

Item 23-1471: Adopt the Proposed Revised Houdini Plaza Rental and Fee Schedule Policy

Item 23-1472: Request to Adopt the Proposed Revised Jones Park Rental and Fee Schedule Policy

Parks and Recreation Committee
Mon, Jan 08, 2024 6:15PM

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 01:01

There is no public hearings or appearances. So, we'll go to action items. 23-1471 I'm going to take them together. Would you like to do that?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 01:14

No that's fine. Yeah.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 01:16

Which is adopt the proposed revised Houdini Plaza rental and fee schedule of policy, and 23-1472 request to adopt the proposed revised Jones Park rental and fee schedule policy. Before I asked for a motion on this, Aldersperson Schultz you refer this back. Would you like to comment or?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 01:42

Director Gazza, would you have that information? Or could you get that information?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 01:42

Certainly, Chair. I was not able to be present at this last committee meeting, and I'd hoped for discussion at that point. That meeting lasted all of two minutes and nine seconds, and I thought at least a conversation concerning these fee increases for those two significant park spaces and rentals was worth having. And to have some notion about asking for some revisions to that fee schedule based on whether you're a nonprofit locally, or if you're a regional nonprofit, or a for profit entity. But it's difficult to have that conversation without having specific numbers about what we take in for those two park rentals in totality on an annual basis. And until we have those numbers, and I know what we're talking about, it's hard for me to make a motion to adjust the fee schedule. So personally, I'd like to see this held until we can get some more specific information from Director Gazza, and I can spell out specifically what I think I'd like to have for that information so we can have a discussion.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 01:55

Yes, we are currently working on that. I talked to Aldersperson Schultz and requested information, and—but it could not be gathered in time for this evening because there wasn't a direct report. It was requiring just manually going through each of the event rentals and then doing some manual totaling of that data. So, we were going to obtain data to determine how many rentals of each fell in each category for these two parks. And then the total amount of revenue gained for the two parks.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 03:26

With that in mind, Aldersperson Schultz, you want to make a motion?

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 03:29

I'll just say a little bit more specifically—I mean, we can talk about information requested, but I'd like to know in each of those four categories—local nonprofits, non-local, for profit, and regional nonprofits—whatever those four categories are know if we have those exact to know what are basically our total take in from those rentals are.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 03:52

I would motion to hold until we get that information, and I'm asking this specifically because local nonprofits are, I think, challenged to—even these small rental fees can be difficult for them. And I know most of these local nonprofits are doing great things for our community, and all they're trying to do is increase our quality of life and do services for our community. And I think sometimes it's challenging for them. I know from experience, and I think we need to give them as much benefit as we can as a city to allow them some space and ability to function and do things for our community because that's what they do.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 04:26

If you're outside of this community and you're a non-local nonprofit, you probably have the wherewithal, and certainly if you're a for profit company have the wherewithal, to cover rental fees for parks, but I think local nonprofits are sort of a class by themselves and they could use a little bit of a leg up when it comes to park rental fees. It's not a lot of money, I get that. But a little bit goes a long way for these nonprofits that are doing things for us. A lot of them are doing things for this community. So that's why I'd like to refer this back, get a little information, figure out if there's a way to adjust the fee schedule to give them a little bit better position and maybe shift the burden to the for profits or the non-local nonprofits.

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 05:06

There you said a lot without having a second. Do I hear a second to that?

Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 05:10

Second.

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 05:11

Okay. Okay. Any further? Kristin?

Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 05:18

If I may ask a question of director Gazza?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 05:20

You may.

Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 05:22

Are adjustments to fees normal process?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 05:29

Yes and no. What I would say is Houdini, that policy was created some years ago and had not been updated for several years in regards to increasing of the fees. And it became time that, you know, we were seeing normal inflation, normal cost adjustments, and our budget would go up in small increments. But most recently, with the way the economy is, we did feel a need to make some type of adjustment, small but, you know, something, and I think it'd be better to be in the practice of updating small, you know, in small amounts over time versus all at once, trying to do something larger.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 06:14

On Jones, we didn't change the rates. We kept them the same. Basically, in that policy, it was more about there's now an area that people can grill and have a propane tank in order to grill out, and we put a slab there of cement to be able to do that. So, in addition to cleaning up the policy, that was really what that reflected. These are only two parks that we call special event parks. So, you have the higher rate, otherwise the rates, generally are the rental of the pavilion. So, these are the ones where you'd have the larger ones.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 06:52

And is it is it fair to say that the city on any given year with these parks, our goal is not to be profitable. Our goal is to provide a great area.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 07:03

Yeah, we're subsidizing what I would say these events, considerably. I—it's hard to say event to event, but the amount of time to put out picnic tables, pick up garbage, litter pick up. A lot of times, you know, the day before we hurry up, mow the grass, make sure it looks very good for the park. There's excessive use of the bathrooms at that time, requires a lot of housekeeping cleanup afterwards; you have toilet paper and things like that that get used. So, the fee that we're charging is minimal.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 07:42

What I wouldn't be afraid to do is, and I think some of the data might show this, is most of our rentals are the local nonprofit. So, it'll be interesting to see, like we say, the data. Would there be a situation where you could offset it by increasing on one side, the load on the other side? But my fear would be is if there isn't, lower—you know, lowering the local nonprofit would only counter the effect of revenue. We need more revenue. We don't want to go backwards in revenue just from the standpoint budgets are approved and so forth too. So, the idea of, you know, getting a little bit more revenue is the idea here.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 08:26

Yeah, I guess my point on it is—and with respect to my colleague—this decision wasn't come to light—lightly. You know that I think that the conversation is we weren't asking enough questions or didn't follow through. I don't think in any way the Parks Department is trying to get rich on nonprofits, but there is a reality that it costs us more business, more money to be in business of keeping a park ready. So, all—you could almost consider us a nonprofit in that order. So, I guess I'm challenged in trying to find a way to reduce what already is as low as he can do to make it work because the nonprofits are hurting. I get that. But if we run the risk of saying, "Alright, we're going to charge you little to none, and now we're going to charge the others more to make up for it." Well, then maybe we don't draw that that event. And that concerns me even more. So, I appreciate all the work that goes in and trying to keep things as cost effective as we can, but trying to find and find an extra \$5 here and there, that may end up costing us an event that actually is revenue forward for the businesses and everything else downtown.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 09:37

Aldersperson Hayden.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 09:40

I think the city attorney had raised his hand.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 09:44

Clarify the motion.

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 09:49

Okay, the motion that I understand is that this be held. Both items are held for a period until our next meeting, whenever that next meeting is. Yes. Alderson Hayden.

Alderson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 10:04

May I direct question to...?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 10:05

You may.

Alderson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 10:06

Thank you. Um, would you say about 50% as local nonprofits? Or would you be able to swag, like, what were what the breakdown is of the rentals and things like that?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 10:15

I would think it'd be definitely more than that. I think because ADI would be considered still—right?—a local no—they fall under the nonprofit status, I believe.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 10:28

Well, it's split. There's two branches, one—one's nonprofit and one for profits. So, it depends on the category of that rental. And

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 10:35

I think they might fall under the—I think they do fall under the nonprofit the majority of times. So, they're the—they would be the one that would probably see the greatest benefit or the greatest cost whether way, you know, you look at it.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 10:52

In this case, we're looking for adjustments to the Houdini fee, not the Jones fee. We didn't see a need to do that, because that policy was just created and that park was just done. But I—what I understand is you'd like to see the data for both parks, because you may want to make recommendation to change the fees at Jones also. But, yeah, the majority are going to be the nonprofit.

Alderson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 11:16

Okay. Yeah, my concern is, if it's making up the majority, then trying to balance it out by charging the others more would be really unsustainable because it would have to really, really jack up those rates if you're talking about more than 50% are the nonprofits. So, I appreciate the sentiment that Alder Schultz has, but I have kind of concerns that Alder Alfheim has kind of referenced,

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 11:39

Alderson Schultz.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 11:42

I—this is the conversation I want to have. Without having those numbers, it's hard to have that conversation. And I'm totally with you on the points that you're making, that we don't want to adversely affect the rentals of these spaces for non-local nonprofits and for-profit corporations. I guess there's a few questions I would have. One of the questions is we have other parks that are rented by corporations; those fall under a non-event fee

schedule. Is there any opportunity to look at those fees? Or is that strictly outside of the purview of this increase? I assume it is. And we're just talking about these two?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 12:19

Yeah, these are the two policies. Here we do have—we did bring the policy through for the pavilions, if I remember—I'm trying to think—well, a month don't matter, but last year. What we did is we looked at increasing it in the community parks just because we knew companies are more likely to be able to afford that, and we stayed away at that time, from the individuals that might want to just have a baby shower or something smaller. So, the community parks were raised at that time. Approved just this last year.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 12:59

Let's stay focus on these two.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 13:01

Okay, I agree. That was a question I was asking. Another question, I guess, and it pertains to the rental fees, in your experience over the last several years of Jones and Houdini Plaza is the—has the use of those spaces caused Parks and Rec to and—or facilities to incur more costs for repair. I know, we've had some issues with Houdini Plaza and the pavement. Is some of what we're doing here to compensate for that? Or is that strictly put back on the organization that rents it and has to cover the costs for repairs?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 13:36

Yeah, it's very rare that—you know, like, we have had a light pole back into and we caught that on camera and was able to get the refund for that repair. But yeah, it's just wear and tear on the park and facilities themselves, you know, things that sometimes need immediate attention. You might have a paper holder torn off the wall or some type of material on the cement that you gotta power wash off. Things like that, sometimes it's hard to pinpoint where that came from, and you just accept it, as you know, well, wear from the program, and you know—but we're always dealing with issues like that, you know.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 14:18

Okay, committee should understand that I trust the numbers that were brought forward. I just felt like for us to make a vote or have a vote on this, I wanted to have a conversation to understand what that breakdown is.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 14:31

Okay.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 14:31

And I don't I don't feel the rush to get this approved. And I'd rather have a—the deep conversation than a quick two-minute meeting to not have a conversation. So, we're getting there. This is a good conversation. We'll get some more in-depth numbers. Maybe we can look at it, maybe nothing changes, and maybe there is no proposed amendment. But I do want to see that so.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 14:52

Okay. Aldersperson Hayden. Then Aldersperson Wolff.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 14:56

Two quick questions. How long do you think it would take to get those numbers together?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 14:59

Um, By the end of the week.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 15:01

Okay, and how much effort—like well, I guess if it's by the end of the week it must be minimal.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 15:04

I don't think it's nothing that I'd be concerned about gathering that information.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 15:09

Okay. And I don't see anybody, any people rushing out to rent Houdini Plaza or Jone's Park in the middle of winter, right?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 15:15

No, no, I'm not concerned about that. I mean people are already have either rented it already, you know, a year in advance—a lot these larger events. And so, a lot of times when we bring these through, it's not for the reason of—you know, they can be implemented, and then usually we move up the date of implementation if need be.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 15:36

So, revisiting this a third time, but it doesn't hurt anything?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 15:40

No.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 15:41

Okay.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 15:42

Aldersperson Wolff.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 15:43

Thank you, Chair. Yeah, I was just gonna say I don't think it hurts to wait a little bit, and get some more information. I've heard some on this committee say, you know, more information is always a good thing. So, I say we hold it.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 15:59

Aldersperson Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 16:00

I am perfectly fine holding and getting more information. I would, however, say that, in my—I have both Jones and Houdini in my district, and the loudest nastiest feedback I get is because of the garbage afterwards. So, if raising the fees across the board allows us to take care of those parks after the events better, I think that's wisely spent, and I would not want to reduce that. That would be my thought. Thank you.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 16:26

Any further questions or comments in terms of holding it until our next meeting? If not let's take a vote. All in favor of holding till our next meeting signify by saying aye. All those opposed? Chair votes aye. Five zero.