



AGENDA REPORT

Library and Community Services

DATE:	July 19, 2022
TO:	Mayor Butt and Members of the City Council
FROM:	LaShonda White, Interim Director of Library and Community Services Ranjana Maharaj, Deputy Director for Community Services - Recreation
Subject:	Approve a Fee Waiver Policy and Partnership Policy
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	<p>The Community Services Department - Recreation Division charges fees, aligned with the City Council-approved Master Fee Schedule, for programs and facility usage to help cover the cost of providing such services and maintaining facilities.</p> <p>While the positive impact on the availability of services is important, adoption of the fee reduction/waiver policy and partnership policy will decrease the amount of revenue that the Recreation Division collects annually.</p> <p>Between the past four years beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-2017 through Fiscal Year 2019-2020, permit fees for various events totaled approximately \$640,000 (\$160,000 annually); however, a total of approximately \$462,000 (\$115,000 annually) in applicable fees were reduced or waived as a result of fee reductions. The total amount of fee reductions include a combination of approved 25 percent reductions for community-based organizations, 50 percent reductions for governmental entities, and 100 percent fee waivers approved by executive management. As a result of the COVID pandemic, FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021 do not provide a full year of "normal" data as rental requests and fees were down substantially.</p>

	In addition, the amounts set forth above may not incorporate all the reduced or waived fees associated with partnership agreements/memorandums of understanding between the City of Richmond and non-profit organizations.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	March 15, 2022
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The Community Services Department - Recreation Division (Recreation) recognizes the value of partnering with outside organizations to provide services that benefit the Richmond community. To provide support to organizations that provide a community service and to create an equitable process, City staff is bringing forth a fee waiver policy for determining when event-related fees can be waived, and a partnership policy to expand or enhance the services provided to Richmond residents.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROVE the City of Richmond's fee waiver and partnership policies; and AUTHORIZE City staff to make administrative changes to both policies and corresponding applications, as necessary, to improve the successful implementation of both policies - Community Services (LaShonda White/Ranjana Maharaj 620-6828).

DISCUSSION:

The Community Services Department-Recreation Division ("Recreation") strives to be an exceptional steward over facilities, parks, and funding for programs and services. Historically, Recreation charges fees for programs and facility/park usage to help cover the cost of providing such services and maintaining facilities. Charging fees is a standard practice in the Recreation and Parks sector when individuals, private groups, government, or non-profit groups wish to reserve and exclusively utilize public facilities.

For many years, Recreation has worked with a variety of individuals and organizations to provide programs and services to Richmond residents and members of the public at-large. Organizations have increasingly requested fee waivers to support their program delivery. Additionally, requests for partnerships between the City and organizations have steadily grown. This has caused Recreation to recognize the need to create more formal policies and procedures to ensure that fee waiver approvals and partnerships are consistent with the mission of Recreation and to ensure that organizations are treated with consistency and in an equitable manner.

City Council requested that City staff develop and bring forth comprehensive fee waiver and partnership policies for consideration. In order to provide an equitable process, City staff recommends the creation of policies and procedures for (1) fee waivers for events or temporary uses of City facilities and/or parks¹, and (2) the development of partnership policies for longer-term collaborations between the City of Richmond and community-based organizations for the benefit of the Richmond community. City staff is bringing forth a fee waiver policy and draft partnership policy for City Council review, discussion, and feedback.

City staff brought drafts of both policies before City Council on March 15, 2022, for discussion and recommended edits. City staff subsequently brought the drafts to the Recreation and Parks Commission on April 6, 2022, for consideration and approval; however, the drafts were not approved by this body until May 4, 2022, due to lack of quorum during the previous meeting. City staff incorporated input from City Council, the Commission, and community into both policies, and is bringing the policies, along with corresponding applications and other relevant documents before City Council on July 19, 2022, for final adoption.

Fee Waiver Policy

Historically, it appears the majority of waived fees related to parks and facilities usage were processed on a case-by-case basis with the ultimate decision made by the City Manager. The purpose of the proposed draft fee waiver policy for City Council's consideration is to establish fiscally responsible guidelines to equitably evaluate and consider fee waiver requests for one-time events or temporary uses of City facilities and parks (Attachment 1).

Under the proposed policy, fee waivers may be submitted by organizations that fall within the following categories:

- 1) Intergovernmental Cooperation
- 2) Non-profit Organization
- 3) Official City of Richmond Partner
- 4) City of Richmond Co-Sponsored Event

Recreation staff collects fees based on the approved Master Fee Schedule to help cover the cost of providing services and maintaining facilities. While the positive impact on the availability of services is important, adoption of the fee reduction/waiver policy and partnership policy will decrease the amount of revenue that the Recreation Division collects annually.

¹ Definition of fee waiver: the granting of a reduction or dismissal of a required fee normally charged for the use of a facility or park.

The draft policy outlines the following:

- Purpose of the policy
- Eligibility
- Eligible and ineligible uses
- Procedures
- Acknowledgements
- Criteria
- Schedule
- Proposed application components

Fee Waiver Timeline

The timelines for the Fee Waiver/Partnership requests will be handled according to the schedule below. The applications for Quarter 1 are due on October 1, 2022. The events for this Quarter are to start during the months of January 2023 to March 2023.

QUARTER	EVENT START MONTH	APPLICATION DUE	APPROVAL/DENIAL NOTIFICATION
QUARTER 1	January February March	October 1st	November 1st
QUARTER 2	April May June	January 1st	February 1st
QUARTER 3	July August September	April 1st	May 1st
QUARTER 4	October November December	July 1 st	August 1st

Any requests received for any events starting prior to the Quarter 1 deadlines (i.e., during the months of August 2022 through December of 2022) will be reviewed on an individual basis.

With the start of Quarter 1 of 2023, City staff strongly encourage and expect organizations to adhere to the schedule below when requesting a fee waiver. The schedule allows Recreation staff to effectively process application requests and manage their various workloads. While it is important for requests to be submitted in alignment with the timeline, City staff understands that there may be times when event planning does not neatly fit within the schedule. City staff will review and consider applications that are submitted outside of the schedule on a case-by-case basis.

Partnership Policy

The purpose of the Partnership Policy is to establish policies, guidelines and procedures that govern how partnerships between the Recreation and external entities are

evaluated, created, and managed (Attachment 2 and Attachment 3). This policy would cover organizations interested in longer-term use of City facilities or parks and such organizations' desire to expand or enhance the services provided to Richmond residents (i.e., youth sports programs, Adopt-A-Spot, and beautification programs). Depending on the type of partnership, these agreements may or may not include fee waivers.

This policy will allow Recreation to be proactive rather than reactive when presented with a partnership opportunity. It also sets a "level playing field" for all potential partners, so that they can know and understand in advance the parameters and selection criteria for a proposed partnership. A major component in exploring any potential partnership will be to identify additional collaborating partners that may help provide a synergistic working relationship in terms of resources and community contributions.

The draft policy includes the following sections:

- Purpose of the policy
- Background
- Partnership purpose
- Partnership categories
- Required conditions
- Partner expectations
- Costs for Approval Process
- Definitions
- Application

Next Steps

As both policies are implemented, City staff encourages feedback from organizations regarding the policies, process, and timelines. City staff requests the ability to make administrative changes to the policies, the applications, and the memorandum of understanding, after review and input by the City Attorney's Office, if those changes are not substantial and can support the successful implementation of the policies. City staff will bring any major recommended changes before City Council for consideration and approval.

City staff plans to provide periodic updates to the Recreation and Parks Commission and City Council regarding the implementation and fiscal impact of the fee waiver and partnership policies.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Proposed Facility Fee Waiver Policy and Application

Attachment 2 - Proposed Partnership Policy and Application

Attachment 3 – Partnership Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding Template