



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: EXTENDING BEACH LIFEGUARD SEASON

WARD: ALL

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: S. LEE YOUNG, MANAGER OF RECREATION PROGRAMS, EXT. 5166

SUBMITTED BY: B. ROTH, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: D. MCALPINE, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the 2020 Business Plan and Budget staff report include a paragraph concerning an increase to the base budget for Recreation Services by \$21,500 to extend Lifeguarding Services at Centennial Beach until the Friday prior to the Labour Day weekend, effective for the 2020 season.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Report Overview

2. The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's inquiry as to the feasibility and costs related to extending the lifeguarding season at our current locations starting in the summer of 2020.
3. The Recreation Services Department has been providing lifeguarding services at Johnson's Beach and Centennial Beach for over 30 years.
4. The City of Barrie has 8 waterfront/beach access locations of which two (2) beaches have lifeguards on duty. At Johnson's Beach, there are two (2) lifeguard chairs and at Centennial there are five (5) lifeguard chairs. Depending on the beach usage, there can be up to five chairs in rotation at Centennial and up to two chairs in rotation at Johnson's. If either beach is extremely busy, the operations are supplemented with lifeguards out on the water on paddle boards.
5. The beach lifeguards are on duty from 11:30a.m. – 5:30p.m., typically for seven (7) weeks (approximate dates are effective July 1st to August 16th).
6. Over the last three (3) years, the City of Barrie has averaged 49,000 bathers plus an additional 64,000 beachgoers annually between both beaches for a total annual average of 113,000 visitors at both beaches.

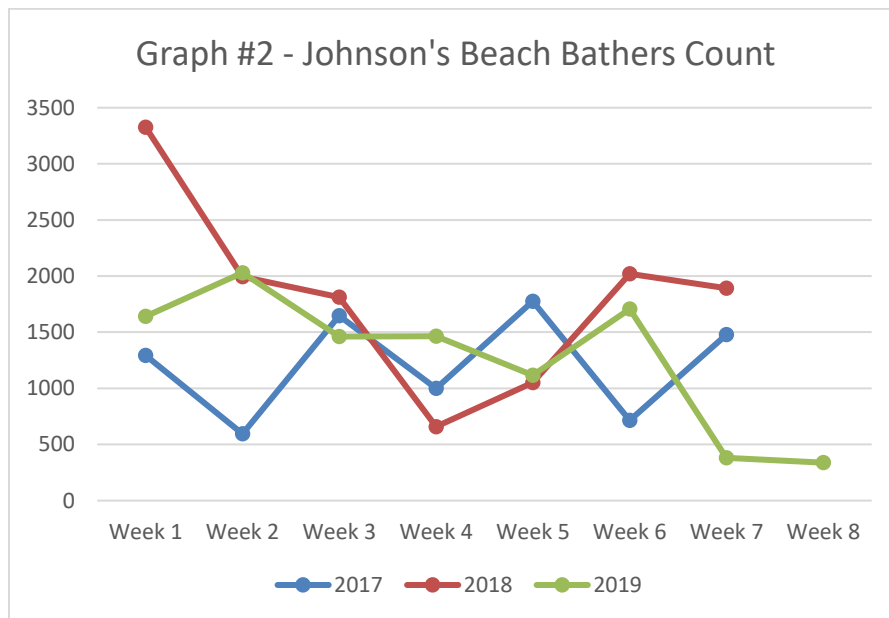
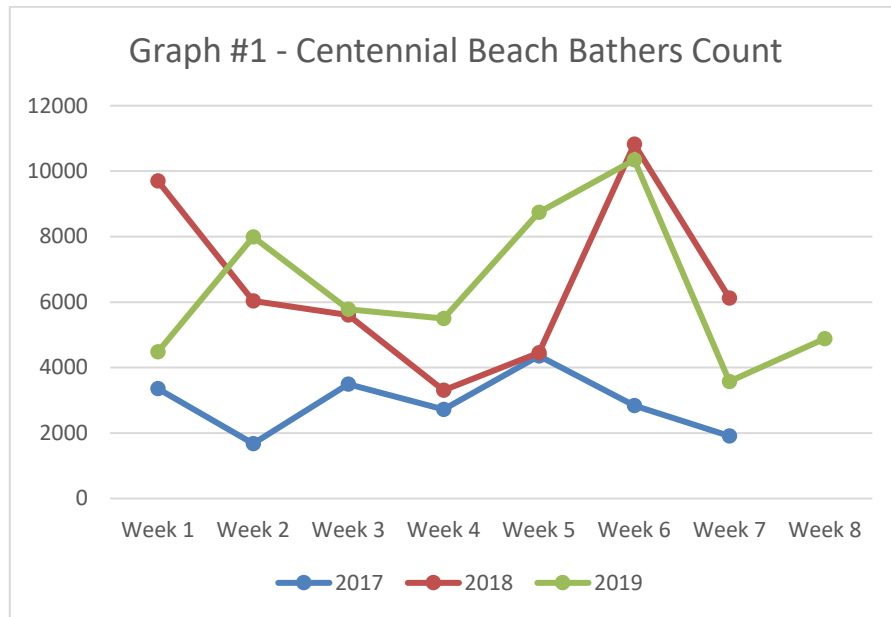
ANALYSIS

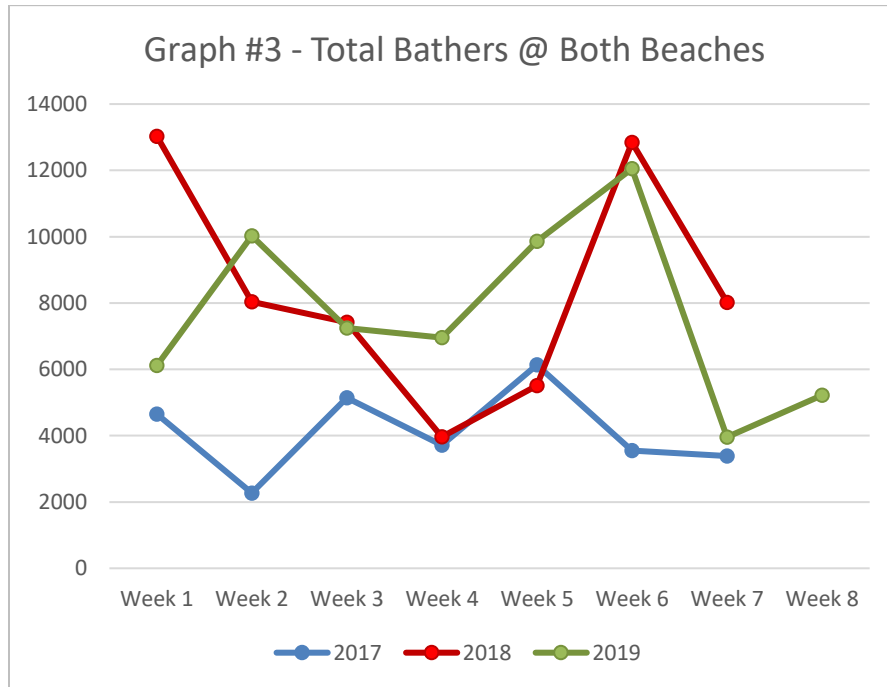
7. The Lifesaving Society (LSS) of Ontario does not currently have set guarding regulations for public beaches. In public pools, operators have the ability to regulate users through established regulations and guidelines for guarding such as set ratios of guards to bathers. On the beach, there is no way to control numbers in such an open public space. The two beaches are staffed based on the previous years' practices and protocols plus recommendations received from the Lifesaving Society and emergency service providers. Staff constantly monitor weather forecasts and conditions to adjust staffing levels accordingly.
8. The Recreation Services Department has trained lifeguards for the beach annually for over 30 years. The training occurs in June and is specific to Barrie's waterfront operations which include the beach and associated auxiliary facilities as well as other related waterfront operations, i.e. Wibit (privately-run inflatable waterpark). The beach training occurs over several days in June for a total of 35 hours per lifeguard. In order for a lifeguard to work a shift at the beach they must successfully complete this training program. Guarding in open water is very different than an indoor facility where there is greater control over access and the environment. For example, at Centennial Beach there is a severe drop off just past the buoy lines that poses challenges for many swimmers and non-swimmers, especially if the swimmer is unaware.
9. The Recreation Department typically hires 20-25 beach lifeguards per season. These guards come from existing part-time staff and from students that work during their summer break. A beachfront lifeguard must be dually certified as both a National Lifesaving Society (NLS) Lifeguard and NLS Waterfront Lifeguard. A significant portion of the staff choose not to be trained as a Waterfront Lifeguard due to the high level of responsibility and varying factors that impact beach guard operations. These impacts are very different than that of the controlled pools in our recreation facilities.
10. Recruiting beach lifeguards is a challenge due to the nature of the position. As mentioned, there are numerous factors such as open access with no control of user volume, patrons being tethered to their phones or social activities and not supervising their children plus multiple waterfront services.
11. End-of-season availability of beach lifeguards can be challenging. Many of the lifeguards are post-secondary students who generally leave prior to the long weekend to return to school. This impacts their availability for guarding on the Labour Day weekend and to assist with beach closing operations such as removal of buoys and storage of equipment.
12. The beach lifeguards work only at the beach for the season. They may sub in at a pool as a last resort, however, they tend to max out their available hours at the beach.
13. The lifeguards are there to assist in an emergency and also as a preventative measure. Lifeguards use their time on duty to educate our users about water safety. Lifeguards make regular announcements for water safety, sun safety, etc.
14. Recreation Services has partnered up with the LSS to offer a FREE PFD (personal flotation device) loaner program to users. This program offers a safe alternative for all ages to engage in water activities safely.

15. The beach lifeguards have multiple internal and external groups they liaise with on the waterfront. These groups include: Municipal Law Enforcement, Marina Operations, Parks Operations, Creative Economy special events and the private vendor for the Wibit.
16. In terms of drownings or major incidents that have occurred over the past three summers, there were none in 2016. There was a drowning in 2017 and it occurred after the City's guarding hours. In 2018, City lifeguards assisted with an incident during operating hours on the privately operated Wibit (inflatable water park). In 2019, there were no major incidents. Each year, there are an average 8-10 incidents in which EMS is called. The lifeguards conduct over 50 missing person searches on the beach ranging from children and teenagers to adults, special needs individuals and the elderly.
17. The chart below outlines the Beaches in Simcoe County and neighboring municipalities that have beaches and whether they are guarded or not.

Guarded Beaches in Simcoe County or Surrounding Municipalities						
Location	Do They Guard Beaches	# of Guarded Beaches	Hours of Operation	# of Guards	Start and End Date	Additional Comments
Barrie	YES	2	11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Centennial Beach 11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Johnsons Beach	5 chairs 2 chairs	Last Friday in June to usually the 3 rd Sunday in August	
Collingwood	NO					
<u>Innisfil</u>	NO					They teach lessons at the beach but not guard the beach. They also have guards for their day camps.
Orillia	YES	2	12 p.m. – 5 p.m. Couch 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Moose	2 chairs 2 chairs	July 1 to <u>Labour Day Monday</u>	
Oro - <u>Medonte</u>	NO					
<u>Wasaga</u>	NO					

18. The number of bathers and swimmers at the City's beaches varies considerably by beach, as well as with the temperature of the water and air. The guarded season is typically seven weeks in duration, with week one starting at the end of June, weeks two to four representing the month of July and weeks five to seven representing the first three weeks of August. In 2019, an additional week of guarding at Centennial Beach only, was approved by Council.
19. The following line graphs display bather counts per beach on a weekly basis over the past three years:





Notes:

- Week 1's count was impacted by construction in 2017 and a heat wave in 2018. 2019's attendance reflects a normal trend.
- Week 8 in 2019 reflects an extension of lifeguard service which was approved by Council. Both air and water temperature were relatively warm.
- Attendance generally drops in week 7 (after the August civic holiday week) and will fluctuate based on weather conditions.

20. Staff recommend an increase the guarded season to approximately nine weeks for Centennial Beach only, ending on the Friday immediately prior to Labour Day representing almost two additional weeks beyond what has been typically provided at this beach. The guarding of Johnson's Beach is recommended to remain at seven weeks. The estimated cost for the additional weeks is \$21,500.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

21. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

22. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee could choose to extend the season to Labour Day at Centennial Beach only. This would be an additional cost of \$26,100.

This alternative is not recommended due to the challenge of securing enough students to work scheduled shifts and complete season shut down operations. Many students require the weekend to travel and prepare for post-secondary school.

Alternative #2

General Committee could choose extend the season by one week at both beaches or at Centennial Beach only. The additional cost for both beaches would be \$13,500 whereas at Centennial only it would cost \$10,500.

Although this alternative is available, this option is not recommended as it leaves a gap between the end of the guarding season and the Labour Day weekend.

Alternative #3

General Committee could choose to extend the season to the Friday of Labour Day weekend at both beaches. This would be an additional cost of \$30,000.

This alternative is not recommended as data shows that Johnson's has limited usage for the remaining weeks in August. It may also be challenging to retain enough staff to guard both beaches for the additional weeks.

FINANCIAL

23. The cost of increasing the guarded season at Centennial by approximately two weeks is estimated to be \$21,500. The Recreation Services base budget would need to be increased to support this enhancement to the level of service that is provided.

LINKAGE TO 2018–2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

24. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:

Fostering a Safe and Healthy City

25. Increasing the length of the season when lifeguards are available to assist in emergency situations and prevent drownings as well as educate would improve the safety of residents and visitors.