



Agenda Item #: \_\_\_\_\_

# Staff Report

## City of Manhattan Beach

**TO:** Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

**THROUGH:** Geoff Dolan, City Manager

**FROM:** Dennis Groat, Fire Chief

**DATE:** July 18, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of the City Council's 2005-2007 Work Plan Item to Purchase and Install Emergency Lifesaving Rings on the Manhattan Beach Pier, and of an Appropriation Not-to-Exceed \$1,400 from the City's "State Pier and Parking Lot Fund" For Their Purchase.

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the purchase and installation of three emergency lifesaving rings with throw ropes and tamper-resistant cabinets for the Manhattan Beach pier, and that Council approves an appropriation not-to-exceed \$1,400 from the City's "State Pier and Parking Lot Fund" for their purchase.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATION:**

Staff is recommending the purchase of three lifesaving rings with throw ropes and tamper-resistant cabinets for our pier. Our most recent cost estimate for these items from the desired supplier is \$1,143.99. Since these lifesaving rings are not currently an approved budget item, staff is requesting that an amount not-to-exceed \$1,400.00 be appropriated from the City's "State Pier and parking Lot Fund" for their purchase, delivery, and installation. There are more than sufficient funds in this account for these items. Ongoing maintenance costs and any replacement costs will be absorbed by the existing Fire Department budget.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Throughout the year, there are significant periods of "after-hours" time when the lifeguard station on our pier is not staffed, generally during the late night and early morning hours. During these periods of time, our Fire and Police Departments are often the first emergency services to arrive on scene for a call of a person in the water in distress. Lifeguard response for these incidents is usually from the local lifeguard headquarters building in Hermosa Beach. Over the past ten years, staff is aware of three drownings that have occurred as the result of persons jumping from our pier during the nighttime and early morning hours. In each of these cases, our emergency responders were summoned by observers soon after the persons jumped into the ocean. The observers were unable to provide direct rescue assistance to these persons.

**DISCUSSION:**

In our most recent pier drowning incident, a young man jumped into the ocean during the nighttime hours. He soon became severely weakened and distressed, and was unable to swim to shore. His friends who had accompanied him summoned emergency assistance and provided encouragement to the victim. Just prior to the arrival of one of a Police vehicle and Fire units, the victim slipped under the surface and drowned. Staff has researched the use of lifesaving rings, and feels that this young man could likely have been saved if such a device was immediately available to his friends or other observers.

Other beach communities in our general area have installed lifesaving rings on their piers with positive results. Staff consulted with the Huntington Beach Lifeguards, who installed the rings on their city's pier, and with lifeguards from the Newport Beach Fire Department, who installed the rings on both of their city piers. Huntington Beach has a very long pier (1,750 feet), with three lifesaving rings along its length from the waterline to its ocean end. The piers in Newport Beach are each about 1,000 feet long, and they have installed one ring at the end of each of these piers. Both cities were positive about having these devices on their piers, and Newport Beach already has one documented save by a citizen utilizing the lifesaving ring from one of their pier structures. The Manhattan Beach pier is approximately 930 feet long, and because of the need for quick access to lifesaving rings in an emergency, staff is recommending that we install three of these rings and cabinets on our pier, with the rings spaced evenly along the rails above the ocean surface (one on the north railing, one on the south railing further out, and one on the ocean end of the pier).

Even with "unlocked" cabinets, vandalism of the equipment has been minimal in Huntington Beach and Newport Beach. Each reports that about two rings per year are replaced due to losses to vandalism. Staff feels that the tamper-resistant type of cabinets would not significantly impede emergency access, and may help deter such vandalism and theft. The tamper-resistant cabinets have a thin clear plastic panel that must be "popped" to access the lever that opens the storage cabinet.

Both Huntington and Newport utilize rings, rope, and fiberglass cabinets made up as a unit specifically for the outdoor storage and deployment of these lifesaving rings, and this is the equipment that staff is recommending be approved for purchase for our pier. These cabinets and rings can be mounted directly to a wall or to the pier railings themselves.

Fire Department staff has consulted our local lifeguard supervisors regarding the possible installation of lifesaving rings and cabinets on our pier, and they are fully supportive of this.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Provide direction to staff

- Attachment 1: Proposed cabinet with tamper-resistant latch
- Attachment 2: Cabinet installed on the Huntington Beach pier
- Attachment 3: Cabinet installed on the Newport Beach pier
- Attachment 4: Lifesaving ring and throw rope in the cabinet

Attachment 1 – Proposed cabinet with tamper-resistant latch



Attachment 2 – Cabinet installed on the Huntington Beach pier





Attachment 3 – cabinet installed on one of the Newport Beach piers



Attachment 4 – Lifesaving Ring and throw rope in the cabinet

