



Subject: Nickel Beach and Centennial – Cedar Bay Beach Seasonal Operation Plans 2021

To: Council

From: Corporate Services Department

Report Number: 2021-49

Meeting Date: February 22, 2021

Recommendation:

That the Centennial – Cedar Bay Beach Operations Plan attached as Appendix A, and the Nickel Beach Operations Plan attached as Appendix B of Corporate Services Department Report 2021-49 be approved; and

That the Director of Corporate Services be directed to engage staff in the implementation of the seasonal operations outlined in Appendix A and Appendix B of Corporate Services Department Report 2021-49.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to seek direction from Council regarding the seasonal operations intended for implementation at Nickel Beach and Centennial – Cedar Bay beach through the 2021 operating season.

While staff have identified options and provided the highlights of a recommended Operations Plan in this report, staff highlight this information is provided as a mechanism to start the conversation on beaches. These plans can and will be adjusted at the direction of Council.

Background:

During the 2020 operating season, various operational changes were implemented at Nickel Beach and Centennial – Cedar Bay Beach in response to the ever-changing requirements of staff, residents, and visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key operational changes in 2020 included:

- enhanced health & safety measures for both staff and beachgoers
- increased security services
- increased staffing levels
- support from enforcement and emergency services
- consultation with public health
- capacity and residency-based access restrictions
- fee structure for residents and non-residents of the Niagara Region
- hours of operation
- parking options and availability
- communications and media updates
- reserved space and dedicated access times for Port Colborne residents

These operational changes supported a positive and safe beach environment.

Staff acknowledge and identify that despite best efforts the activity around Nickel Beach and Centennial – Cedar Bay beach certainly increased in 2020.

Discussion:

It is anticipated that increased activity around Nickel and Centennial – Cedar Bay will likely continue without pro-active changes in City operations. Staff appreciate Council's support throughout last year and the recognition of some of the challenges associated with beach operations.

Consideration for safety and quality of experience, for both residents and visitors should be at the forefront of decision making. As a result, staff have identified several options for beach operations in 2021 for Council to consider.

Option one – Keep beaches closed with no access for the season. Staff do not recommend this option.

Option two – Open beaches with access restricted to Port Colborne residents only. A City-obtained legal opinion advises against this course of action and staff do not recommend this option.

Option three – Open beaches with strict capacity limits, including pre-booking for non-resident vehicles and implement a multi-faceted operational approach. Staff recommend this option.

Staff have identified that the biggest challenge through the 2020 season was the total volume of cars and patrons attempting to access beaches at peak times, not the geographical residency of those patrons. As such, staff are proposing the implementation of a strategic Operational Plan in 2021 that limits access for both Centennial – Cedar Bay Beach, attached as Appendix A, and Nickel Beach, attached as Appendix B of Corporate Services Report 2021-49. If option three is supported, staff intend to provide Council with an additional information report prior to the start of the

2021 season (schedule for the Victoria Day weekend, subject to Provincial Guidelines and recommendations of the City's EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) as it relates to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic) which will update Council further on the status of operations.

Internal Consultations:

Communications

Staff will work closely with the City's Communications Officer to create and execute a marketing communication to promote new beach operational changes. This includes utilizing both traditional print media, new digital media initiatives, updating signage and graphics adhering to brand guidelines, and responding to media requests. Staff will also provide appropriate and regular updates to the Communications staff, including information regarding capacity, parking, inclement weather, and beach closures.

Community Safety & Enforcement

The implementation of advanced capacity signage will assist all staff with traffic flows and reduce the need to direct traffic.

In this initial plan, the By-law Division's main function with the beach will be the issuance of parking tickets in the adjacent areas. Education and social distancing enforcement will be conducted by the beach team. To alleviate the need for ticketing, a signage review will occur in the coming months with additional signage added to support effective enforcement.

Financial Implications:

Staff identify that projected revenue and associated costs for the 2021 season will vary relative to the direction Council provides for staff regarding beach operations.

Conclusion:

The implementation of a strategic Operational Plan that focuses on limiting capacity, will allow staff to be responsive in managing the challenges and mitigating risk as we continue to navigate through COVID-19 for the 2021 season.

Appendices:

- a. Centennial – Cedar Bay Beach Operating Plan 2021
- b. Nickel Beach Operating Plan 2021

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 approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

