

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HALF MOON BAY

AGENDA REPORT

For meeting of: **March 16, 2021**

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

VIA: Bob Nisbet, City Manager

FROM: Matthew Chidester, Deputy City Manager
John Doughty, Public Works Director
Saul Lopez, Director of Police Services

TITLE: SPRING/SUMMER BEACH ACTION PLAN 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, approve the proposed “Action Plan” for enhanced management, enforcement and litter controls for certain beaches and access points within the City limits including Poplar Beach Park (beach, parking lot and coastal trail) during the Spring and Summer of 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Action Plan is anticipated to result in a fiscal impact of approximately \$12,000 in additional services costs to the General Fund for the remainder of the fiscal year. Assuming approval of temporary seasonal employee with Mid-Year Budget, funding for all other activities is available within the FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget. The FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget will recommend funding to implement the action plan through September.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT:

This plan is consistent with the *Infrastructure and Environment* and *Healthy Communities and Public Safety* elements of the adopted Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Half Moon Bay and the San Mateo County coast are a prime recreation destination for the Bay Area as well as visitors from around the world. Within Half Moon Bay itself, public beaches extend north to south for almost 7 miles. Notable among the public beaches within City limits are Half Moon Bay State Beach comprising three distinct beach areas (Francis, Venice and Dunes Beaches), Poplar Beach, Surfer’s Beach and Miramontes Point Beach. Great beach opportunities extend both north and south of the City along Highway 1. Information on Coastside beaches can be found on the City’s website at <https://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/732/Beaches>.

Poplar Beach is City-owned and provides the public access to both the beach and California Coastal Trail. Poplar Beach is a popular location for locals and visitors alike to recreate and escape the heat of the Bay Area. Poplar Beach has historically been a congregating point for large groups, particularly local youth and teens. Increasingly, Poplar Beach has become a meeting spot for groups coming from Bayside communities. In 2018 and 2019, these activities coincided much of the spring with graduation and related “Senior Skip Days”. COVID-19 limited these activities in 2020.

In FY 2019-20, the City and Sheriff’s Office executed an amended service contract for Police Services. As part of that contract, the following conditions were added:

“During the summer months (Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend), the Police Chief shall consider the City’s beach and park areas to be an enforcement priority and shall make resource, deployment, and staffing decisions with that in mind. Within the confines of the staffing model and budget outlined in the current contract, the Police Chief will use a variety of tactics to maintain law and order at the beaches and parks, including but not limited to: routine patrols, increased patrols, redeployment of on-duty patrol force, foot patrols, overtime details at peak hours, electronic sign boards, use of the Crime Suppression Unit, etc. The Police Chief will retain the right to provide general police services within the policy guidelines and practices of the Sheriff’s Office which establishes priorities for deputies when receiving multiple calls and when responding to more serious crimes or emergencies in progress.”

On June 4, 2019, the City Manager outlined several steps that were being taken to address increased activity and demands at Poplar Beach. These initial steps for the summer months included:

- Enhanced Police Services including Bicycle Beach/Trail Patrols
- Expanded Public Works Maintenance—Adding full day Saturday and Sunday staffing
- Expanded Abundant Grace Coastside Worker Beach Cleanup Program
- Coordination with Republic Services on refuse removal and collection
- Assessing ways to expand volunteer/non-profit participation

On June 18, 2019 the City Council authorized staff to proceed with an action plan that included the bullet point items above as well as overnight private security.

On March 17, 2020, the City Council authorized staff to proceed with an action plan that included the same actions as the prior year (with the exception of contract security), weekend Public Works coverage, and the expanded Abundant Grace Worker Program. This meeting happened to be the last meeting conducted to date as a regular Council meeting at the TACC.

The last year represented a tremendous challenge to the City and its regional partners due to COVID-19. On March 13, 2020 the Bay Area Region issued a Stay-at-Home Order that included prohibitions on travel, exercise and other “normal” activities. These Orders were ultimately

replaced by Statewide Orders during the year which often modified the terms under which travel and exercise could be undertaken. Throughout the year, the beaches in and near Half Moon Bay served as a respite for local and Bay Area residents seeking exercise and recreation.

During the summer of 2020, the City closed its beaches twice in response to the pandemic. Working in collaboration with regional partners, the City, County and State took the bold step of closing all coastside beaches during the Memorial Day holiday weekend. On the Independence Day holiday weekend the City, County and Harbor District joined to close their local beaches; State Park Beaches remained open. The closures took a great deal of coordination and staffing to deliver. No other full closures were implemented; however, State parks and other agencies chose to close parking in and near public beach and harbor access. As a result, neighborhoods in the area received a greater number of visitors seeking parking than normal.

In July 2020, the City Council conducted a workshop on beach impacts in and near Poplar Beach. Staff followed this with a report in the fall on implementation efforts. A Pilot Parking delineation program was subsequently abandoned by the City in response to majority property owner disapproval.

As part of the follow up report in October 2020, the City Council discussed Coastside public restrooms. Throughout much of the summer, the City had received complaints from residents regarding visitors using their yards as restrooms. Staff conducted a survey of available facilities (see Attachment 1) which shows that there are approximately 51 operable permanent and portable facilities located along the City's coast.

Also in 2020, the City Council adopted new (revised) beach rules which, in addition to continuing dog-on-leash requirements and fire prohibition on all beaches, included the prohibition of alcohol and single use plastic bottles of one liter or less. Signage has been updated, Staff is working on education and the Sheriff's office will address enforcement.

The Sheriff and City Public Works Department now each have all terrain vehicles (Polaris) capable of accessing the beaches and coastal trail even during the busiest of times.

In 2020, staff utilized several new strategies to address the varying solid waste needs throughout the City. At Poplar Beach, staff rolled out new educational signage campaign, relocated the Big Belly compactors that were attracting illegal dumping, and increased the number and size of the dumpsters in the parking lot. These dumpsters were also outfitted with new, slotted lids. The educational signs were strategically located at entry and exit points at both Poplar and Miramontes Beach, reminding visitors to "leave nothing but footprints" and to "pack it in, pack it out." In addition to increasing the garbage capacity at Poplar Beach, staff addressed similar needs in other hot spots by installing the Big Belly units at Miramontes Point Beach and convincing the Granada Community Services District to increase garbage capacity at Surfer's Beach.

Under the California Coastal Act, Poplar Beach, other City beaches and the adjacent State Beaches are and must remain open and accessible to the public 24-hours a day. Over the last year, the City has chosen to leave the Poplar Access gate open 24-hours per day, in order to evaluate the impacts to the beach, City facilities and adjacent neighborhoods. This action has allowed the Sheriff's Patrol more convenient access to enforce late night parking and related activities. Leaving the gate open has also reduced evening parking impacts on the adjoining neighborhoods as well.

DISCUSSION:

Overview

City staff, notably representatives of the Sheriff's Office, Public Works and the City Manager's Office, have been continuing to assess means to address the annual spring and summer "high demand season". In previous years, the focus of the Action Plan was primarily on Poplar Beach. While Poplar Beach and its associated parking lot are a significant challenge, the City is looking to focus resources this year in a few additional pilot efforts beyond Poplar. In addition, the City has reached out to State Parks and will be meeting with them the week of March 15th. Staff will also be working with Princeton Harbor and San Mateo County Parks to ensure we continue our collaboration on parking and access this year as well.

As was discussed with the City Council and community last year, traffic issues on the Coastside are inevitable. On virtually any summer day, there are simply more cars than roadway capacity. As virtually all visitors to the Coastside are coming by private automobile. Mass transit is not really a viable option given the distance many visitors travel and practically, it is difficult to bring beach gear and the entire family on a bus or shuttle—which is not to say that it is not something to strive for in the future. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the traffic issues by limiting the number of non-related (non-social circle) individuals can/should be in a single vehicle; this has also eliminated most carpooling in general. The simple reality is that Half Moon Bay and Coastside residents have to continue to adapt and live with the knowledge that traffic (particularly weekends) are part of their lives.

Traffic on Highway 1 and 92 ultimately finds its way to local streets and neighborhoods. Visitors, being human, will always be looking for a parking spot as close to the beach as possible. Any given day in the summer months, the overflow of parking demand at Poplar Beach and Half Moon State Beaches are met by on-street parking on public streets in neighborhoods to the east; the degree of neighborhood parking varies significantly during the peak season and by proximity to the beach access. While during typical off-seasons the public lots tend to meet the demand, the COVID-19 years have resulted in parking demands outside normal seasonal highs.

It is still unclear what the COVID-19 impacts will be to the spring and summer beach activities and visitation overall. It is also unknown what the regional weather patterns will be. What we can be sure of is that the Coastside will receive significant visitors as we do every spring and summer. Things we can expect are:

- 1) Bay Area residents are unlikely to travel outside the State and Country as in pre-COVID-19 years due to restrictions and herd immunity concerns. This is likely to lead to shorter duration trips to places like Half Moon Bay;
- 2) Three (3) holidays fall as 3-day weekends and that 3-day holiday weekends bring crowds to Half Moon Bay;
- 3) High school students have been unable to attend classes and congregate with friends and those young adults are likely to want to congregate as part of spring break and pre-graduation activities. Poplar Beach has long been a destination for those students;
- 4) Per the Coastal Act, beaches must be available and accessible to users 24-hours per day;
- 5) Visitors from around the Bay Area are seeking recreation and exercise and visitation to the coast always increases when the temperatures rise;
- 6) Traffic and parking demands in all areas will increase with the visitors and there is little the City can do to preempt or control after-the-fact. In any given day there are simply too many automobiles to be handled by Hwy 92 and Hwy 1; and
- 7) The beach areas will be overwhelmed with garbage and litter from these visitors.

Following is a brief description of the principal components of the City's spring/summer 2021 plan for beaches. Each section includes a bullet point summary of actions. [See Attachment 1 for the consolidated 2021 Beach Action Plan.](#) The 2021 Action Plan reflects lessons learned from 2019 (pre-COVID) and 2020 (COVID) preemptive actions deemed necessary by staff in response to prior community and City Council input.

Administration

The 2021 Beach Action Plan is a collaborative effort involving the staff of the City Manager's Office, Public Works, Communications and the Sheriff's Office. This success of the effort is also dependent upon the collaboration of our regional partners including State Parks, San Mateo County Parks, Princeton Harbor, Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol. As we found last year, communications was critical to conveying information. This year's action plan, unlike prior years, includes developing a communications plan/strategy around traffic, parking, alternate beach options, COVID-19 and other emerging issues.

- Administration
 - Time Frame—May 1 to October 15
 - Staff preparation and coordination will continue throughout March and April.
 - Physical improvements will start to be implemented in April.
 - City communications planning is ongoing, but includes:
 - City will prepare and send a letter to Nancy McGhee, San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools asking she forward the letter to all local high schools (Coastside and bayside) to inform them of the rules of Poplar Beach (and all City beaches) and to discuss the enforcement that they are going to encounter should they choose to pursue graduation related activities. This will also include reference to COVID-19 related issues.

- City will coordinate with Cabrillo Unified School District on Coastside specific messaging
- City will coordinate with the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce on visitor information and maps, on issues including locations of all public beaches along the San Mateo County coast and beyond, parking, traffic, alternate routes, restrooms, etc.

Traffic

The City contracts with the San Mateo County Sheriff for law enforcement including traffic enforcement on local, County and State roadways. The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining local streets and regulatory signage. The California Department of Transportation is responsible for maintenance, management and operations of the highways including all traffic signals. The California Highway Patrol is a partner with all agencies and primarily provides support on and adjacent to Highway 1 and Highway 92.

As noted previously, visitors to the Coastside often overwhelm the State and local road system. The City recently completed improvements at the intersection of Highway 1 and 92 and installed a “No Turn on Red” sign at Main Street and Highway 92 following study and approval of Caltrans. These improvements were made to help improve traffic flow on weekends. Sheriff Patrol has and will continue to cite those violating traffic laws. They often conduct focused enforcement at known problem locations including Highway 1 and 92 intersection.

- Traffic
 - Sheriff/Law Enforcement
 - Continue regular patrols throughout the City.
 - When staffing allows, conduct focused enforcement at known problem locations including the intersections of Highway 1 and 92 and Highway 1 and Main Street.
 - Continue to work with the California Highway Patrol to provide regular and focused traffic enforcement in Half Moon Bay and on the Coastside.
 - Work with Caltrans and MTC to seek their authorization to utilize the Highway 511 signs to alert potential visitors of delays and alternate routes.
 - Utilize local VMS signage for traffic, parking and enforcement related messaging.
 - Use SMCAAlert to notify community of traffic issues and accidents.
 - Public Works
 - City to continue to work with Google and others to address app-based routing issues within the City.
 - City will coordinate with the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce on visitor information and maps, on issues including locations of all public beaches along the San Mateo County coast and beyond, parking, traffic, alternate routes, restrooms, etc.

Enforcement

As noted above, the San Mateo County Sheriff provides law enforcement and related public safety functions for the City of Half Moon Bay and all adjoining areas to the City. The Sheriff's Department coordinates and supports Coastside law enforcement with California Highway Patrol and State Parks for enforcement, investigation and search, rescue and recovery. Recently, the Sheriff purchased and outfitted a 4-wheel drive Polaris vehicle for the Coastside to expand direct beach enforcement. The Department has and continues to utilize bicycle patrol officers as well. The City is hoping to provide a volunteer citizen bicycle patrol to serve as ambassadors for the City along the entire Coastal Trail (within City limits).

The Sheriff's Department (via Community Services Officer) conducts regular checks of the Poplar Beach Parking Lot during daytime hours. Regular Sheriff Patrol covers the entire City 24-hours per day and includes beach areas and adjacent neighborhoods within City limits. Patrol is also responsible for traffic and parking enforcement throughout the City. Under the City's contract for services, the Sheriff Office has committed to providing extra staffing in high demand times including holidays and weekends.

- Enforcement (General)
 - Sheriff
 - Continue deploying Bicycle Beach/Trail Patrols.
 - Continue regular patrols of City including Poplar Street and Poplar Beach including late night and early morning patrol of Poplar Beach Parking Lot
 - Patrols (via Polaris) will be conducted throughout the spring and summer evenings at Poplar Beach based on staffing availability, safe access to beaches and environmental factors.
 - Continue to work with State, regional and local partners to utilize 511, SMC Alert and portable VMS signage for traffic, parking and enforcement related messaging.
 - Coordinate with Public Works on posting of temporary and permanent signage to maximize information, improve education and address enforcement of beach rules.
 - Other
 - Poplar Gate will remain open consistent with current and recent past practice.
 - Form and implement Volunteer Bike Patrol for California Coastal Trail.
- Enforcement (Memorial Day, Independence Day weekend and Labor Day)
 - Sheriff to staff an additional patrol car with two deputies on these holidays and will conduct enforcement provided staffing is available.
 - Community outreach

- Place changeable copy sign at Highway 92 near Main Street a minimum 5 days in advance of the holiday weekend reminding the public regarding parking, activities, no fireworks, etc.
- In advance of Independence Day, coordinate with Public Works to place signage reminding community and visitors that fireworks are illegal in Half Moon Bay.
- Issue public service announcements and utilize other sources to remind the public that fireworks are illegal in the City limits.
- On Independence Day, post conspicuous temporary signs along local streets and at local beaches, as necessary.

Maintenance

The Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance and operation of beaches, public parking lots, and portions of the coastal trail. The City supplements these efforts by contracting with Abundant Grace Coastside Worker (Abundant Grace) to assist with litter clean-up on Poplar Beach, Poplar Parking Lot, the Coastal Trail and nearby neighborhoods. The Maintenance Division is made up of seven individuals, including the Superintendent, who are responsible for Citywide maintenance. Over the course of the last several years staff has considered and implemented various models for covering beaches and parks during heavy use periods including the use of supplemental parttime seasonal staffing.

Tonight (March 16), the City Council is being asked to authorize a Part Time Seasonal Public Works Maintenance position in the Mid-Year budget to provide focused (Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday) services to City beaches, parks and downtown during Spring/Summer 2021. This will also provide regular maintenance staff the time during the week to address critical maintenance and capital repair of these and other facilities.

- Maintenance
 - The City will deploy a seasonal maintenance worker (subject to Mid-Year budget authorization) to staff Poplar Beach and service other City beaches/facilities on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday as well as Memorial Day (May 31), Independence Day (July 5) and Labor Day (September 6).
 - Regular Maintenance staff will address litter management, maintenance and capital repair of these facilities Monday through Friday. Regular maintenance staff will also be used for on-call demands and emergency coverage.
 - With the easing of COVID restrictions, Public Works will work with Pacific Beach Coalition on coordination of the California Coastal Clean Up Day in September with hopes of looking at regular beach clean-ups during summer 2021 (and the rest of the year).
 - Replace and update existing dangerous surf signs at Poplar, Surfers and Miramontes Point Beaches.

Coastside Restrooms

Over the course of the summer of 2020, the City received complaints from a few residents regarding the behavior of some Coastside visitors. Notably, that visitors were choosing to use yards as restrooms. In fall of 2020, City staff conducted an inventory of existing restroom facilities in or near the City limits and provided a report to the City Council on October 6, 2020. Fifty-one (51) operable restrooms (permanent and portable) were identified along the coast from Princeton Harbor on the north to Miramontes Point Road to the south (see Attachment 2, Map). There were also 10 inoperable restrooms (all on State Park property) along this segment due to lack of maintenance and upkeep. The restroom facilities are relatively dispersed throughout the entire length with obvious focus on beach access and public parking facilities. Based upon this assessment it appears that there are generally sufficient restroom facilities on the coast and that unfortunately, bad human behavior is somewhat inevitable.

Staff has scheduled a meeting with State Parks staff the week of March 15th to discuss a variety of collaboration and coordination efforts. One of the issues to be discussed is the maintenance and operation of restrooms over the high demand season. This will include a request for maintenance and opening of the 10 inoperable restrooms at Venice Beach.

In addition, staff has identified two potential locations for new portable restroom facilities; one at terminus of Kelly Avenue and the other at the northerly terminus of Pilarcitos Avenue at Wave Street. These locations have significant neighborhood beach parking and related foot traffic. Staff is recommending placing portable facilities at these two locations as a one season pilot project. This will provide an indication of demand, community compatibility and reduction of unwanted behavior from visitors to these areas. The cost of five months rental and servicing of units will be approximately \$12,000.

- Coastside Restrooms
 - State Parks
 - The City will coordinate with and advocate for State Parks to maintain and retain open all available restroom facilities at Dunes, Venice and Francis Beaches.
 - Poplar Beach
 - The City will increase the number of portable restrooms consistent with prior years.
 - Servicing of restrooms will be daily.
 - Terminus of Kelly Avenue
 - The City will place an ADA compliant portable restroom near the entrance to the Coastal Trail in proximity to terminus of Kelly Avenue.
 - City will coordinate with State Parks on location.
 - Servicing of restrooms will be daily.
 - Terminus of Pilarcitos Avenue and Wave Street
 - The City will place an ADA compliant portable restroom near the terminus of Pilarcitos Avenue and Wave Street.
 - Servicing of restrooms will be daily.

Solid Waste

Garbage and litter control remains a challenge for staff and many of the management strategies utilized in 2020 were considered successful. In 2020 we will build upon the successful strategies, looking to expand on this effort in 2021. Strategies that will be replicated this year include utilizing temporary educational signage at key entry points to beaches, retaining the use of larger dumpsters at Poplar Beach and increasing the number of garbage, recycling, and compost carts throughout the downtown area.

While staff recognizes the desire to move away from utilizing dumpsters from a purely aesthetic perspective, doing so has consistently resulted in loose litter finding its way into the environment. This has been despite increasing the scope of the Abundant Grace Coastal Clean Team and the shifting of Public Works Maintenance staff to weekend coverage.

Public Works is building a second garbage enclosure adjacent to the existing garbage enclosure in the Poplar Beach parking lot. This enclosure will not impact the number of available parking spaces and will allow for two of the three garbage dumpsters at Poplar Beach to have a designated enclosure. The third dumpster will remain at the entry point near the pay station.

- Litter Management
 - State Parks
 - The City will advocate for additional solid waste receptacle on State Parks lands with focus on areas that directly connect to City neighborhoods providing public beach parking;
 - The City will also advocate for additional signage related to litter with focus on beach parking lots and Coastal Trail.
 - Poplar Beach Area
 - The City will retain three dumpsters at Poplar Beach Parking Area for use of visitors. Two will be housed in enclosures and the third will be placed near the pay station kiosk;
 - On holiday weekends and/or when weekend temperatures are expected to be exceed 90-degrees inland, staff will utilize the City's dump truck to collect and dispose of trash throughout the weekend. On these select days, the truck would be backed up to the gate at the terminus of Poplar Street as an additional trash receptacle and emptied throughout the day by City staff;
 - The truck may be utilized at other times based upon demand
 - Abundant Grace Coastal Clean Team program will continue to provide expanded litter pick-up services per their contract with the City including Poplar Beach and Parking Lot, the Coastal Trail, Poplar Parallel Trail and neighborhoods in vicinity of Poplar Street; and
 - Republic Services has agreed to provide custom, split lids with large holes to accommodate garbage bundled in plastic bags and/or boxes (should

they be able to locate). Absent the custom lids, Republic will place split lid units at Poplar Beach.

- Terminus of Pilarcitos Avenue and Wave Street
 - The City will place a solid waste bin next to the proposed porta-potty at this same general location
 - City staff will service once a day during spring/summer

Conclusion

Poplar Beach and the nearby beaches are major draws for local and distant visitors. As such, we can expect traffic and related impacts through the spring and summer of 2021 and subsequent years. The impacts will be more acute during Bay Area heat waves and holiday weekends. The “2021 Action Plan” suggests reasonable and achievable steps that can be taken by the City and Sheriff to alleviate many of the concerns and impacts identified by residents.

Attachments

1. Consolidate 2021 Beach Action Plan
2. Coastside Map of Restroom Facilities