

THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report DCS 02-2022

Council Meeting Date: January 6, 2022

TO: Mayor Weber and Members of Council

FROM: Steve McAuley, CAO

RE: Grand Bend Beach Patrol 2022 Seasonal Operational Hours

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report DCS 02-2022 regarding the Grand Bend Beach Patrol 2022 Seasonal Operational Hours be received for information.

SUMMARY

This report presents Council with information on the Grand Bend Beach Patrol.

BACKGROUND

At its July 13, 2021 meeting, Council passed the following motion:

21-0713-14 ***THAT** staff prepare a report on lifeguard services including compensation and seasonal hours for 2022 budget discussions. Carried*

This report addresses Council's resolution regarding the 2022 seasonal operational hours for the Grand Bend Beach Patrol.

Traditionally, the Grand Bend Beach Patrol has started full time coverage on the Main and North Beach beginning the third Friday in June to Labour Day. Over the past few years, weekend coverage has started earlier, between the May long weekend to the beginning of June, which has been largely weather dependent. This approach is difficult as weather is unpredictable and changing start dates annually is difficult to communicate to the public.

In 2022, and moving forward, coverage will be consistent with past practices with full time coverage starting the third Friday in June until (and including) Labour Day. Staff are also suggesting Saturday and Sunday coverage beginning the first full weekend in June. In 2022, this would mean that weekend patrols would start on June 4, with full-time coverage starting June 17.

The beginning of June start date will allow the Beach Patrol enough time to train and prepare for the upcoming season and is comparable to start times for other seasonal positions within the Municipality. These start dates are comparable to other

municipalities that offer waterfront lifeguarding services. A consistent schedule also helps to set expectations for the public and staff.

During the beach season, the flag system communicates the presence of lifeguards on the beach. When flags are present, the beach patrol is on duty. This is communicated by the signage at the entrance to the beach area, and signage on the lifeguard stands. When there are no flags present, the Beach Patrol is off duty.



Signage on Lifeguard Tower communicating the flag system.

During full-time coverage, the patrol hours of the Beach Patrol are as follows:

- Monday to Thursday: 12:00 – 18:00
- Friday to Sunday and Holidays: 11:00 – 19:00

Staff are not recommending any changes to these hours as full coverage is provided during the peak visitor times to the beach.

Beach Patrol hours are posted on the municipal website and at the Grand Bend Beach House. They are also promoted regularly through social media.

During the off season, signage is installed to inform visitors that the beach patrol are not on duty and to call 9-1-1 for emergencies. The municipal website is also used to communicate the end of the Beach Patrol season.

Lifesaving equipment such as life rings are available year-round.



Off season signage at the Grand Bend Beach

In addition to the hours of operation, staff have often received public feedback on issues like the number of lifeguard stands positioned on the beach, how the stands are utilized, areas of the beach that are sectioned off, etc. While staff appreciate public feedback, it is important to understand that the beach is a very dynamic area, with changing winds, water and later in the day, changing light and water reflections. All of these types of conditions are considered on a daily basis by our lifeguard personnel in making decisions about where and how to monitor the beach. We are fortunate to have a crew of lifeguards that tend to spend a number of seasons working for Lambton Shores, and through their training and experience are able to make these decisions. While they may not always make sense to the general public, there is always a reason decisions are made that frankly only our Grand Bend Beach Patrol will understand.

The other issue often asked as it relates to our Beach Patrol is in regards to bylaw enforcement. To be clear on this, our Beach Patrol staff are not asked, nor are they expected to enforce bylaws. While they can and do certainly direct individuals regarding unsafe behaviour or stop behavior that could lead to issues either in the water or on the beach, they will not issue tickets to anyone. Having said that, our beach patrol members have the ability to contact bylaw enforcement staff should they see an issue or require assistance to deal with unruly individuals. Bylaw presence was increased in 2021 with

enforcement officers being assigned to beach duty only. This type of focused enforcement is planned for the 2022 beach season.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

There are no alternatives presented.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The recommendation is for Council to receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff is not recommending any substantial changes to the 2022 Beach Operations, as such there is no direct financial impact associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

R. Shaw, Parks and Facilities Manager
A. Farr, Manager of Community Development