at Seaside Lagoon versus a longer season, and the difficulty of projecting COVID-19 conditions nearly three months in advance, the City Council will need to determine whether the community benefits of moving forward with re-opening of Seaside Lagoon beginning in July outweigh the potential risks and exposure. As staff is continuing to gather information, the presentation on Tuesday night will include supplemental material related to development of a Seaside Lagoon operating plan for the 2021 season.

### **BACKGROUND**

On April 5, 2021 LA County moved into the less restrictive Orange Tier. On April 6, 2021 Governor Newsom announced that, based on California's low rate of positive COVID-19 case rates and increasing vaccination rates, schools and businesses would be able to fully re-open at their pre-pandemic capacities starting June 15, 2021. The State has indicated they are going to allow outdoor events and private gatherings starting April 15, 2021 but the County is still in the process of clarifying protocols. In order to consider the re-opening of the lagoon for a modified and shortened season, the following variables need to be considered:

### **ENGINEERING: WATER QUALITY REQUIREMENTS**

To prepare for a 2021 opening, the City will need to notify the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Los Angeles County Health Department that the Lagoon may operate this summer to activate the various field compliance oversight activities. Michelson Laboratories is contracted to provide the required water quality monitoring and sampling at the Lagoon. The monitoring and sampling cost for the 2019 season was \$18,500. Once the operation starts and the effluent discharge into the Harbor begins, the City is required to submit a detailed monthly water quality report to the State Water Quality Control Board and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency.

In addition, the Lagoon is currently operating under a Time Schedule Order (TSO) with the Regional Board for certain metal pollutants of concern. By May 31, 2021, the TSO requires the City to evaluate the impact of Lagoon discharges on receiving water to determine if effluent limit exceedances are causing or contributing to receiving water exceedances. This evaluation has been underway with collection of effluent and King Harbor samples. Because the Lagoon was closed in 2020, additional samples were not collected to further evaluate the impact of effluent concentrations and this assessment will be completed using data from the past few years. The TSO also requires an evaluation in the coming year of the impact of future development and AES shutdown on Lagoon operations and effluent quality. Plans for both of these scenarios shall be reviewed and assessed. Finally, in 2021 the City must report on the economic feasibility of all identified compliance options, including installation of a treatment system and deconstruction of a seawall barrier.

### **PUBLIC WORKS: OPERATIONS AND FACILITY PREPARATION**

To prepare Seaside Lagoon for the 2021 Summer Season, site preparations will need to be started for the opening and ongoing operation of the facility for the season. Some of the preparations include pump station startup, painting, landscaping, playground and life safety inspection, Lagoon grading and sand sifting. These tasks are performed every season as a normal preparation for the Lagoon seasonal opening. The preparations will take approximately 30 days to complete, and cost for preparation are part of the Tidelands Maintenance and Operations budget. Staff availability may also

be a challenge depending on the demands of COVID-19 protocols for increased maintenance at waterfront facilities.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES: OPERATIONS AND STAFFING**

To prepare Seaside Lagoon for the 2021 Summer Season, Community Services staff will need to focus on hiring and training personnel, as approximately 95% of existing Lagoon employees have other jobs or are only willing to work on a limited basis. The Lagoon typically requires cashiers (6), lifeguards (12-18) and maintenance workers (12), who are all part-time employees. Staff will also need to purchase uniforms, ropes and buoys for the Lagoon, first aid equipment and lifeguarding equipment.

### **REVENUE**

Admission is charged to entrants at the Lagoon during the operating season. Daily admission fees are \$6.00 for children and \$8.00 for adults. The Lagoon also offers party and event rentals that range from \$550 - \$1,500. With the shortened season and limit on capacity, it is estimated that revenue would be \$200,000-\$250,00 for the season. Revenue for the full 2019 season, at full capacity, was \$390,000. It should be noted that the revenue collected from the Lagoon entrance and rental fees does not cover costs associated with its operation. On average, during a typical season, the operation of Seaside Lagoon is subsidized out of the Harbor Tidelands Fund for approximately \$200,000.

### **BEACHLIFE FESTIVAL**

The organizers of the BeachLife Festival have indicated a desire to hold the festival in September 2021. The tentative dates under consideration are September 10-12. A final decision regarding the festival will need to consider all Federal, State, County and Local protocols related to COVID-19 and public gatherings. If the festival moves forward on the proposed dates, the organizers of the event will need access to Seaside Lagoon and the adjacent parking lot for approximately 10 days prior to the event start date. Public Works and Community Services will then need an additional week to drain the pool and make other arrangements prior to giving BeachLife access to Seaside Lagoon.

If the BeachLife Festival is held in the fall, the 2021 Seaside Lagoon summer season will be approximately 51 days. At this time, staff is looking for direction from Council regarding whether to proceed with the opening of Seaside Lagoon.

### **COORDINATION**

Community Services Department coordinated with the Public Works Department and Waterfront & Economic Development Department while preparing this report.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The historic operation of a full season at Seaside Lagoon with full capacity requires an annual subsidy from the Harbor Tidelands Funds. The average annual subsidy in the past ten years is \$200,000. With a shortened season and limited capacity, the subsidy is anticipated to be much higher.

### **APPROVED BY:**

*Joe Hoefgen, City Manager*

**ATTACHMENTS**

None.