

CITY OF PACIFICA
Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission
August 26, 2020

SUBJECT:

Pacifica State Beach Surf Camp/School Permitting

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve the recommended changes to the surf camp/school policy creating a six-month pilot program to include a Community Access Partner (CAP) permit to be held jointly by Brown Girls Surf and City Surf Project.

To place the Surf Camp/School Permit Policy on the Commissions work plan in order to more thoroughly study this issue, collect and analyze information and make appropriate recommended changes.

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BACKGROUND:

In 2003, the City's Public Works Department developed a Master Plan for Public Improvements at Pacifica State Beach. To address beach related issues during the implementation of these improvements, a Beach Subcommittee was formed on April 15, 2004. The subcommittee's work consisted of making recommendations and developing guidelines for the elimination of fires, beach hours of operations, ideas for the creation of a parking program, and recommendations for signage.

At the time, concerns were raised about beach usage, water safety and congestion due to lack of regulation relating to surf camps/schools. The subcommittee spent considerable time on the topic of surf camps/schools at Pacifica State Beach. After many public forums, the subcommittee put forth a recommendation to limit surf camps to a maximum number of three, to be regulated by the Parks Beaches and Recreation Department.

This direction is addressed in Ordinance No. 692-C.S., Section 4-10.116, *"The Director may promulgate rules and regulations for the reservation, rental, and use of exclusive use facilities in all beaches, and parks. The Director may also impose reasonable time, place, and manner conditions in writing to ensure that public health, safety and welfare are protected during the use of exclusive use facilities. It shall be unlawful for any person to violate such rules, regulations or conditions."*

The Parks, Beaches, and Recreation (PB&R) Commission, after conducting a study session, concurred with staff and the subcommittee to recommend the limitation of surf camps and develop rules/guidelines for them. On April 25, 2005, the recommendations were on the agenda of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Council approved the implementation of a policy to support the Ordinance listed above and directed staff to come back to the following meeting with some changes and clarifications to the guidelines, specifically allowing that:

- Local surf shops, who hold a Pacifica business licenses and carry liability and workers compensation insurance, may continue the practice of employees teaching individual and small group lessons with a maximum of 5 students in

keeping with the ratio of five (5) students per instructor (minimum safety requirement).

At the May 9, 2005 regular City Council meeting, council directed staff to proceed with implementation of the Pacifica State Beach Surf Camp/School Policy Guidelines.

On November 28, 2012 and January 9, 2013, the PB&R Commission held study sessions to discuss and review the surf camp/school policy as well as to consider increasing the amount of permit holders. Representatives from each surf school and the owner of Nor Cal Surf shop attended the November 28 meeting, and each surf school was represented at the January 9 meeting.

At the January 23, 2013 meeting, the PB&R Commission adopted changes to the Surf Camp/School Policy (attached) that included allowing one local surf shop to apply annually for a permit to increase the number of students that were currently allowed (for surf shops) from 5 to 12 at the small surf camp rate.

DISCUSSION

At the June 8, 2020 City Council meeting approximately 30 emails/letters and 13 speakers addressed concern over the surf camp permitting process. In particular, many wrote or stated that they were concerned about racial equity relating to beach access, and that the permitting process makes it difficult for non-profits, like Brown Girls Surf (BGS) and City Surf Project (CSP) to apply for a surf camp permit;

In addition, several commenters shared personal anecdotes relating to the importance of equitable beach access, their experiences at the beach and surfing, as well as volunteering with non-profits that work with diverse communities. Many of the speakers advocated reforming the surf camp permitting process.

The 2020 price for an annual permit is \$1,060 for small camps and \$1,280 for large camps. Currently there are four permitted surf camps, two large – Adventure Out and Surf Camp Pacifica, one small – University of Surfing and one local shop – Nor Cal Surf Shop. These camps have been permitted to operate for many years. When an inquiry is received, groups are added to a list and told they will be contacted should a spot open up. Since the policy limits the number of permitted camps, and each year the camps have chosen to renew their permits, new camp operators, whether non-profits or not, have not been able to operate.

At the June 22, 2020 City Council meeting, Council referred this work item to the PB&R Commission to evaluate the Pacifica Surf Camp/School Policy to determine if/how the program could be amended to allow more surf camps to operate, or to revise the permit renewal process in order to support non-profits that work with diverse communities.

On July 22 and August 5, 2020, the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission held study sessions to discuss the Surf Camp/School Policy. Mira Manickham-Shirley, executive director of BGS and Johnny Irwin, executive director of CSP, participated in both meetings. They each shared information and background on their organizations, who they serve and how they operate. Information on their organizations was also shared with Commissioners prior to the first study session.

Also in attendance at one or both sessions, were representatives from all the current surf camp permits holders. In addition, several members of the public attended both meetings, speaking in support of the two non-profits and their mission. Leading up to the meetings, several emails were also sent, which were provided to Commissioners and will be included as attachments to this report.

Staff had the opportunity to have several conversations with both executive directors who sent a letter to the Commission, along with a proposal for a Community Access Partner (CAP) permit prior to the first study session (attached). This proposal included a draft criteria for the types of

groups that would be eligible for a CAP permit as well as a set of key features seen as necessary for creating an equitable permitting system.

Mira Manickham-Shirley spoke of the desire for equitable access to surfing for all people and shared that there are factors, which keep this from happening. She spoke of the frustration of not being able to obtain a permit and asked for reform that allows other permits to be issued. Her comments were echoed by Johnny Irwin, and they both stated they would like to see a CAP permit that would allow others to apply.

At the July 22 meeting, a few members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal, supported diversity and equitable access, advocated for youth, especially those disenfranchised and they shared their experiences with surfing and the non-profits. At the August 5 meeting, several members of the public spoke, all in favor of the proposal, complimenting the Commission for their efforts working on this issue.

In addition to equitable beach access and non-profit organizations, the study session also included discussion on the following surf camp topics:

- Safety
- Space
- Number of participants at any given time
- Scheduling
- Permit application process,
- Review of existing permits

In order to get a better picture of how the current and potentially new surf camp groups utilize the beach for lessons, staff suggested doing a survey to obtain scheduling information. Information is currently being collected and will be shared with Commission as available in the near future.

Commissioners were interested in implementing a pilot program with a CAP permit for either the remainder of the year or 6-months. However, during that time, there is a desire to work on the overall permit policy with an overall inclusive and equitable surf camp policy as a goal. Commissioners agreed they would like to see this task on their work plan.

RELATION TO CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND WORK PLAN:

This action helps to support youth services, which is a component of **A Healthy and Compassionate Community**. It also promotes **An Engaged Community**, taking actions to restore trust in city government, expanding communication and building community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Prorated cost of surf camp permit for 6 months would be \$530 for a small camp and \$640 for a large camp in revenue. Additional staff time would have no significant impact on the budget; however, the continued work on the permit policy will be a new work item not currently on the Commission's work plan, and therefore will divert staff resources normally focused on already approved priority actions and on-going programs.

ATTACHMENT LIST:

Surf Camp/School Policy for Pacifica State Beach – redline version

Community Access Partner letter and proposal

Letters to Commission/Department (sent prior to both study sessions)