



ROCHESTER PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

INFORMATION FOR BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: Recreation Activities Review	DATE: 12/03/13
ITEM DESCRIPTION: Recreation Activities & Organizational Structure	PREPARED BY: M. Nigbur
<p>As a continuation of the discussion last month related to recreational activities staff has continued to review the recreational activities the City is involved in along with reviewing different organizational structures from different cities around Minnesota. Additionally, this analysis has included a review of what recreational activities those other cities provide for services at their facilities.</p> <p>As you are aware a summary of general recreational activities was developed outlining the areas which Park and Recreation staff are involved in. The summary provided did not include general park use, which is difficult to measure without performing specific user counts in the parks. Currently, Rochester Park and Recreation is involved in some fashion with approximately 70 different formalized activities and we are the main agency for approximately 1/3 of those. All of the activities noted create a cumulative impact of approximately 2,000,000 park connections annually. These connections do not include the trail usage, the daily park visits, and some of the other larger events (national night out, 4th of July, Rochesterfest, Down by the Riverside, etc) all which occurs annually each year in our park system. All of these activities occur with significant coordination with the Park and Recreation staff. The intention of this information is to show the impact of recreational activities in the City and the use within our facilities.</p> <p>You may recall we also had the opportunity to hear from several partner organizations last month. These presentations help reinforce the importance of recreation in Rochester. The groups invited are only a handful of the many groups we work with each year. This method of providing recreational services is one of many options available to meet the needs of the community.</p> <p>As noted we have reviewed some of the other operations of the other larger cities around the state. In some of the cities reviewed recreation services are performed completely by the City. While in other situations, like Rochester, many different groups working both together and independently provide the activities for the community benefit. I would point out that this is the most common approach to serving the communities.</p>	

As we have noted Rochester is served by many great partner organizations. Based on the review of the other cities there are several distinct areas which most activities are found: youth sports, pre/post school activities & camps, arts/music/crafts, general community education/activities, and the senior population. For Rochester the local youth sports groups meet many of the local youth sporting desires, the School District and others provide the “Community Education” type programs as well as the pre/post school activities which are similarly found in many cities. The Senior Center meets many needs of the senior population with their programming.

Even though these different groups and other partner organizations provide programming with their specific vision in mind, there are still activities or programs for the residents that are desired and are needed to further support the multiple cross-sections of Rochester. While I am sure there are many more, a few key gaps that are in our recreation programming have been identified:

- Better promotion and utilization of the outdoor open spaces and better promotion of our recreational programming
- Cultural & Socio/Economic engagement - connecting and creating activities for the different cultures and different economic backgrounds in the community
- Wellness – for all ages, getting individuals into our parks to participate for the sole reason for health benefits (biking, walking, hiking, yoga, group classes, etc)
- Creating activities to support the short term transient population that may be here for medical or other services.

Strictly from an organizational structure review there is a wide variation of how cities are set up and provide recreation services. Some of the organizational structure is dictated by what types of facilities they have and what programs they actually provide. Based on this review it is apparent that there is no standard organization chart for Park and Recreation Departments. There are cases where park activities (ie maintenance, youth sports, rec programming, etc) are being provided by other city and non-city organizations. There are also cases where some of the traditional park facilities (pools, community centers, ice rinks) are controlled by other departments. Nevertheless, on a broad general concept there are some basic divisions for Park and Recreation services that can be found throughout the industry.

- Administration (which can commonly include policies, park planning, volunteer coordination, payroll, administrative services, etc.)
- Park Maintenance (commonly can include forestry, parkland maintenance, landscape/gardens, project construction, building maintenance, etc)
- Recreation Programming (youth sports, adult sports, aquatics, playground management, adaptive services, special events, ‘in’ park activities, etc)
- Facilities (management of pools, venue operations, sports complex usage, ice arenas, etc)
- Specialty Areas (art center, golf, nature center, zoo, community centers, senior center, aquatic center, etc)

Overall, what has been demonstrated through this analysis is that the Rochester Park and Recreation Department has and continues to do a good job in helping to provide recreational activities in the City. However, we must continue to look toward the future to better serve the changing makeup and desires of our residents by adapting our programming. To manage our gaps in service, to continue to provide the existing services the City is currently involved in, and to allow the potential for expansion of the services provided, the City does need to have the properly trained staff to fulfill our mission. Over the course of this review of recreational services, I do not believe there is any doubt that what the City provides has significant value for its residents. In comparison of these other cities the City has been very efficient in its staffing for providing these recreational activities.

At this stage there are two alternatives the board can pursue.

- Continue to analyze the recreation position & organizational structure.
- Request the Council to release the funds to support the hiring of a recreation services staff person.

NOTE: if alternative #2 is selected and if the Council releases the funding, the Director of Park and Recreation and other appropriate staff would review and modify the current position description with the HR Department and will determine where/how this position will fit within any potential changes to the organizational structure.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff would recommend that the Board seek the release of the funding from the City Council to allow posting and filling of a recreation position as determined by the Director of Park and Recreation.

PARK BOARD ACTION _____

DATE _____