

Staff Report to Council

Title: Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee Report

Report Number: Parks & Facilities-2024-04

Director: Community Services

Manager: Manager.

Meeting Date:
Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Date to be considered by Council:
Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Recommendation:

That Council approve the recommendations presented in the Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee report; and

That Council approve a 2024 budget amendment of up to a maximum of \$92,000 to commence the recommendations identified in the report for 2024; and

Further that these recommendations be funded through the Lifecycle Reserve Fund.

Executive Summary:

The Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee (PSAC) is recommending 10 new ladders be approved in 2024 along with new sign designs and installation, improvements to the lifesaving stations, directional signage, emergency parking enhancements and a Beach Blazer program be developed. The PSAC is looking for approval of up to \$92,000 to ensure these recommendations are delivered. Further enhancements shall be included as part of future annual budget deliberations.

Strategic Priorities:

C.9-Enhance the experience at the lakefront

Financial Considerations:

The PSAC has provided a range of costs for the delivery of high priority items to be considered for improvements at Kincardine Station Beach for 2024. The PSAC has recommended a range of \$64,100 - \$92,000 to offset the costs of the combined recommendations. This will be considered as a 2024 budget amendment.

Policy:

N/A

Context and Background Information:

Since 2008, a total of 13 drownings and near-miss incidents have occurred in the water near the Kincardine piers. In response to these incidents, reviews have been undertaken seeking opportunities for safety improvements.

A drowning and a near miss occurred on August 12, 2023, in Lake Huron near the piers in Kincardine.

On September 13, 2023, Council established a Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee (PSAC), made up of stakeholders and subject matter experts.

The PSAC reviewed many aspects of the piers and the waterfront which included the built environment and existing practices of the waterfront. This review provided recommendations based on prioritization of importance.

The first recommendation the PSAC approved was to ensure that both piers remain open year-round with appropriate signage and education. To support this decision, it is important to acknowledge the additional resources will be required.

High Priority Recommendations:

- New ladder installations phased in over 1-4 years.
- Lifesaving stations be increased from 2 to 4.
- Enhance access signs to the piers that depict no jumping from piers.
- The perimeter of the piers to be painted bright yellow with enhancements.
- Enhanced signage be installed to reflect risks and 911 address.
- Non-swimming area located south of the south pier be increased from 100 metres to 200 metres.

Medium Priority Recommendations:

- Gate design and installation at the entrance of the piers.
- Consider fines for patrons who use the piers contrary to approved uses.
- Parking pilot project for 2024 and additional directional signs identifying parking locations based on patron usage.
- Remove the existing large, blue, decorative chairs located at the northern section of Station Beach.
- Install mitigations to reduce members of the public from parking in the assigned Emergency Parking locations.
- Consider a volunteer supported Beach Patrol (Ambassador) program for a one-year trial in collaboration with other Community Partners and that the existing beach education program be enhanced to provide continual education opportunities for patrons at the waterfront.

The PSAC acknowledges that there are significantly greater costs associated with maintaining piers for recreational purposes and not solely for the structures to serve as a break wall for marine craft and note that without investments to support the recreational

aspect of the piers, that one or both could be closed by Council in the future due to financial constraints.

Consultation Overview:

The PSAC heard from four key subject experts. They included:

- Scott Ruddle, Open Water Safety Expert
- Dr. Elizabeth Urbantke, Regional Advisor London's Coroner's Office
- Dr. Jaime Blackwood
- Dr. Chris Houser, Smart Beach Representative (Dean of Science, University of Waterloo)

Origin:

On September 13, 2023, Council established a Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee (PSAC) made up of stakeholders and subject matter experts related to the most recent drowning at Station Beach in August, 2023.

Implementation Considerations:

The implementation of the recommendations that are considered **High** will be based on supply chain (procurement of ladders as example), and staffing capacity.

Several capital projects (already approved by Council) that were anticipated to commence procurement processes in spring of this year, may need to be paused until the recommendations of the PSAC are fulfilled. This could delay some projects into 2025.

Risk Analysis:

Many of the recommendations relate to hazard identification and deterrence to help further identify to the public the risks associated with lake conditions, and specifically those conditions in the water around the piers. Identifying the risks of the natural water environment is intended to help prevent future drownings, however it is possible that future accidents will occur. The additional measures of new equipment, more education, and more hazard identification are hoped to protect water users and staff.

Attachments:	Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee Report
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