

City of Placerville
MEMORANDUM

DATE: 12/1/08

TO: City Council

FROM: Steve Youel, Director of Community Services

SUBJECT: **AQUATICS RISK MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT**

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council authorize a resolution to execute a one year agreement between the City of Placerville and Ellis & Associates to participate in the Comprehensive Aquatic Risk Management Program.

BACKGROUND

For the past three years, the City has contracted with Ellis & Associates (E&A) to provide a comprehensive risk management program for the City's aquatics programs held at the Placerville Aquatics Center and El Dorado High School pool. Through this program, E&A provides the mandatory training and certification for the City's lifeguard staff. Additionally, the program offered by Ellis and Associates goes beyond basic lifeguard training by requiring ongoing assessments and holding City of Placerville lifeguards to the highest standard of accountability. E&A provides City staff with strong administrative support which includes staff training, unannounced operational audits to verify lifeguard skills and knowledge, and in the event of an accident, litigation support if necessary.

Prior to 2005, the City utilized the American Red Cross as its lifeguard certification agency. During that time, City staff experienced poor customer service and a lack of communication with the American Red Cross staff. Red Cross training methods were outdated and failed to adequately train lifeguards in the use of oxygen and automated external defibrillators (AEDs). After receiving Red Cross certification, lifeguards had no ongoing training requirements and City staff received little or no administrative support in implementing the training programs. These problems worsened after the local Red Cross office closed and staff was faced with long delays in obtaining certification and receiving answers to basic questions.

With the opening of the Aquatic Center, staff recognized the new facility would further increase the demands placed on lifeguards and City staff. After thoroughly researching the options, staff recommended switching to E&A to improve swimmer safety, improve lifeguard training and performance, and to receive adequate support from a highly specialized, professional aquatics team. Today, many other local Cities, including the City of Folsom and Cosumnes CSD, have contracted with E&A for the same reasons.

ANALYSIS

Over the past three years, City staff has been more than satisfied with the level of service and support provided by E&A staff. The E&A approach is to have an ongoing partnership with the City. This partnership allows City staff and lifeguards to have immediate access to the complete resources of E&A as well as the client managers that work with individual facilities. Their professional staff communicates well with City staff, works diligently to find answers, and partners with City staff in developing realistic solutions specific to our facility. The operational audits have provided City staff with excellent feedback to further improve lifeguard performance and swimmer safety.

E&A also has been very proactive in developing rescue techniques and standards. Many of the standards E&A put into place years ago are now common in all aquatic facilities. Using technology and information gathered internationally, E&A constantly improves rescue techniques to allow for the most efficient and safe rescues. The E&A lifeguard license is the most accountable lifeguard license in the industry. As an E&A client, City of Placerville lifeguards will continue to be held accountable for their skills and performance through the independent auditing process. No other recognized lifeguard certification matches this requirement.

E&A Comprehensive Aquatic Risk Management Program provides the City with the most current proactive standards, policies and procedures in Aquatic Risk Management. Within the ever-changing aquatic industry, a variety of new laws and ordinances are implemented regularly. E&A staff works closely with State and National officials on the development and implementation of policies affecting the aquatic industry. E&A clients are among the first to know about upcoming changes, and those changes are implemented in an efficient and thoroughly researched manner. In the event of an accident, E&A legal and administrative staff will assist their client agencies in the investigation and through any potential litigation. Maintaining our contract with E&A reduces the City's exposure to potential risk.

At this time, staff still recommends E&A as the best aquatics management option for the City. In the greater Sacramento area, there are limited alternatives to this program. The American Red Cross and YMCA are the most recognized programs that offer basic lifeguard training and certification. Neither of these programs, however, provides the same level of service and support that E&A is able to offer. On a National level, E&A is recognized as the gold standard of comprehensive aquatics risk management programs and it is simply unmatched by any other agency. In addition, changing to another certification program would result in thousands of dollars in additional expenditures to re-train lifeguards, as well as countless hours of staff time in revising and implementing new policies and procedures. Further, City staff would lose access to a vital resource by ending our partnership with E&A.

The content of the proposed contract with Ellis and Associates is similar to the previous agreement. The proposed contract is for one (1) year (January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009), but also contains a 30 day termination clause, should the need arise.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total annual cost of the current agreement with Ellis & Associates is \$8,175 per year. The proposed agreement calls for a \$100 increase per operational audit. Four audits are held annually increasing the total annual cost of service by \$400. The total annual cost for the year 2009 will be \$8,575. This increase and Annual fees due to Ellis & Associates are accounted for within the 2008-2009 operating budget for Aquatics.

Attachments - Ellis & Associates Agreement

Steve Youel, Director of Community Services

Approved for Submittal to City Council:

Reviewed for Fiscal Analysis:

John Driscoll, City Manager/Attorney

Dave Warren, Director of Finance