

MINUTES

Ad-Hoc Committee to Review Fees
April 4, 2022 / 5:15 PM
City Council Chambers / 37 Green St.

In Attendance: City Councilors – Byron Champlin (Chair), Nathan Fennessy, Paula McLaughlin and Mayor Jim Bouley; City Staff – Brian LeBrun, Deputy City Manager - Finance; Carlos Baía, Deputy City Manager - Development; David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director; and Crayton Brubaker, Community Development Specialist.

- 1) **Call to Order:** Chairman Champlin called the meeting to order at 5:22 PM.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes:** Councilor Fennessy moved to adopt the minutes of the March 21, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor McLaughlin and passed with a unanimous voice vote.
- 3) **Discussion of Parks & Recreation Fees:** Parks and Recreation Director David Gill gave a presentation about the Parks & Recreation Department's rental fees and philosophy of rate charges, including non-ordinance fees for the Citywide Community Center (CWCC) facilities, pools, athletic fields, cemeteries, and the City Auditorium (Audi). Beaver Meadow Golf Course fees were not included in the discussion. Councilor Champlin also requested the committee review recommended changes for Arena fees provided in a separate handout. Deputy City Manager Brian LeBrun noted that Arena fees will be reviewed after Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Gill explained the distinction of fee rates charged for residents and non-residents as well as non-profit and for-profit groups. He also discussed the philosophy of Parks and Recreation Department fees. They are intended to be comparable to similar communities and within the ballpark of market rate. He also noted that up until 10 years ago, every fee was presented to the City Council annually. Currently, only changing fees due to market conditions are recommended to Council each year.

There were questions about the use of pools for non-residents and if pool rates fully compensated for all expenses. Mr. LeBrun and Mr. Gill said the pool rates alleviated some, but not all, expenses in regards to operating the pools.

Mr. Gill also discussed athletic fields use and rates. He noted that in recent years field users must tell the Parks and Recreation Department exactly what times teams are using and practicing in order to maximize community availability and use. He also noted that since COVID, there are about 1,500 less kids participating in these sports leagues. Councilor Champlin asked if there was a difference in softball versus baseball fields charges. Mr. Gill said there was no difference. Councilor Fennessy asked if there was a difference in leasing versus one-time use of fields. Mr. Gill noted that if a team or league leases the space, they have control of the space. He also stated that travel teams are using City athletic fields more now than in previous years and that partnerships with teams and group boards are essential. He also noted fees are actively being condensed and that there is a process for scheduling leased fields.

Mr. Gill discussed overtime rate for park staff being charged for less than its actual expense. Councilor Fennessy asked if staff at Green Street Community Center were there throughout

the day or just during scheduled times. Mr. Gill noted that staff is only at the Green Street facility during scheduled times, which is essentially daily in the winter and a few times a week during the spring, summer, and fall. He also stated that adult drop-in fees are lower than entities that charge for similar activities.

Mr. Gill briefly discussed the Audi fees and the good relationship and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the Department has with the Friends of the Audi. He said that City staff and the Friends of the Audi meet at the beginning of every year to discuss expenses, fee structures, and efforts by the Friends group. Councilor Champlin asked if they still charge the Friends of the Audi. Mr. Gill explained that they do, but according to the MOU they get 2-3 meetings at no charge. The Parks and Recreation Department handles all booking, maintenance, etc. due to the reorganization in 2010. Councilor Champlin asked if there was a discrepancy in the cancellation fee policy between the lobby and the rest of the facility and Mr. Gill said there was not.

Councilor Champlin asked if the process was cumbersome for a non-profit group to get an exception or reduced rate. Mr. Gill explained that it has not been lately, but was historically more difficult. He also noted it is easier for groups the Department has previously worked with to get these exceptions or reductions, as new groups would require a minimum 30-day process to get approval from City Council or Recreation Parks Advisory Committee.

Mr. Gill explained the cemetery fees and the variety of services and fees provided by the Cemeteries division. Councilor Fennessy asked what happens to a Concord resident who has no family or means to pay for burial. Mr. LeBrun explained that the City Human Services Department has a line item for indigent population burials. Councilor Champlin asked if the City has a Potters Field-type burial site for indigent populations and Mr. Gill indicated that there were historically, but not currently. Councilor Fennessy asked if there was enough space in the cemeteries and Mr. Gill noted that the Department looks 30 years ahead for space projections and is moving towards a 35-year outlook. Mayor Bouley asked if as many people are buried as there used to be. Mr. Gill noted there were 248 burials last year, which was the highest in recent years and that the City has not purchased more land for cemeteries in 40 years. The differences for infant versus adult burial fees were also discussed.

The committee then returned to discussions regarding the Citywide Community Center. Mayor Bouley acknowledged how the fee structure is formed but does not agree that a tax status should determine a fee rate and that he wants more of the community to have access to meet inside of the CWCC. Councilor Champlin agreed and asked how a systematic process could be created. Councilor Fennessy stated that unless classrooms were being used, he doesn't understand why classrooms are not more available for general public use and expressed that these were barriers for public use of the CWCC. Mr. Gill acknowledged these concerns and saw them as an opportunity to explore now that they are moving past COVID. He also indicated that he wants more community use of the CWCC, wants reasonable adjustment of rates, and says the concept of the center needs to be redefined from how it was created 4 years ago. Liability issues and the expansion of grants for those who cannot afford programs were also discussed. The committee discussed finding a middle ground between reservation fees and walk-in accessibility. Mr. Gill noted that over the past 10 years, many community centers across the country have become more reliant on fee and reservation-based model. Councilor McLaughlin asked if a refundable deposit structure were possible where a group would get a deposit back if they showed up and used the space. Mr. Gill indicated he would explore and research this concept.

Mayor Bouley noted that not many meeting spaces in the Concord area have reasonable rates and he wants the Citywide Community Center to be an accessible and affordable place for community meetings. Councilor Champlin noted similarities between the way the CWCC and Concord Public Library are used and suggested there may be Library public use policies that are transferable to the CWCC.

Councilor Champlin and the committee directed Mr. Gill to research what other facilities are doing and to report back to the committee. The committee found general consensus in wanting to hear from groups that use the CWCC to explore strengths, weaknesses, and their experiences with the system. Mayor Bouley said he did not want to change Audi or pool rates. Councilor Fennessy indicated he wanted a bit more of a gap between resident and non-resident rates for pools. Mr. Gill said he wants to develop a clear, consistent process for reasonable fees that increase community access. The committee discussed and agreed wanting citizens to be able to use a variety of public facilities more, if they are not reserved.

Mr. Gill noted all committee concerns and indicated he will organize groups to come in and discuss their experiences, potential process improvement, fee feedback, etc. Councilor Champlin indicate that he wants to look at general experiences and wants a free-flowing conversation. The committee directed Mr. Gill to return to the committee to discuss on the Monday, May 2nd meeting.

Councilor Champlin and the committee also indicated in the meantime that they would like to discuss development fees with Deputy City Manager of Development, Carlos Baía for the Monday, April 18 meeting.

- 4) **Arena Fees:** Mr. LeBrun provided a handout to the committee and noted the fee changes the Arena staff were recommending. The committee briefly discussed the changes dealing with the Everett Arena. Councilor Fennessy asked the difference between prime ice time and non-prime ice time. Mr. LeBrun stated that prime ice time is usually weekend days and peak times during the week and non-prime time was usually early morning, late at night, and in the middle of the week. There was consensus among the committee to approve Arena fees.
- 5) **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on Monday, April 18 after the Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) at 6:00 PM. Deputy City Manager of Development Carlos Baía will attend the next meeting to discuss development fee structures from the Community Development Department. The following meeting will be tentatively on Monday, May 2 and will include Parks and Recreation Director David Gill and several group representatives to discuss use of the Citywide Community Center.
- 6) **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Fennessy and seconded by Councilor McLaughlin. The motion was approved with a unanimous voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 6:49 PM.