

1/10/2025

Memo to:

Budget Committee

From:

Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director
Recreation Commission

Subject:

This memo is in response to the request from the last Budget Committee meeting on 1/8/25 for additional information related to staffing at the beaches. Along with that, budget alternatives are presented in response to exploring ways to decrease Waterfront Staffing costs while still safely managing the beaches as well as another proposed cut to Special Events, related to Halloween costs.

Waterfront Staffing Information:

Why do we have lifeguards at all?

The beaches in Town have been guarded for years (since the early 90's at least) and it has become an expectation and a strong desire of the Town residents/taxpayers/their guests to provide this service. Our Red Cross certified and trained lifeguards add an important layer of safety and oversight to the beaches. The supervision of the guards not only helps prevent water safety issues but also supports beach patrons with following other beach guidelines. The guards often have to make sure kayakers or paddleboarders don't launch their boats from the beaches and they go to the boat launches to be inspected by Lake Hosts for any invasive species. In recent Summers the lifeguards have played an important role in early detection of cyanobacteria blooms and then working with the Recreation Director helping to inform the public about a current issue or help educate them to be better informed about the problem in the future. Many parents with young children who are less confident swimmers in particular value the presence of the lifeguards. The position also offers community youth a positive Summer job opportunity that they can learn valuable lifesaving and water safety skills, build employment experience, and interact with all ages of community members in a valued role.

Why can't we have one lifeguard to cover the beach?

Having only one lifeguard to cover the beach would be unsafe for many reasons. "Lifeguards should get regular breaks from surveillance duty to help stay alert and to decrease fatigue", Red Cross Lifeguarding Manual. Only one guard would not allow the guard to have any breaks or if they did the beach would be unguarded for that time. In addition, if there was a serious incident, you would need more than one guard to respond effectively; a back or spinal injury takes at least two guards to manage the backboard for example. Another reason is that if the scheduled guard was unable to make it to work that day for any reason, the beach would be unguarded. At Elkins we have two separate beaches and one guard can not cover both beaches. If the Town has lifeguards, it should be in a manner that is providing the patrons of the beach a safe swimming experience following Red Cross recommended safety guidelines, having one guard on duty does neither of those and opens the Town up to increased safety risks and liability issues.

What is our current staffing number daily and why?

The current optimal staffing numbers are: 4 guards at Elkins and 3 Guards at Bucklin. This provides the best situation for swim area coverage and staff efficacy, especially on busy days. The beaches can be operated safely with a reduced number of 3 guards at Elkins (Elkins can be operated with 2 guards if the swim area on the right is posted with the no guard on duty sign)

and 2 Guards at Bucklin, this number has been used for the current budget calculations while also leaving room for the option to increase the numbers of guards to 4 and 3 when needed.

The current lifeguard staffing is based on recommendations from our Lifeguard Trainer, Swim Lessons trainer, and Beach Consultant, Len Angelli. We have worked with Mr. Angelli since 2021 and his years of experience as a Red Cross certified lifeguard and lifeguard instructor and WSI (water safety instructor) have been crucial in training our guards/swim instructors and supporting the Recreation Director to ensure our beaches are operated safely.

Can we reduce or change the daily hours for staff or reduce the number of open days?

The current hours with staff are 10-5 PM seven days a week. There are suggested cuts to the number of days a week we have staff as described in Budget Scenario #3 to help lower the Waterfront Staff Wages budget. Six days a week has been utilized in the past, due to lack of staffing, but as we have gotten more guards it went back to 7 days a week. The expectation from the community is that it is staffed 7 days a week, but if it comes to it for budget cuts we could look at the 6 days a week option.

We could look at decreasing the hours of coverage or changing the hours. For example instead of 10-5 PM we could go to 12-5 or 12-6 PM. Or doing 12-5 weekdays and 10-5 PM Saturday and Sunday. At the beaches it can be difficult to predict numbers of patrons and when they will be visiting as so much depends on weather (which can change rapidly) and other factors. The 10-5 PM range is the recommended choice for open hours because it covers the part of the morning when younger families with kids are at the beaches and then a portion of the evening/after work hours when the beaches also can be busy. The option of reducing the hours could impact possible hires as many of them want full time work in the Summer and if we are offering limited hours that may impact their desire to lifeguard for us.

Why are budget alternative scenarios being presented?

These alternatives are being presented in response to questions brought up about ways Waterfront Staffing Wages could be reduced in FY 2026. All these alternatives are designed to safely manage and operate the beaches this Summer, meet community expectations around beach staffing, while looking to reduce costs. Each scenario shows estimated costs and savings as well as supporting explanations.

Original Budget submitted by Recreation Director

\$236,929

Waterfront Staffing

- Lifeguards start Memorial Day weekend; Beach Attendants start last week of June, 7 days a week 10-5 PM, including \$1 pay increase for guards

Special Events

- Halloween Event Funds at \$10,000

Alternative Reduced Budget Scenario #1

\$229,889

Estimated reduction of \$ 7,040

Budget Reductions (see details on following pages)

- Special Events- Halloween Staffing Funds -\$2,000
- Waterfront Staff Wages-Eliminate Beach Attendant Position, -\$17,745
- Waterfront Wages- Raise average number of guards daily from 5 to 6 and increase average pay for guards from \$15.70 to \$16.70, guards start Memorial Day weekend +\$13,063
- Estimated FICA Reduction- Due to changing staffing, -\$358

Budget Reduction Explanations for Scenario 1:

Waterfront Staff Wages Reduction of \$17,745:

Estimated savings of **\$17,745** by eliminating the Beach Attendant position.

Beach Attendants main responsibilities are:

- ☒ Managing the Kayak and Paddle Board loan program
 - ☒ Checking residency
 - ☒ Ensuring waivers are signed
 - ☒ Equipment set up and management
- ☒ Checking on bathroom supplies
 - ☒ We pay for daily professional cleaning of the bathrooms.
- ☒ Beach cleanup/raking

This shift could be accomplished by having the lifeguards who are not actively on duty guarding (the role requires periodic breaks from being in the stand on duty) take over the Beach Attendant roles. There could be times when the boat loan program would be unavailable due to the guards needing to focus on guard duties specifically, for example: when responding to a safety issue, training, or large numbers of swimmers in the water.

The change would need an increased number of guards on duty and raise wages for guards as they are taking on additional responsibilities; see the following description for details on this

increase. In the past, the guards were responsible for beach cleanup and bathrooms; with support from the Recreation Director, these responsibilities could be completed effectively by the guards.

Commented [GU1]: Do we mean Beach Attendants here?

Commented [PK2R1]: Before the beach attendants, the guards did the beach clean up, bathrooms, and boats.

Waterfront Staff Wages Increase of \$13,063:

To make up for not having Beach Attendants and the increased responsibilities for guards, raise the average number of guards daily at the beaches from 5 to 6 (3 at each beach) and also increase the average wage for the guards from \$15.70 to \$16.70. Increase of \$13,603.

Special Events Reduction of \$2,000:

Reduce \$2,000 from the Special Events Line from funds set aside for the Halloween Event to pay NLFD/NLPD/DPW staff to cover the extra duty. This item can be reduced to best match predicted costs of the event as it is scheduled to happen next year (Oct. 2025) while making sure the event is still managed safely.

Alternative Reduced Budget Scenario #2

\$216,784

Estimated reduction of \$20,145

Budget Reductions (see details)

- Special Events- Halloween Staffing Funds -\$2,000
- Waterfront Staff Wages- Eliminate Beach Attendant Position -\$17,745
- Waterfront Wages- Raise average number of guards daily from 5 to 6 and increase average pay for guards from \$15.70 to \$16.70, guards start last day of Kearsarge +\$6750
- Waterfront Staff Wages- Reduce guard days by 9 and start on last day of Kearsarge schools, -\$6309
- Estimated FICA Reduction- Due to changing staffing, -\$841

Budget Reduction Explanations for Scenario 2:

Waterfront Staff Wages Reduction of \$17,745:

Estimated savings of **\$17,745** by eliminating the Beach Attendant position.

Waterfront Staff Wages Increase of \$6,750:

To make up for not having Beach Attendants, raise the average number of guards daily at the beaches from 5 to 6 (3 at each beach) and also increase the average wage for the guards from \$15.70 to \$16.70.

Waterfront Staff Wages Reduction of \$6,309:

Estimated savings of **\$6,309**

Based on increased number of guards and increased hourly rate. Have the Lifeguards start date to the last day of school for Kearsarge (third week in June), eliminating 9 staffed Beach days. In the past we have started staffing the beaches on Memorial Day Weekend and then

gone weekends until school gets out (third week of June depending on snow days). In past Summers these days have been hard to staff as many guards are still in school and the weather and water temperatures can be less than ideal. Under this scenario the beaches would still be open, swim lines and docks in and bathrooms open, just not staffed with lifeguards until the last day of school for Kearsarge.

Special Events Reduction of \$2,000:

Reduce **\$2,000** from the Special Events Line from funds set aside for the Halloween Event to pay NLFD/NLPD/DPW staff to cover the extra duty. This item can be reduced to best match predicted costs of the event as it is scheduled to happen next year (Oct. 2025) while making sure the event is still managed safely.

Alternative Reduced Budget Scenario #3

\$226,369

Estimated Reduction of \$10,560

Budget Reductions (see details)

- Waterfront Staff Wages- Lifeguards start on Memorial Day and Beach Attendants start last week of June and all staff work six days a week instead of seven days-\$7,952
- Special Events- Halloween Staffing Funds -\$2,000
- Estimated FICA Reduction- Due to changing staffing -\$608

Budget Reduction Explanations for Scenario 3:

Waterfront Wages Decrease of \$7,679:

Reduce the number of open days from seven to six at the beaches, with Beach Attendants starting late June and lifeguards starting Memorial Day weekend. A reduction of ten days for the guards and nine days for the attendants.

Special Events Reduction of \$2,000:

Reduce **\$2,000** from the Special Events Line from funds set aside for the Halloween Event to pay NLFD/NLPD/DPW staff to cover the extra duty. This item can be reduced to best match predicted costs of the event as it is scheduled to happen next year (Oct. 2025) while making sure the event is still managed safely.