

MINUTES

Ad-Hoc Committee to Review Fees

May 25, 2022 / 5:15 PM

City Hall / 41 Green St, 2nd Floor Conference Room

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

Excused: Mayor Jim Bouley

- 1) **Call to Order:** Chairman Champlin called the meeting to order at 5:20 PM.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes:** Councilor Fennessy moved to adopt the minutes of the April 4, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Champlin and passed with a unanimous voice vote.

3) **Discussion of May 2nd Meeting:**

Councilor Champlin began the discussion by talking about the six program rooms. Mr. David Gill indicated the City-Wide Community Center (CWCC) had 6 programming rooms, excluding the Senior Lounge and library branch. Of the 6 rooms, 4 are for general programming and 2 are fitness rooms. Councilor Champlin asked how the senior lounge is used. Mr. Gill indicated there are drop in programs three times a week and the senior lounge has multiple other uses. He also emphasized that the community wanted a space specifically for senior citizens during the CWCC public input process.

Councilor Champlin indicated that Clement Kigugu with Overcomers Refugees Services said at the May 2 meeting that his organization is going to Manchester for weekend events, including weddings. Councilor Champlin asked if Concord is losing business related to items like that. Mr. Gill noted that 2 multiple weddings and religious celebrations were done at the CWCC before the pandemic, but not many had been done since. He noted that facilities are not currently able to be fully staffed on Sundays during the summer schedule, which runs from May to mid-October. However, the CWCC is usually open on Saturdays until 1pm. Mr. Gill said that the CWCC is open on Sundays during the winter schedule and that it is important to have notice for scheduling rooms.

Councilor Champlin asked the committee about general impressions they had from the May 2 meeting. He noted that he wants the discussion to focus on the CWCC auditorium and four programming rooms, as they have no designated purpose and are not currently used heavily. He wants to make sure these rooms are used and barriers are mitigated as much as possible. Mr. Gill noted that the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee (RPAC) recommended reducing rates for Concord based groups from \$45/hour to \$35/hour in their January 2022 meeting. He also said that \$15-20/hour was a generally reasonable fee he heard from groups on May 2 meeting. Councilor Fennessy indicated that members of the community ought to be able to use community space and that for purposes of ensuring people show up, a reasonable fee like \$15-20/hour makes sense. He also said he wanted to have flexibility.

Councilor McLaughlin asked if non-profit status should matter in the fee process. Councilor Champlin noted Charm Camacho's experience of not being a non-profit, but providing

many non-profit services for her organization and the community and that they should take experiences like that into account. Mr. Brian LeBrun cautioned the potential consequences of designating non-profit status and discrimination of non-formally organized groups. Mr. Gill said only Sindy Chown and Charm Camacho's organizations were not non-profit groups represented at May 2 meeting. Councilor Fennessy suggested distinguishing resident and non-residents, rather than non-profit vs profit statuses. Mr. Gill said the current rates for non-residents across the board are \$15 an hour more than resident groups.

Councilor Champlin brought up Councilor McLaughlin's suggestion of having a refundable deposit. Councilor Fennessy indicated the potential that some group could misuse that system of a refundable deposit. Mr. LeBrun suggested adding some eligibility criteria for refundable deposits. Councilor McLaughlin stated that for-profit groups should not have a refundable deposit. Mr. Gill said the Parks and Recreation department always have four to five months ahead booked out and that city offered programs have priority. Councilor Champlin explored how a refundable deposit would work and the practicality of organizations paying and receiving money. Mr. Gill noted that currently, the Parks and Recreation department accepts credit card, check, or cash. He recommended staying away from a refundable deposit since refunding many checks would take up a lot of staff time. Mr. LeBrun identified that refundable deposits may be better using credit card transactions. Councilor Fennessy stated that organizations who may be seeking a refundable deposit may not have a credit card. Mr. LeBrun stated that if the department didn't use credit card transactions for the refundable deposit, it would be best for the department to simply have more cash on hand. Councilor McLaughlin asked if there could be a policy that makes rooms free and penalizes groups that misuse or consistently cancel the room.

Mr. Gill noted that there would probably be a \$40,000 (CWCC and West Street Ward House rentals) deficit in next year's Parks and Recreation budget, if room fees would be removed altogether.

Mr. LeBrun noted that it would be problematic if there are hundreds or thousands of deposits being refunded for small amounts of money. Councilor Champlin brought the conversation back to how to differentiate each group for fee applicability at the CWCC and how to best identify and quantify group use. Councilor Fennessy indicated initial decisions to be made included a decision of whether to eliminate fees or set new, reduced fees. Then, if the committee were to reduce fees, the committee would need to decide whether it would be refundable or non-refundable. Councilor Fennessy noted that he had a sense from the committee discussion so far that a refundable deposit system would not work. Councilor Champlin stated he wanted a minimal fee. Mr. Gill indicated that the West St Ward House would lose around \$20,000 in rental fees initially, but there could be a potential gain in revenue, if CWCC use increased. Mr. LeBrun said this may spur conversation of other fees like use of golf course and some parameters for a non-fee space rental will help prevent those future conversations.

Councilor Fennessy stated that not having a fee for the space makes sense, but there should be a distinction between resident and non-resident groups.

Mr. Gill brought up that RPAC suggested reducing CWCC rental fee to \$35 an hour from the current \$45 an hour in their January meeting.

Councilor Fennessy made a motion to suggest to the City Council to set program rooms fees at the CWCC to be \$15 an hour for resident groups and \$30 an hour for non-resident groups and to set the CWCC auditorium use fee to \$25 an hour for resident groups and \$50 for non-resident groups. Councilor McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Gill asked that rental rates at the West Street Ward House (WSWH) need to be discussed as the new room rental rates at the new center would now be lower than WSWH.

Councilor Fennessy motioned for an amendment to the previous motion to also set West Street Ward House rental rates at \$15 an hour for resident groups and \$30 an hour for non-resident groups. Councilor McLaughlin seconded the motion. The amended motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

- 4) **Next Meeting:** The next meeting was set for Monday, June 27th at 6:30 pm, after the Parking Committee meeting.
- 5) **Other:** Mr. Gill asked a procedural question of which fee changes will be brought to City Council during the July meeting. Councilor Champlin indicated he wants to change Parks and Recreation fees as soon as possible, so he will request that those fees be set for the July City Council meeting. The Community Development Department (CDD) fees will be reviewed and brought to City Council at a later date.

Mr. LeBrun asked the committee if they would like to explore other fees that are not related to the CDD such as fire department, etc. Councilor Champlin indicated he did not want the committee to discuss non-CDD or non-CWCC fees. Councilor Champlin stated he will that discuss further with Mayor Bouley.

Mr. LeBrun confirmed that all fee changes except for the Community Development Department fees will be discussed in the July City Council meeting and that the CDD fees will be referred to a future Council meeting.

- 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 6:07 PM.