From: Matt Loomis
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Additional info re: MPR Fees
Date: Saturday, January 22, 2022 9:52:10 PM

City Council-

While I understand that I might be the only individual to comment on the proposed Missoula Parks and Recreation User Fees increases, there were a couple points I hoped to get in front of you, which I had neglected to include previously.

The tennis and pickleball courts are not slated for a fee increase, and they have not seen one since at least 2018. Regarding "equity", you may want to think about this, as those are two specific sports that tend to be enjoyed by people "with means". Shirley Kinsey had mentioned during a previous committee (it may have been the Parks Advisory Committee) meeting that she did not find it right to raise fees for courts that are beyond repair. While it is true that the Playfair Park tennis courts are not in fantastic shape (Parks paid to patch/repair/fix the courts a few years ago, but the repair tactic did not work), the Fort Missoula tennis and pickleball courts were redone just a few years ago. Additionally, these courts remain locked for many months out of the year and are not available for public use. During the months that Parks will unlock these Fort courts, my understanding is that the public can not use these courts without a paid reservation (just like the softball fields). For leagues, setup is required by Parks (though possibly less laborious than the softball fields), and staffing IS required by Parks. As staffing is the main reason for charging these fees - as well as for the proposed fee increases - it is a mystery to me why tennis/pickleball users would not pay a higher rental fee. What winds up happening is that not all sports/users are treated equal- again, an issue with equity.

Additionally, as you are probably aware, many hourly works with Parks are not paid well. The site facilitators that users are forced to pay for do not make much (around $13/hr. plus payroll taxes, with no benefits), yet $164.50 will be the nightly fee for a field rental at the softball complex (fields 1-5). While this includes lights, the ONLY other incurred expense by Parks is for the site facilitator, who would be scheduled for about a five hour shift. If just three out of the five fields are used, that is a nightly expense of $493.50, for high-efficiency lights and... what else, exactly? For leagues, there is the option for some field prep, which is basic field preparation at best. Parks will likely answer that some of the fees go to the Enterprise Fund, or possibly some other account that the public is unaware of. Enterprise funding is intended to be used for upgrades to facilities, yet the ONLY upgrades made to the softball complex since its inception have been to correct shortcomings of the initial buildout. So... what is actually being paid for?

EXAMPLE: Weeknight rental from 6-11 p.m. would be $164.50x3 fields=$493.50. This would include lights (Parks estimates at no more than $10 per hour per field, so $60 at the most), a site facilitator (say $13 per hour plus payroll taxes x five hours at most = $85), and field prep (Parks puts that at $54.50/field, although I would gladly debate that).

In my example above, that's somewhere around $300 in actual "cost" (according to Parks, though I *highly* contest that the field prep they do would take that much in time or supplies) for three fields over five rental hours. At a rental cost of nearly $500, where is the rest of these fees going? My point here is that the amount of labor and materials used doesn't seem to come close to what fees are charged.

I would implore you to not approve fee increases - of any kind - from a City department without some type of explanation from said department. Without knowing what the budget implications will (potentially) be, I don't know how one could make an educated decision like that. At the very least, ***please*** send this back to Parks and ask for justification and numbers, numbers, numbers. I'll eat my words if their actual costs somehow equal what they charge, but that is a risk I'm happily willing to take.

Again, I thank you for your time and am sure that no counselors will take this information without some serious consideration.

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