



Subject: Nickel Beach Parking and Related Operations 2024

To: Council

From: Corporate Services Department

Report Number: 2024-22

Meeting Date: April 9, 2024

Recommendation:

That Corporate Services Department Report 2024-22 be received; and

That Council approve consolidating all parking permits and season passes to honk mobile; and

That Council approve redesignating the 26 parking spaces along Lake Road from the Zone 1" parking classification to a No Parking Area zone; and

That Council approve applying line painting and installing flexible bollards, as depicted in Option 1 of Appendix C, along Lake Road between Zone 1 and Zone 2; and

That Council approve updating the current posted speed limit from 20 km/h to 10 km/h; and

That Council approve discounted parking of \$15 on weekdays and \$20 on weekends in Zone 2 for beachgoers who present proof of purchase of a Splashtown pass; and

That Council approve Nickel Beach to align with Bylaw 5503\100\10; and

That Council approve the extension of beach operations from closing after Labour Day to closing after Thanksgiving weekend.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the 2024 Nickel Beach season and propose operational changes.

Background:

In advance of the 2023 beach season, Council approved Report 2023-32, which permitted the expansion of non-beachfront parking capacity at Nickel Beach through the construction of new parking zones and overflow parking options for beachgoers. Report 2023-32 was presented to Council because of the request from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) that vehicles be restricted from parking directly on the beachfront to protect the endangered Fowler's Toad population that inhabit the beachfront at Nickel Beach.

In absence of direct beachfront parking options, notable adjustments to annual beach operation in 2023 included:

- Door-to-door and social media communication campaigns to provide awareness to locals and visitors of changes to beach operations and parking.
- Increased daily hours of operation (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.).
- Amendments to traffic and parking by-laws and parking fees.
- Beach handbook of operational guidelines created in conjunction with the MECP.
- Fowler's Toad identification and legislative training for all beach staff.
- Park and pay, and advanced parking reservation options.
- Redefined free parking for locals by means of PORTicipate Pass.
- Creating seasonal parking pass options.
- Beach lounge rental program.
- Enhanced beach amenities included new accessible washroom facilities, first-aid station, landscaping, and grounds beautification.
- Toy sharing program.
- Initiatives to support Splashtown Niagara's operations.

Discussion:

Following the 2023 beach season, staff from Corporate Services, Communications, and Public Works engaged in discussions regarding beach operations. While enhancements

to beach operations such as new washrooms, accessible beach mats, and a beach toy borrowing program were well received by beachgoers who relayed this information to front-line beach staff, several opportunities for improvement were also identified.

In consideration of both internal staff discussions and feedback gathered throughout the 2023 beach season that beachgoers provided to beach staff, Recreation staff recommend the following changes to Nickel Beach operations in 2024:

Parking and Safety

There are currently three independent sources of purchase for differentiated parking permits. To simplify parking and payments, Recreation staff recommend consolidating all parking lot permits and seasons passes to Honk Mobile. Staff also recommend moving Centennial Cedar Bay Beach parking permit purchasing to Honk Mobile, to consolidate all paid parking options throughout the City into one system. An updated overview of parking options for Nickel Beach is attached as Appendix "A".

A consistent source of refund requests and complaints fielded throughout 2023 were related to safety and damage concerns brought on by parking vehicles along the side of Lake Road as designated spaces within Zone 1. In response to these concerns, Recreation staff recommend that Council approve the following:

- Remove 26 total parking spaces along Lake Road that are currently included as Zone 1 and designate this area as no parking.
- Apply line painting and install flexible bollards along Lake Road between Zone 1 and Zone 2 to create a visual and physical barrier that maintains vehicle traffic on the roadway and provides a safer pedestrian walkway along the shoulder of the road to the beach entrance. Costing and alternative solutions are identified further under financial implications.
- Update current posted speed limit from 20 km/h to 10 km/h.

Splashtown Niagara

Splashtown Niagara experienced a decline in weekday sales during 2023. Recreation staff are in discussions with Splashtown Niagara and are working towards an arrangement to combine Splashtown tickets with discounted parking to encourage increased weekday traffic to Splashtown Niagara and Nickel Beach.

Beach Rules and Seasonal Hours of Operation

Recreation staff recommend that Nickel Beach be designated as pet-friendly and align the rules with that of other City parks. Many beachgoers that arrive seeking to enjoy a walk with their pets at Nickel Beach are turned away daily under the current rules. Staff have confirmed with the City's environmental consultant, Lisa Price, that allowing pets

would not be a concern for the Fowler's Toad habitat, provided pets remain leashed as per By-law 5503/100/10.

Nickel Beach has historically closed annually following Labour Day weekend, as seasonal students return to school. The walk-in gate to the beach would then remain open to the public at all times as all key infrastructure was locked away for the season.

With the new washroom amenities and consistent warm weather in fall each year, staff are proposing to extend the hours of operation beyond Labour Day each season and maintain public washroom access and daily waste collection up to Thanksgiving weekend, aligning with other signature City parks and outdoor facilities.

Internal Consultations:

Communications:

Communications staff will launch a robust communications and marketing strategy to profile the unique features of Nickel Beach and encourage area residents to visit the beach this coming summer. At a high level, the strategy will include a digital component with geo-targeted digital ads to residents in Port Colborne and neighbouring municipalities, radio advertising, updated website, and social media content. Staff will also work with local media to support sharing Nickel Beach messaging through traditional media channels as well.

Staff are planning an initiative that will allow the city to collect feedback on-site from beachgoers using signage and QR codes linked to an online survey. Staff will do monthly draws for participants as an incentive to provide feedback.

Engineering

Recreation staff consulted with project design staff in Engineering to develop a traffic calming strategy based on safety concerns from the 2023 beach season.

By-Law

Recreation staff consulted By-law staff regarding allowing leashed dogs on Nickel Beach, regarding removing street parking on Lake Road, and designating that area as 'no parking'. By-laws do not need to be amended to accommodate these changes.

Public Works

Recreation staff will work alongside Public Works staff for beach maintenance initiatives and for installation/connection of the washroom trailers.

Financial Implications:

The traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures recommended by Recreation Staff will cost approximately \$13,000. These changes will also reduce the number of Zone 1 parking spaces from 50 to 24. Staff recommend funding these initiatives from the beach reserve which is approximately \$198,000.

An alternative option for Council to consider is to purchase water-filled jersey barriers to place along Lake Road from Zone 1 to Zone 2 at a cost of approximately \$66,000. Staff do not recommend this option due to the higher financial cost.

Examples of the line painting and flexible bollards or water-filled jersey barrier options are attached as Appendix "C."

Public Engagement:

Feedback from beachgoers throughout 2023 was collected both anecdotally by beach staff, as well as reported within the City Wide customer service request system which included pedestrian safety concerns with parking along the roadway, confusion with parking software, and positive comments about the washroom. Staff used much of this feedback to help guide recommendations found within this report.

Staff are currently designing a more formal questionnaire to gather feedback from beachgoers in 2024. The questionnaire will align with the net promoter model identified in the City's Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Environment and Climate Change
 - Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
 - Economic Prosperity
 - Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
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Conclusion:

In conclusion, Recreation staff believe that addressing the feedback from staff observations and beachgoers will improve the user experience during the 2024 season.

Appendices:

- a. Nickel Beach Parking Map
- b. Nickel Beach Parking Rates & Fees
- c. Traffic Calming Measures Options

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.