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|  COBOURG | THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG | |
| | STAFF REPORT | |
| TO: | Mayor John Henderson and Members of Council | |
| FROM: | Dean Hustwick, Director of Community Services | |
| DATE OF MEETING: | June 29, 2020 | |
| TITLE / SUBJECT: | Operational Plan to Re-Open Cobourg Beach | |
| REPORT DATE: | June 25, 2020 | File #: |

1.0 STRATEGIC PLAN

Not Applicable

2.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Not Applicable

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the report from the Director of Community Services; and

FURTHER THAT Council provide direction to Municipal Staff on whether to proceed with the opening of Cobourg Beach as outlined in the report.

4.0 ORIGIN

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 22, 2020, the following resolution was carried:

WHEREAS on June 1, 2020 Council approved the closure of Victoria Park Beach and requested a Staff Report with options for "how the Town could reopen the beach with restricted use;"

AND WHEREAS the municipality has since been authorized to move to Stage 2 in the Ontario Government's reopening plan, which came into effect on June 12, 2020;

AND WHEREAS all 19 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Northumberland County have been deemed 'resolved' by the HKPR District Health Unit as of June 22, 2020;

AND WHEREAS protecting the health and wellbeing of Cobourg residents is a key objective of the Town's Strategic Plan and emergency response to the pandemic;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council confirms the closure of Victoria Park Beach to normal activity, but instructs Staff to prepare for a trial system of a safe and gradual reopening with restricted access and limited capacity as follows:

- 1. The fence around Victoria Park Beach will remain in place with gated access points;*
- 2. A limited number of beach passes for use by all members of the public during designated hours will be made available free-of-charge and on a first-come first-served basis via an online booking system;*
- 3. The beach passes will only be valid for a specific date and time, Opening times to be determined by Council after receiving a Staff Report for Council consideration.*
- 4. Access gates will be managed by summer staff or a security company who will be responsible for checking pre-booked beach passes.*
- 5. A changeover period between time slots will allow for a smooth transition and rigorous sanitizing of hard surfaces;*
- 6. The number of beach passes made available will be determined based on physical distancing requirements and in consultation with the Town's Emergency Planner and the HKPR District Health Unit;*
- 7. Outside of Council-approved hours for the use of beach passes, public access to the beach will be strictly prohibited;*
- 8. The appropriate number of lifeguards will be hired for the rest of the summer season to reflect operating hours.*
- 9. Beach pass applicants must also answer health screening questions and agree to abide by physical distancing rules and Provincial Emergency Orders;*
- 10. The accessible beach mat will be installed with one entry gate being an accessible entrance; and*
- 11. Beach passes will be made available on a trial basis seven (7) days a week (Monday to Sunday, beginning on July 6, 2020*

(unless Council deems otherwise due to a change of circumstance);

AND FURTHER That staff draft a Beach Regulating By-law for council's approval at the June 29th Regular Council;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town of Cobourg continues to communicate that Victoria Park Beach is closed except for those with a valid pass;

AND FURTHER THAT the implementation of this trial period be reviewed by Council at the Committee of the Whole meeting on August 24, 2020.

5.0 BACKGROUND

On May 11, 2020 Municipal Council received a report from the Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services regarding the option for Council to make a decision on the closing of Cobourg Beach.

On May 11, 2020 Municipal Council referred the decision to the Monday June 1, 2020 Committee of the Whole Meeting to be brought back for discussion by Council.

On Monday June 1, 2020 Municipal Council held a Special Meeting of Council to discuss the May 11, 2020 Staff Report regarding the potential closure for Cobourg Beach and approved the following Resolution:

WHEREAS Council received the report referred from the May 11, 2020 Committee of the Whole Meeting and the Second Report on By-law Enforcement Statistics for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to implement the closure of Victoria Beach until August 31, 2020 and install metal fencing, barriers with emergency access points as necessary and continue with increased enforcement at the Waterfront area in order to continue to make sure residents and visitors are complying with Provincial Orders and complying with Physical Distancing Guidelines as set out by Federal, Provincial and Local Health Units; and

FURTHER THAT the Staff provide a further report to Council at the Monday June 22, 2020 Committee of the Whole Meeting with any statistics of Waterfront area activities and any other areas of concern that arise due to the beach closure, and in addition include in the report how the Town could reopen the beach with restricted use, along with the costing estimates associated with the reopening of the Beach for Council approval; and

FURTHER THAT portable washrooms, including accessible units, be set up with the number to be determined by the EOC and for the washrooms be cleaned/maintained twice daily; and

FURTHER THAT clear signage indicating the Cobourg Beach is closed will be posted at the Highway 401, pending Ministry of Transportation approval, on all Arterial Roads entering Cobourg, on all major approaches to Victoria Park Waterfront and on Cobourg Beach itself.

As of Thursday June 4, 2020, Municipal Staff officially completed and executed Municipal Council's direction and closed Victoria Beach to all public access.

6.0 ANALYSIS

Town of Cobourg staff have collaborated across Divisions to develop a preliminary plan to implement Council's decision to re-open Cobourg Beach by July 06, 2020. However, additional time may be required to implement this plan after Council makes a final decision on June 29, 2020. The operational model outlined below is intended to provide Council with a general understanding of how the beach can operate based on Council's direction along with related costs. The details of this model will continue to be worked out and refined by staff after the June 29th Council meeting and incorporated into an operational procedures document.

Operating Hours

Council has asked that the beach be open seven days a week (Monday to Sunday).

It is recommended that instead of closing the beach at 6:00 p.m., when it may still be sunny, warm and busy, that it remain open until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. after the regular dinner time when there may be fewer people remaining on the beach that would need to be asked to leave (the model currently is based on 8:00 p.m.). The easier it is to clear and close the beach, the fewer the conflicts that would be expected that would require additional assistance from By-Law Enforcement and the Cobourg Police. Longer hours may also accommodate more people wishing to access the beach after the busy periods.

The Lifeguards will use their megaphones to provide beach patrons with notifications of beach closure at the end of each day and beach and enforcement staff will facilitate the clearing and closure of the beach.

Access Points (Entrances/Exits)

To simplify the management of capacity and to limit the staffing requirements, a single entrance is planned at the main pergola near the canteen building. Potentially two exits will be established (near the sensory garden/beach ramp and/or at the Division Street pergola. Several emergency access points will also be maintained.

Because the beach canteen will not be operating, there will be no food and beverage or other products or services available at the beach. Therefore, in and out privileges may be required to allow people to leave the beach area for shade/cooling, to purchase food and beverages, to access personal supplies, etc, although some concerns with this have been raised by emergency services.

Every individual admitted to the beach will be issued a wristband (and possibly also a hand stamp) to accommodate in and out privileges, if that is ultimately permitted, and to identify anyone who may have accessed the beach without a ticket. Wristbands/stamps will change each day to reduce the risk of imitation products.

Beach Capacity

Cobourg Beach is approximately 39,000 square metres. If you subtract approximately 10,000 square metres for walkways and set-backs, that leaves approximately 29,000 sq m. Based on various scenarios of party sizes and spacing between parties, the beach can safely handle between approximately 1,200 and 3,200 people at any given time. This does not include the number of additional people that could be accommodated through the stand-by process after people leave the beach for the day.

In the first stage of this trial program, staff will use a target maximum capacity of 1,500 people and will re-assess that number on a daily basis and adjust as appropriate.

Lifeguards

The YMCA has prepared a preliminary plan and budget to provide a reduced level of lifeguarding services for July and August based on reduced capacity. The lifeguard towers will be moved closer to the water's edge to provide the guards with better views of swimmers without having to patrol amongst the patrons (for physical distancing precautions for the guards). The Town may install rope barriers between the towers (with designated access points) to create a set back from the water's edge to separate sunbathers from swimmers/walkers.

Reservation Process

Monday - Thursday

User demand for the beach Monday to Thursday is generally much lower than on weekends and fluctuates considerably during the day with people often staying for shorter periods. Therefore, staff would like to begin this trial period by managing beach capacity on a first-come, first-served basis from Monday to Thursday. People will be allowed to enter the access gate until the maximum number is reached. As people leave, additional individuals will be allowed to

enter from the stand-by line, which will be monitored to ensure physical distancing.

If demand during the week is high causing long line-ups, the reservation system may be implemented for every day of the week.

Friday - Sunday

With the higher demand on weekends combined with the maximum capacity being applied, particularly in the first phase of this trial program, reservations will be necessary to avoid excessively long line ups.

On-Line - In order to be ready to implement this program by July 06, an existing ticketing program must be used rather than a customized system. Staff believe the Concert Hall's ticketing system, Arts Manager, will be capable of handling this type of reservation system with some modifications. This system requires patrons to input some basic personal information (which could help with contact tracing if required) and allows them either to print their own tickets or to receive electronic tickets. Patrons would then need to produce either paper or electronic tickets at the entrance to the beach where staff would use hand-held devices to read the bar codes to ensure only patrons with valid tickets are allowed access.

As the Town has only two hand held bar code readers (not intended for full-day use) additional units would need to be purchased. Furthermore, since there is no WiFi at the beach devices would need to be cellular activated. Staff believe the software/servers were designed to handle approximately 100 reservations an hour but unsure whether it could handle a significant increase to this volume (people may simply have to wait – needs further investigation).

Telephone – Council requested that patrons be allowed to obtain tickets by telephone because not everyone has access to the Internet. Currently, one staff member is staffing the Town's new COVID-19 hotline and one Community Services Division employee is staffing the Division's various telephone lines, which receive dozens of calls a day. In order to establish telephone reservations for the beach, an additional employee will be re-assigned to a specific telephone number for this purpose and who will have access to the ticketing system. Tickets for these patrons will be printed and delivered on the appropriate date to the beach entrance staff who will require the patrons to show identification.

The call volume could be very high requiring additional resources to be added shortly after start-up. As all full-time staff are already carrying out their regular duties, additional duties related to COVID-19 or re-assigned duties to cover the shortfall in part-time or seasonal employees, there is very little capacity within the organization to further re-assign staff to this telephone line. Therefore, additional summer students may need to be hired to answer the calls (patron

information would then need to be passed to an employee with access to the ticketing system for data entry and ticket printing).

Stand-By Tickets – Some days, particularly Fridays, and evenings may have lower demand for reserved tickets. It is also expected that people unfamiliar with the beach limitations and the reservation system will attend the beach expecting to be able to enjoy it for a period of time. To accommodate people who did not make reservations and those simply wanting to walk through, and to reduce potential conflict at the entrance gate, it is proposed that a stand-by line be facilitated. A percentage of the daily tickets (e.g., 10 – 20%) can be held back from reservations for same-day stand-by patrons. This is a frequently used practice by popular tourism attractions around the world. Staff will use hand-held devices to register stand-by patrons and issue electronic tickets. This process may also be followed to accommodate additional capacity due to the early departure of patrons.

Staffing Model

Beach

- Staff will be required 30 minutes before opening and after closing
- Estimated staffing requirements during operating hours (8 staff at all times):
 - 1 Entrance: 4 staff
 - 2 staff to scan tickets and issue bracelets
 - 2 staff to:
 - monitor lineups for physical distancing
 - review health questions
 - process stand-by tickets
 - 2 Exits: 2 staff (1 at each exit)
 - 2 staff as relief floaters and to facilitate physical distancing on the beach
 - 1 security guard on duty during operating hours to assist with the enforcement of the rules, reduce potential conflict and to deal with actual conflicts

Ticket Sales

- Arts Manager – ½ time FTE to manage database/system
- Telephone – 1 minimum (possibly more)

Enforcement

- Bylaw Staff and Cobourg Police Service

Health and Safety

- Staff will be issued Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) according to Town COVID-19 procedures

- Beach entrance will have desks with plexiglass barriers installed for health questions, ticket processing and bracelet distribution

Washroom Facilities

The Town has a contract with a private company to operate and clean the beach washroom facilities within the canteen building. This contractor has developed COVID-19 procedures and has the staff to manage this contract for July and August. Every other sink, toilet stall and urinal would be closed and the contractor would continue to clean throughout the day by alternating the closing of two washrooms on each side. Additional port-a-potties may be required. This facility will also be available for other park patrons including those simply walking through the waterfront area.

Alternatively, port-a-potties can be rented and installed on the eastern end of the beach that will include a portable sink facility and two cleanings a day. A private company is able and ready to provide these facilities.

A third option is a combination of opening the washroom facility and installing a limited number of port-a-potties on the beach to reduce the need for patrons to leave the fenced area.

7.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACT**

The following expenses have been estimated very quickly since the Council meeting on June 22 and will be refined based on further direction from Council on June 29. As outlined in the chart below, the total estimated costs of opening the beach from July 06 to August 31 may range from a low of approximately \$219,000 to a high of \$377,000. The details of these estimated costs follow the chart.

Financial Impact Schedule

| Expense | Low-Cost Scenario | High-Cost Scenario |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Staffing | \$115,000 | \$130,000** |
| Lifeguards | \$52,000 | \$105,000 |
| Washrooms | \$30,000 | \$80,000 |
| Wristbands | \$11,000 | \$21,000 |
| Communications/IT | \$6,000 | \$36,000 |
| Miscellaneous | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| Preliminary Estimated Total | \$219,000 | \$377,000 |

**All expenses are preliminary estimates*

***Recommended option*

Staffing = \$115,000 - \$130,000

- **Students with 1 Security Guard = \$115,000** (approximate – public institutions are not eligible for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy)

- Managers/supervisors = no additional cost but managers would need to be re-assigned from regular duties
 - 8 students per shift, seven days a week, 8 weeks
 - 1 security guard per shift, seven days a week, 8 weeks
 - Additional students could be required to assist with telephone reservations
 - Staff and the union have concerns with the use of students for this type of role that may very well involve angry/hostile patrons and potential conflict, therefore, 1 security guard has been added
- **Private Security Company = \$130,000 (Recommended)**
 - 1 supervisor and 7 security guards per week = approx. \$16,000 X 8 weeks = \$128,000
 - August 3 statutory holiday = \$3,000 extra (approximately)

Lifeguards = \$52,000 - \$105,000

The YMCA is revising its plans and procedures to provide lifeguard services for Cobourg Beach from July 06 – August 31 based on the new limitations (including all mandatory training). The proposed budget for this service is for \$105,000. If the YMCA receives the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, which it is expected to receive, this cost would be reduced to approximately \$52,000.

Washrooms = \$30,000 – \$80,000

- **Option 1: Beach Washroom Facilities = \$30,000** (approximate – additional port-a-potties could be required which would increase this cost)
 - May require access point and fencing to be moved north to encompass the building if no in/out privileges allowed – current thinking is bracelets will accommodate in/out privileges
- **Option 2: Port-a-Potties = \$80,000** (approximate)
 - 16 units – could potentially reduce
 - Approximate Cost for July/August: \$80,000

Wristbands = \$11,000 - \$21,000

- July 06 – August 31 = 57 Days
- \$50 per 500 plus tax and shipping
- 1,500 per day + 20% Stand-By = 1,800 X 57 Days
- 2,500 per day + 20% Stand-By = 3,000 X 57 Days
- 3,000 per day + 20% Stand-By = 3,600 X 57 Days

Communications/IT = \$6,000 - \$36,000

- Radio sets
- Additional hand held devices for processing tickets

- Improved communications between entrance/exits for mobile counting of beach patrons would likely require installation of WiFi for an estimated \$30,000

Miscellaneous - \$5,000

- Signage = \$1,500
- Tables/chairs with plexiglass barriers = \$1,500
- PPE and cleaning supplies = \$1,000
- Miscellaneous = \$1,000

If Council decides to open the beach, there is an estimated \$102,000 remaining in the Aquatics/Lifeguards budget and approximately \$35,000 remaining in the Beach Washrooms budget, based on the savings projections outlined during the May 21 Budget Update meeting with Council, that could be used to offset a portion of these costs.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Based on Council direction provided at the Committee of the Whole on June 22, 2020, staff continues to develop an operating model with the goal of opening Cobourg Beach by July 06, 2020. Staff will revise its approach based on any further direction Council chooses to provide to staff.

9.0 POLICIES AFFECTING THE PROPOSAL

Not Applicable

10.0 COMMUNICATION RESULTS

The Town's Communications and Marketing and Events Departments will promote on municipal websites and social media accounts that Cobourg Beach is re-opening with the new restrictions and procedures outlined in this report.

| Title: | Signing Official: | Signature: | Date: |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Director of Community Services | D. Hustwick | Electronic | June 25, 2020 |
| Chief Administrative Officer (Interim) | I. Davey | Electronic | June 26, 2020 |