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September 28, 2009

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Karen Murphy, Public Services Director
SUBJECT: Recreation Fee Philosophy

General Information

The recreation fee philosophy provides a general direction for staff in preparing fee recommendations that support recovery of a percentage of costs associated with various recreation and park offerings. The Parks and Recreation Commission then reviews the recommended fees, accepts public input and presents their final recommendations to City Council which, in turn, makes the final decision on the fees.

In terms of general recreation fees, we have the following areas to consider: competitive sports, swimming, and general recreation. Fees for the two enterprise recreation activities, the golf course and the civic arena, will be addressed separately based on a schedule that corresponds appropriately with the business strategies that are in place for these funds.

This report will provide data for each area and pose specific philosophical questions where pertinent.

Competitive Sports

The basic principles of the fees in the area of competitive sports have been to recover all direct costs associated with adult sports, and only program costs associated with youth sports. This means that facility preparation costs are assessed in adult sports while the only costs recovered in youth sports are for officials and supplies. These costs are offset by individual player fees.

Measures have been taken in the recent past to lessen the cost of the maintenance of competitive sports facilities, principally softball fields. The consolidation of facilities such as the new fields at the Redcoat Complex, has lessened travel time and expense associated with field preparation. Staff has been evaluating the total operating costs associated with the programming and field maintenance required for the city's competitive sports leagues over the course of the past season, and has met with user groups to discuss reasonable increases in fees to cover expenses.

Swimming

2009 was the fourth year for the enhanced Plymouth Pool, and the twelfth season for a single outdoor pool. Revenues for FY2009 were in line with previous years in that the revenues covered approximately 50% of the operational costs for the pool and associated facility. However, we have experienced a rising cost for chemicals over the past 3 years and anticipate this trend to continue. Swimming fees have remained unchanged for the past 4 swimming seasons, and staff supports a small increase to the fee for 2010 to help offset rising expenses.

General Recreation

In this category we address general use activities such as cross country ski and toboggan rentals at the City Forest, the deposit on picnic kits and picnic reservation fees at our community parks.

The equipment rental rates have been set at a level which simply covers the cost of replacing the equipment, and the picnic kit deposit is designed to insure return of the equipment. A fee for the picnic reservation program, allowing citizens to reserve picnic shelters in our community parks, was instituted in 2005. This fee was established to ensure that pavilions were indeed utilized once reserved, and the fee has been successful in accomplishing this. The picnic shelter fees have been increased slightly since 2005 as operational costs to maintain the shelters have increased.

The fee philosophy outlined above has served our parks and recreation programs well for many years. The challenge that exists is to ensure that fees continue to support expenses appropriately while keeping recreational opportunities reasonably priced for the community. I ask that the Commission recommends a fee philosophy for the staff to follow at their October meeting, providing staff with direction in developing recommended fees for the Commission to review at their regularly scheduled November meeting.

Respectfully,

Karen Murphy