




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

THRU: Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: February 10, 2020

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Department Nature and Adventure Summer Camp Registration

This memo is intended to provide details regarding the February 8, 2020 Nature and Adventure Summer Camp Program registration challenges that resulted in suspension of the day's registration processes. Despite the comprehensive steps taken by the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to prepare for the February 8th registration; specifically complying with each step of the vendor's exhaustive pre-registration performance checklist, Nature and Adventure Summer Camp registration was not executed as planned.

Vermont Systems Incorporated (VSI), the software vendor, informed PARD that the slowdown was caused by a caching mechanism within the application that failed approximately 15 minutes prior to the start of online registration. This failure impacted the process that drives the message content onto the screen. As RecTrac (software) attempted to automatically recover, the result was record contention, which was more severe given the online registration load. These actions brought the registration process to a severe slow-down, resulting in the unacceptable system performance.

The PARD registration team received a number of concerns in real time from the community regarding the registration experience. Based upon this feedback, PARD made the decision to suspend the registration process. Despite the system slow-down, many summer camp registrations were successfully completed. Registration for the remaining available spots in the Nature and Adventure camps will be re-opened Saturday February 15, 2020 at 12:00 pm for Austin residents and 2:00 pm for non-residents. This registration will be for any remaining Nature and Adventure Summer Camp spots on a first-come, first-served basis. All other scheduled summer camp registrations will continue in accordance with the previously established schedule below:

- Cultural Arts and Therapeutic Summer Camps' registration will remain on Saturday, February 15, 2020 at 10:00 AM for Austin residents and 1:00 PM for Non-Residents;
- Community Recreation Summer Camps' registration will remain on Saturday, February 22, 2020 at 10:00 AM for Austin residents and 1:00 PM for Non-Residents.

Based on the complications experienced during summer camp registration, PARD will take the following steps in advance of February 15th to thoroughly prepare for the process:

- Work with the vendor to ensure improved planned and automated system readiness

- Work with the vendor to develop a root cause analysis/5 Why's analysis surrounding this incident and initiate actions to prevent a future occurrence
- Actively explore options for an alternative vendor for an improved recreational management system
- Explore opportunities to enhance PARD's technical support to manage infrastructure, specifically insourcing, as to not rely on an environment hosted by a vendor beyond PARD's control

PARD cannot apologize enough for the frustration Austinites have faced this past Saturday. The Department will continue to do its best to ensure this experience is not repeated.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager