
Subject: RE: Life Guards

From: Mark Peterson (mpeterson@normal.org)

To: blnnews@yahoo.com; ckoos@normal.org;

Cc: ddamery@normal.org;

Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 2:15 PM

Diane, Thanks for reaching out to get more information on our staffing situation at the two Normal aquatics facilities. This has been a very difficult swim season for us in terms of staffing. We started the year with a full complement of seasonal employees at both the Fairview and Anderson Aquatics Centers. However, before and shortly after the season began, we found ourselves short by more than a dozen employees. I have been told by our Parks and Rec staff that we had a few employees who resigned due to non-job related injuries that prevented them from working as a lifeguard, we had a few who moved out of the area, we had a few recent college graduates who found full-time employment and a few that simply chose not to continue to work at the pools.

So, our staffing situation has been challenged all year. On a positive note, weather conditions this year have been excellent for outdoor swimming facilities thus attracting large crowds to our pools and very few closures due to weather. Although this is a very positive situation for the financial viability of the pools, it compounded our staffing challenges. However, we were able to function relatively well up until the last week or so. What we have been encountering over the past few years, is that a number of our pool employees who are going away to college for the fall semester are choosing to quit work early so that they can prepare to move. We have also encountered some of our high school employees who have left employment in late July and early August to pursue extra-curricular high school activities that start prior to the beginning of school. This situation will likely worsen as the remainder of the summer progresses.

We have also found that those employees who are staying with us through August and unwilling to work extra hours to fill the gaps left by those employees who have departed. I am told by our aquatics staff that many of those employees say that they really don't need the extra money and simply do not want to work more hours.

As has been our practice for the past several years, we are planning to close the Anderson facility on August 13th. That is being done in part because we see a significant drop-off in pool usage in mid-August and also because we cannot staff both aquatics facilities. Also in mid-August the operating hours at Fairview will be adjusted to focus on evenings when the pool usage is by far more popular. We will likely be challenged to maintain sufficient staffing levels through Labor Day to keep Fairview open and operating. However, we are going to do everything that we can to do so.

Our Parks & Rec staff is actively looking at ideas for addressing these staffing challenges. This year was a bit unusual given that we started out at a staffing level that was below our target. That problem was then exacerbated by early departures and the lack of willingness of our remaining part-time staff to take on more hours. The compensation of pool employees, we believe, is competitive. We are paying \$9.25 and up for lifeguards depending on their level of experience.

I apologize for this long-winded explanation, but the staffing problems that we experienced this year at our pools is complicated. We hope to find some solutions so we can avoid these issues for the 2018 swim season.

If you have any follow-up questions, feel free to contact me. Mark Peterson

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Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

From: Bloomington Normal News [mailto:blnnews@yahoo.com]

Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 9:01 AM

To: Mayor Chris Koos <ckoos@normal.org>; Mark Peterson <mpeterson@normal.org>

Subject: Life Guards

Gentlemen,

I received reports all weekend of the water slides closing early and only the baby pool open at another pool. The people who contacted me claim they were told it was because not enough life guards were present.

Was the problem not being able to hire staff or some didn't show up for work? Was there a different reason?

I will be doing a story with or without a comment, but it would be better if I could include one. Of course, I will report I requested a comment if I don't receive a response.

Diane Benjamin

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