



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee
From: Elizabeth Ayers
Director, Recreation and Sport Services
Date: February 26, 2021
File: 11-7143-01/2020-Vol 01
Re: Proposed 2021 Operating Hours for Steveston Outdoor Pool

Staff Recommendation

That the hybrid model for 2021, as detailed in Attachment 5 of the staff report titled "Proposed 2021 Operating Hours for Steveston Outdoor Pool," dated February 26, 2021, from the Director, Recreation and Sport Services, be approved for the operation of Steveston Outdoor Pool for the summer of 2021.

Elizabeth Ayers
Director, Recreation and Sport Services
(604-247-4669)

Att. 5

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Facility Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Finance Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

At the November 26, 2019, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting, a delegation presented a petition requesting additional length swimming hours at the Steveston Outdoor Pool for May through September. Staff responded to the request and received the following referral at the January 28, 2020, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting:

That the staff report titled "Response to Request to Expand Steveston Outdoor Pool Operating Hours," dated January 2, 2020 from the Director, Recreation and Sport Services, be referred back to staff to:

- (1) examine a hybrid model that incorporates aspects of the proposed Options, as referenced in the staff report;*
- (2) provide data on daily usage rates and analyze the cost of increasing pool operating hours; and*
- (3) consult the community group that submitted the petition and the 2020 Aquatics Services Board on the proposed operating hours; and report back.*

The purpose of this report is to respond to this referral.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #4 An Active and Thriving Richmond:

An active and thriving community characterized by diverse social and wellness programs, services and spaces that foster health and well-being for all.

4.1 Robust, affordable, and accessible sport, recreation, wellness and social programs for people of all ages and abilities.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #5 Sound Financial Management:

Accountable, transparent, and responsible financial management that supports the needs of the community into the future.

This report supports the following focus areas from the City of Richmond Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019-2024:

Focus Area #2: Recreation and sport opportunities are accessible, inclusive and support the needs of a growing and diverse population.

Focus Area #3: Richmond residents have the fundamental movement skills, competence, confidence and motivation to move for a lifetime.

This report supports the following focus areas from the Wellness Strategy 2018-2023:

Focus Area #1: Foster healthy, active and involved lifestyles for all Richmond residents with an emphasis on physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellness.

Focus Area #3: Enhance equitable access to amenities, services and programs within and among neighbourhoods.

Background

The Steveston Outdoor Pool typically operates from May through August with three primary users: swim clubs, public swimmers and children's swimming lessons.

The Richmond Kigoos Swim Club has 230 active members and swim from the beginning of May to mid August each year. Other rental users of the pool include high school swim teams, a synchronized swim club, school groups, and the Richmond Rapids Swim Club that relocates to Steveston when Watermania undergoes its annual three-week shutdown in September. Of the almost 37,000 visits each year, to the Steveston Outdoor Pool, 60 per cent of swims are by swim club members and school groups.

The pool opens for public swimming on the Victoria Day weekend and remains open until late August. In recent years it has remained open into September to accommodate users during Watermania's annual shutdown. Public hours vary depending on the month, with more available hours during the months of July and August when the weather is generally hotter and children are out of school. Total public availability is typically 91 days for a total of 436 hours per season. See Attachment 1 for Steveston Outdoor Pool's typical operating hours in 2018 (base).

Children's swim lessons take place five days a week in July and August. They occupy the entire pool from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and the lessons offered range from Parent and Tot to Red Cross Level Eight.

It should be noted that 2019 attendance data is being used for the purposes of this report as the pool was opened late in 2020 and both the schedule and usage patterns were atypical because of COVID-19 restrictions, as well as the indoor pools being closed. Table 1 below outlines visits and revenue by user type for 2019.

Table 1: Steveston Outdoor Pool – 2019 Visitation and Revenue

User Type	Visits	Percentage of Overall Visits (%)	Total Visits per Hour	Revenue	Revenue %
Public Swimming (including length swimming)	8,355	23	16	\$18,377	19
Lessons	6,119	17	81	\$48,861	52
Kigoos Swim Club	19,353	52	33	\$21,805	23
Other: Groups/Rentals	2,965	8	49	\$5,385	6
Total	36,792			\$94,428	

When analyzing daily usage rates for swimming at the Steveston Outdoor Pool the following themes emerge:

- Swim clubs and groups/rentals make up 60 per cent of the visits throughout the season with a daily average attendance of 324;
- Swim lessons have the highest concentration of use, with approximately 50 visits per hour and a daily average attendance of 150; and
- Overall public attendance, including length swimming, is lower in the shoulder seasons of May, June and September with an average daily attendance of 25; and,
- In the prime season of July and August, public attendance including length swimming has a daily average attendance of 75. This is inclusive of summer day camp use; and,

See Attachment 2 for typical hourly attendance at Steveston Outdoor Pool (by season) for 2019 and Attachment 3 for weekly attendance / daily average public swim attendance at Steveston Outdoor Pool for 2019.

Analysis

In response to previous requests from the community for increased length swimming, an additional 88 hours of length swims were added at a cost of \$13,500 on a trial basis for the 2019 swim season. This was funded from the 2019 Aquatic Services budget due to the delayed opening of the Minoru Centre for Active Living.

The increase in 2019 operating hours represented a 20 per cent increase in public swimming hours and produced an increase of just over one per cent in overall public swim visits, from 8,244 visits in 2018 to 8,355 visits in 2019. The average number of visits per hour declined from 19 per hour to 16 per hour. This showed evidence that attendees remained constant as in previous years, but were either swimming for longer periods of time or attending different schedules rather than coming in more frequently throughout the season.

In addition, many of the length swimmers are pass holders from the indoor pools; and therefore, little additional revenue was generated from these swimmers.

At the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting held November 26, 2019, a delegation presented a petition signed by 109 individuals that requested the following regarding the Steveston Outdoor Pool:

1. Be open to the public from the beginning of May until the end of September, seven days a week beginning in 2020;
2. Have length swimming hours protected and continued for the duration of the pool opening; and
3. The new hours of operation should be:
 - Weekends and Statutory Holidays: Length swim from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and Public swim from 12:00 to 7:00 p.m.
 - Weekdays: Length swim from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., and Public swim from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Consultations

As directed by Council, staff consulted with the Aquatic Advisory Board and the community group that submitted the petition. Initial meetings were held with organizers of the petition to examine a potential hybrid model that incorporates both the requests of the petitioners and the recommendations of staff and the Aquatic Advisory Board.

The remaining petitioners were then contacted by telephone and invited to one of three focus group sessions for consultations. A total of 15 of 109 people attended the sessions and completed a survey on usage patterns in which the following was reported:

- 80 per cent of the group uses the Steveston Outdoor Pool for length swimming;
- 53 per cent of the group swims at least six days per week;
- 70 per cent of the group prefers extension of September operating hours instead of May operating hours;
- 47 per cent of the group do not currently use any of Richmond's indoor pools; and
- 80 per cent of the group plans to use the new Minoru Centre for Active Living.

Focus group attendees were then asked for their input on their experience at the Steveston Outdoor Pool. See Attachment 4 for the feedback from the Steveston Outdoor Pool users.

Hybrid Model for 2021

In response to the request for additional hours, and consultations with the petitioners and the Aquatic Advisory Board, staff have prepared a hybrid model, for Council's consideration, for the 2021 season that increases length swim opportunities, meets the needs of the greater community and stays within existing budgets.

This option will maintain the existing number of hours by creating modifications to the typical schedule. See Attachment 5 for the 2021 proposed hybrid model operating hours. Although it does not provide all of the days and time requested by the petitioners, it does offer more length swimming opportunities over the previous base budget schedule. This is accomplished by moving some time slots, including those of the Kigoos swim club, to create efficiencies. Representatives of the Kigoos were supportive of this change.

This option would have a total public availability of 457 hours for the season compared to 436 hours in the base budget schedule. It maintains public swim lesson offerings and swim club usage, as well as allowing the public to access the pool in the early mornings and evenings. This option has no additional financial impact and maintains an operating season that is consistent with other pools in Metro Vancouver. The schedule will complement the Minoru Centre for Active Living swimming pools that opened in 2020 with 60 per cent more pool space available for Richmond residents.

It should be noted that the representatives of the community group that submitted the petition have indicated a strong desire to see the Steveston pool open in September. While not included in the proposed hybrid model, additional times to swim in September may be added if a planned maintenance closure at Minoru Centre for Active Living during August extends into September.

Watermania is not scheduled to have a maintenance closure this year and is expected to be available throughout the summer as well as September.

With the current financial realities and the need to manage COVID-19 restrictions, it is not prudent to request funding for increased operating hours at Steveston Outdoor Pool at this time. Staff estimate that the annual cost to accommodate the petitioners request to increase the operating hours at Steveston Pool would range from a low of \$14,910 to a high of \$54,175. The latter number is the full cost of the petitioner's first request which included opening May 1.

Staff will work with the Aquatic Advisory Board and user groups to implement an extensive marketing plan to help increase participation. This may include special promotions and incentives to entice new users to the facility.

At a special meeting of the Aquatic Advisory Board on February 23, 2021, six of seven Board Members present supported the hybrid model for 2021 with a review of operations in the fall to determine any future changes to the schedule that may be warranted.

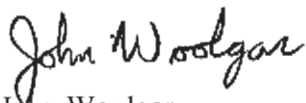
Financial Impact

If Council chooses to support the modified hours as outlined in the recommended hybrid model for 2021, there would be no financial impact as the modified hours fall within the existing operating budgets.

Conclusion

The Steveston Outdoor Pool is utilized by many different groups in the community, some of which may have overlapping demands for time and space. Balancing these demands with the appropriate level of service and corresponding cost to the taxpayer is a challenging task.

Based on the results from the trial increase in operating hours from 2019, consultations with the petitioners and the Aquatic Advisory Board, the opening of the Minoru Centre for Active Living with 60 per cent more space for swimming, staff recommend the hybrid model for 2021, which provides additional length swimming from May through August 2021. If approved, staff will work with the Aquatic Advisory Board and user groups to increase the attendance at the pool and study the potential for a future increase in operating hours at Steveston Outdoor Pool if warranted.



John Woolgar
Manager, Aquatic and Arena Services
(604-238-8041)

- Att. 1: Steveston Outdoor Pool – 2018 Typical Operating Hours (base)
2: Steveston Outdoor Pool – Typical Hourly Attendance 2019 (by season)
3: Steveston Outdoor Pool – Weekly Attendance / Daily Average Public Swim Attendance Summer 2019
4: Steveston Outdoor Pool – Feedback from Steveston Outdoor Pool Users
5: Steveston Outdoor Pool – 2021 Proposed Hybrid Model Operating Hours

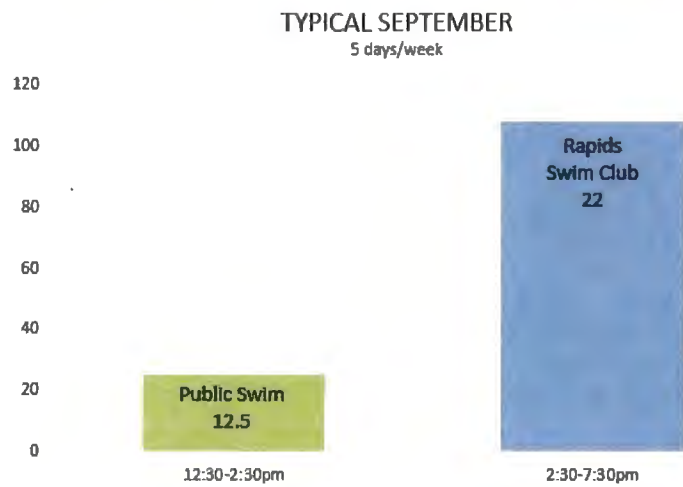
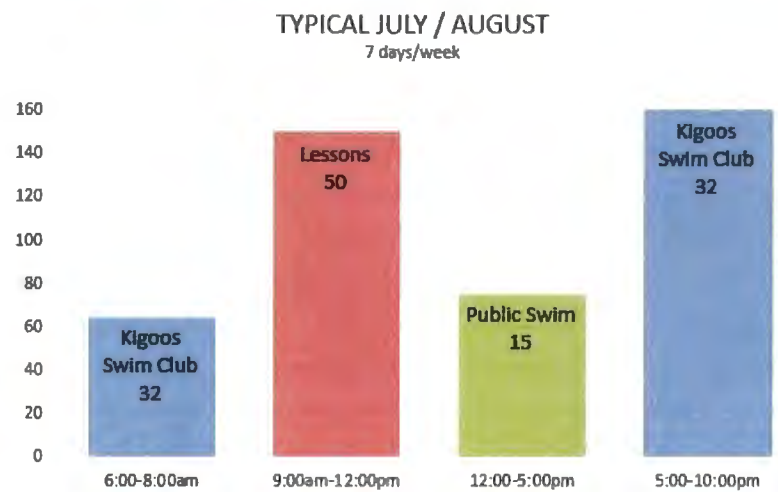
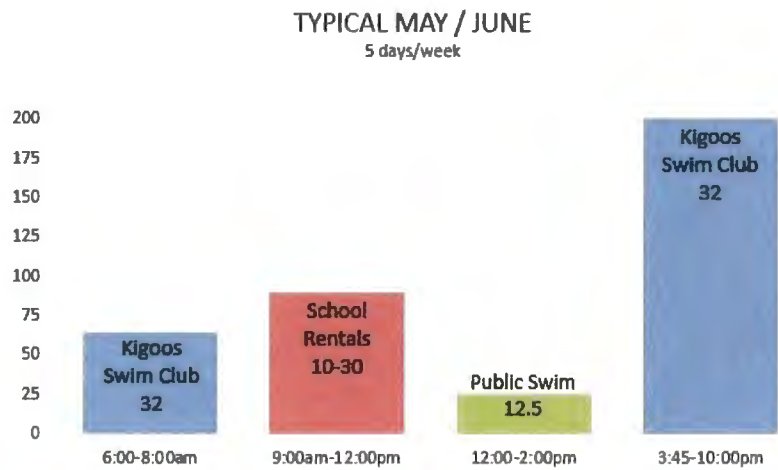
Steveston Outdoor Pool – 2018 Typical Operating Hours (base)

MAY / JUNE - TYPICAL 2018							
	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
6:00	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB		
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JULY / AUGUST - TYPICAL 2018							
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Total Public Swim Hours:	435.5
Total Public Swim Days:	76

Steveston Outdoor Pool – Typical Hourly Attendance 2019 (by season)



Steveston Outdoor Pool – Weekly Attendance / Daily Average Public Swim Attendance Summer 2019

WEEK	TOTAL WEEKLY HOURS	WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	DAILY AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
Sat May 18 – Fri May 24	15	117	17
Sat May 25 – Fri May 31	10	84	12
Sat June 1 – Fri June 7	0	0	0
Sat June 8 – Fri June 14	10	70	10
Sat June 15 – Fri Jun 21	20	283	40
Sat June 22 – Fri June 28	23	188	27
Sat June 29 – Fri July 5	30	301	43
Sat July 6 – Fri July 12	39	424	61
Sat July 13 – Fri July 19	41	712	102
Sat July 20 – Fri July 26	41	929	133
Sat July 27 – Fri Aug 2	41	816	117
Sat Aug 3 – Fri Aug 9	41	961	137
Sat Aug 10 – Fri Aug 16	41	623	89
Sat Aug 17 – Fri Aug 23	41	528	75
Sat Aug 24 – Fri Aug 30	41	852	122
Sat Aug 31 – Fri Sept 6	41	568	81
Sat Sept 7 – Fri Sept 13	10	131	19
Sat Sept 14 – Sat Sept 20	10	124	18

Feedback from Steveston Outdoor Pool Users

There was a wide variety of suggestions to improve user experience that included:

- Paint refresh in changing rooms
- Addition of hair dryers
- Larger pace clocks
- Colourful deck furniture
- New lane ropes
- Canopies/tents to provide shade on deck
- Improved cleanliness

Staff will explore opportunities to work within existing budgets to ensure standards are maintained and amenities added where warranted.

Focus group attendees were also asked for their input on effective marketing and promotion strategies to increase attendance. It was noted that the best source of new customers is through existing customers.

Ideas generated included:

- Increased signage
- Use of social media
- Special promotions (i.e., bring a friend)
- Steveston Insider magazine
- Posters in local condos, businesses, etc.

Staff will work with Bylaws on increased signage options as well as the Aquatic Advisory Board on an enhanced marketing campaign for 2021, including some or all of the recommendations above.

Steveston Outdoor Pool – 2021 Proposed Hybrid Model Operating Hours

MAY / JUNE - Proposed 2021							
	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
6:00	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB	KIGOOS SWIM CLUB		
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JULY / AUGUST - Proposed 2021							
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Total Public Swim Hours:	457
Total Public Swim Days:	88