

MEMORANDUM

Recreation and Community Services



DATE: June 19, 2020
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
THROUGH: Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*
FROM: Renee Lorentzen, Director of Recreation and Community Services
SUBJECT: Status Update regarding Recreation and Community Services Summer Programming

This memo is intended to provide the City Council with an update regarding the status of the City's Recreation and Community Services programs, classes, and events for the Summer 2020 season.

Background

On March 17, six Bay Area counties released public health orders requiring residents to shelter in place for all but essential needs, and eventually requiring social distancing and face masks, as well as additional protections like protective shields at essential businesses.

The sudden spread of COVID-19 and the shutdown has created many changes for City programs.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the Santa Clara County Shelter-In Place-Order, the City halted many of its programs and services to the public and began a new remote-work protocol for many employees.

Social programs identified as essential in serving residents most in need have been continued without interruption, including the Senior Nutrition Program, which provides to-go meals to Milpitas seniors five days a week. Additionally, social services have continued in many different forms, such as transitioning Senior Nutrition Program participants to Meals on Wheels, calling socially isolated seniors through the Friendly Visitor Telephone program, and continuing the promotion and implementation of the Milpitas Assistance Program (MAP). Staff have regularly communicated the availability of discounts on recreation programs, water utility bills, and permit fees for heating and cooling improvements/repair to assist qualifying residents. Staff created a Virtual Community Center that offers activities and games, online adventures, mental health resources, and outdoor activities for residents sheltering in place. More activities and resources are being added daily, and community events and cultural flag raisings are being scheduled virtually.

On June 1, 2020, the County of Santa Clara updated the Shelter-in-Place order to set guidelines for childcare, summer camps, summer school, and other educational or recreational programs for children in stable groups of up to 12. Under this new allowance, only programs and classes that can adhere to social distancing protocols and follow requirements set by the County Public Health Department are allowed to offer in-person programs. Recreation and Community Services staff evaluated its youth program and classes to determine programming options for summer and fall.

Program & Class Evaluation Process

All Recreation programs, classes, and facilities have been carefully evaluated with the following criteria:

- Activity must be allowed under both County and State orders;
- Staff or instructors must maintain the recommended six-foot distancing during the activity;
- Staff or instructors and participants must wear face coverings during the activity;
- Activities must not be “high touch,” meaning that participants are not likely – either because of the nature of the activity or the participants’ young age – to touch each other and/or things that others will touch; and
- Staff easily enforce social distancing guidelines.

Staff also considered whether modifications could be made to the program, class, or facility to allow it to continue under the current social distancing program. For example, staff considered whether the program could be moved to a larger space or could have class size reduced in order to meet the six-foot distancing.

In cases where shared equipment is needed, consideration was given to whether the City or participant could easily provide individual supplies, and therefore eliminate sharing, through such measures as prepacking arts and craft supplies for each participant, rather than use of a communal bin.

Programs with young children are of special concern because they cannot wear face coverings and often touch their faces, each other, and shared objects. These programs are inherently high-touch and considered high risk.

Where the activity cannot be modified to successfully continue in-person under social distancing protocol, staff worked with the instructors to develop virtual alternatives.

All summer season contract programs have been converted to virtual programs, where possible. Because contract programs generally take place either at the contractor’s facility or a City facility, but without physical staff support, staff is unable to enforce social distancing for contract programs. If the instructors were able to offer a virtual version, staff has modified their agreements with the City to allow them to happen with many being piloted this summer. However, it is unknown to what extent residents will participate. Residents who had enrolled in an activity that has been converted to a virtual format have been given the option to withdraw with a full refund, since the virtual program is substantially different from the original program.

Activities that cannot be safely modified to take place in person and cannot be adapted to the virtual environment, have been cancelled with full refund.

This same evaluation process will be applied to Fall season classes and programs, in line with the Santa Clara County Public Health Order.

Proposed Approach

Day Camps

City staff evaluated day camps and determined they can meet the criteria as programs that could be offered in person with social distancing. The Santa Clara County Public Health Order's criteria for providers requires that:

- Children are in stable groups of 12 or fewer;
- Children do not change from one group to another more often than once every three weeks;
- Multiple groups in a facility stay in separate rooms; and
- Providers or educators remain solely with one group of children.

Because children may not move from one childcare or similar program or institution to another more frequently than once every 3 weeks, a child may attend at most one summer camp program, childcare program, or educational or recreational program during a 3-week period.

The City has restructured its day camps to provide both a safe and fun program for campers. Major program changes in addition to the above include:

- Use of Cardoza Park with intermittent use of indoor facilities at the Sports Center for special activities or during inclement weather;
- Extended program hours to allow for working parents to safely drop off and pick up their children;
- Individual activity kits per child to prevent unnecessary sharing of utensils, materials, etc.
- No offsite fieldtrips – virtual fieldtrips and enhanced activities onsite only;
- Augmentation of games to maintain social distancing while keeping children active;
- Wellness activities like youth yoga and meditation for help with stress and anxiety; and
- Cleaning and activity preparation by staff.

Staff are currently preparing for the new program protocols, including staff trainings, and will be starting Day Camps on June 29. Those already enrolled in summer camps have been notified of the program structure changes and have been given the option to be moved into 3-week long camp sessions or opt for a full refund. Camp will run through August 7 before the start of the new school year.

Aquatics

The State has laid out a four-phase reopening plan (Resilience Roadmap) for modifying the State's Stay-at-Home order. On May 8, 2020, the State entered into Stage 2 which allows for certain sectors to be open but does not allow for the opening of outdoor pools. However, in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order N-60-20 and corresponding guidance issued by the State Public Health Officer, if a county has met the State's public health requirements and files a variance attestation, it may move quickly through Stage 2 and open certain sectors including outdoor pools after June 12. Although Santa Clara County is in Stage 2, it has not filed a variance attestation and thus cannot allow the opening of outdoor pools.

On June 1, Santa Clara County Public Health released guidance on the re-opening of outdoor public pools beginning June 5. This has resulted in conflicting guidance related to the opening of outdoor pools however per the County's own order, when there are differences between the County's Shelter-in-Place order and the State's order, the stricter of the two orders prevails and thus outdoor pools cannot be opened in the City.

Although the City's public pools remain closed at this time, staff is working to set up the required safety and program protocols so that the City will be ready to open when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Under the County order outdoor public pools may re-open for aquatic activities that do not require any physical contact. The order also severely limits pool capacities. Thus, when the City does open the pools, major Aquatic Program changes in Milpitas will likely include:

- Aquatic programs limited to lap swimming and water aerobics only due to no physical contact requirement;
- No access to locker rooms;
- Access to the pools will be by appointment only to maintain required lane and open water capacities; and
- Pool Deck Monitor to maintain social distancing requirements.

Other Classes and Programs

Although some enrichment providers have opted to not offer programs this summer, at least ten summer season youth classes and programs will be offered virtually. Life skills cooking classes with Recreation staff, one of the most popular activities for Milpitas teens, are free and available online now and will continue through the summer. Social Services appointments for seniors will also continue to be offered over the phone.

Previously Reviewed Community Events

As discussed at the May 5 City Council meeting, all in-person special events, including the annual Fourth of July celebration, have been cancelled and will not resume until it is safe for large crowds to gather. As we anticipate that the City will not host in-person events for much of this year, staff is coordinating virtual special events, including videotaped speeches and performances, social media sharing, online activities and suggested offline activities that lend themselves to social distancing, with participation primarily among household members and/or involving community service.

Next Steps

Recreation and Community Services will continue to evaluate its programs, services and events, and is committed to safely serving the community in accordance with the County and State Shelter-in-Place order. Fall season offerings and any changes in the services we can provide will be communicated to City Council through additional informational memos. Staff will also continue to communicate changes and programs to Milpitas residents through social media, City website, and Recreation and Community Services customer email lists, on changes to services and opportunities for them to recreate virtually.