



Denver City Council

Public Amenities Committee Meeting Summary

Date: Sept. 5, 2006

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Council Conference Room

Committee Members Present: Lehmann, Montero, Johnson, Robb, Rodriguez

Committee Members Absent: None

Other Council Present: None

1. Budget Overview - Denver Public Library

Shirley Amore, City Librarian, made the presentation, saying this is the first year in several that the news is good. Over the last few years, the budget has significantly decreased, resulting in cuts in staff and service hours, while demand for services has increased as the population has grown and changed. The attached detailed information was provided; the main points in the presentation and discussion included:

- Mayor's recommended DPL 2007 operating and capital budget is \$30,045,086, up from \$28,463,200 in 2006 (a nearly \$1 million cost for utilities is transferred to Public Works for 2007, reflecting \$1 million of the increase).
- DPL's budget expansion request was \$3.3 million; the Mayor's recommendation is \$1.4 million.
- Service expansion includes increase of total hours from 900 in 2006 to 940, to be distributed geographically (some in each quadrant) based on servicing customers with lower incomes and limited English and in the highest-volume locations.
- Expansion of staff from 413 in 2006 to 430.
- DPL will propose to the Infrastructure Task Force new branches in Green Valley Ranch, Stapleton, and somewhere in the West Colfax corridor.
- 2007 service expansion will include delayed, necessary technology upgrades and maintenance agreements.
- DPL is first public library in the country to offer digital downloadable books and movies
- DPL has a strong relationship with Denver Public Schools and Denver Parks & Recreation.
- Residents need predictability of their branch library hours.
- The Fresh Life programs are a wonderful addition and very popular.
- DPL should host the conceptual Libeskind model of Civic Center Park.

2. Budget Overview – Denver Office of Cultural Affairs

Erin Trapp, Director of DOCA, made the presentation, stating that the 2007 budget is largely unchanged from 2006. DOCA staff increased last year to 11, which is good. The main points in her discussion with the Committee included:

- The General Fund 2007 operating budget and capital equipment budget is \$1.2 million, up from \$1.17 in 2006.

--continued--

- DOCA leverages funds through partnerships and sponsorships, totaling about \$255,000 this year, mostly in-kind contributions.
- The 2007 free summer concert series will be expanded to other parks to serve more communities.
- Doors Open Denver 2007 will be organized around themes with more guided tours.
- One Book One Denver will announce the 2006 book later than planned this fall due to problems scheduling the author to be in Denver for the announcement.
- The Public Art Program has 3 full-time staff (comparable cities have about 8). The program is acquiring projectors, doubling the number of submissions that can be reviewed. Almost the entire submission and review process is now digital, greatly increasing the efficiency. A goal for 2007 is to eliminate the backlog of projects awaiting their Public Art component.
- The Justice Center program includes two phases: campus-wide and the smaller interior installations. An artists-in-residence program – including inmates in the public art program – has been proposed and is being explored.

3. Budget Overview – Theatres & Arenas

Jack Finlaw, Director of the Division of Theatres & Arenas, said the 2007 budget is mostly unchanged from 2006, and most of its revenue is from charges to its constituents for use of its facilities (Red Rock Amphitheatre; Denver Coliseum; Denver Performing Arts Center [Buell Theatre; Boettcher Concert Hall, Newton Auditorium Theatre, housing the Ellie Caulkins Opera House and Chambers Grant Salon]; Colorado Convention Center). Theatres & Arenas is a special revenue fund.

- For 2007, the division expects a \$1.6 million General Fund transfer, representing 9% of total revenue of \$17.2 million.
- The transfer is down from \$2.5 million in 2006, reflecting a requested increase in the special event parking transfer. The DPAC garage may be transferred from Public Works to Theatres & Arenas. The Parking Council is looking at this within the context of all parking policies.
- Sources of revenue are rent for facilities, concessions, and parking.
- Debt payments on the renovation of the Newton Auditorium are made out of Theatres & Arenas operating budget.
- As of August 1, 2006, the stagehands are no longer a salary expense but are accounting under services since their services are obtained now through contract with SMG.
- Capital budget request is nearly \$3 million, 36% of which is for roofing the original convention center. Other large projects are at the Buell and Red Rocks.
- Theatres & Arenas will propose to the Infrastructure Task Force completion of the studio theatre in the Newton Auditorium (\$10-\$12 M) and renovations/updates at Boettcher (\$50-\$100 M).
- The flexible “black box” theatre at Newton would provide a smaller performance venue for groups including the Tier III organizations. Colorado Symphony Orchestra would participate in renovations of Boettcher.
- Naming rights to the lecture hall at the convention center are near a deal.
- A recent ruling on prevailing wage for some convention center employees will increase the 2007 operating loss, as will higher utility costs and taxes on utilities.
- Theatres & Arenas is working with the Downtown Partnership on plans to upgrade 14th Street.
- Retail on 16th Street Mall is a key to the success of downtown.
- Theatres & Arenas is reorganizing its structure to focus on customer service, safety issues, and ADA compliance.

4. Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan & GOCO Grant

Susan Baird, Natural Resources Planner, and Bart Berger, founder of the Mountain Parks Foundation, discussed the Mountain Parks Master Plan and the \$75,000 Great Outdoors Colorado planning grant that will fund a portion of that work. Main points in the discussion included:

- The Denver Mountain Park system includes over 14,000 acres in three counties (Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Douglas). Acreage ranges from the Winter Park Ski area to Red Rocks Park (exclusive of the Amphitheatre) to remote peaks important to the mountain vista from many vantage points. There are numerous trails, roads, and structures. The Mountain Parks are also home to an elk herd (Genesee) and two bison herds (Genesee and Daniels).
- The system, begun in the early 20th Century, has been somewhat neglected as regional and neighborhood parks and parkways in the city became more important, and the Department wants to bring this important asset into the new century.
- Creation of the Mountain Parks Foundation by Mr. Berger was the catalyst for embarking on a system-wide master plan, providing the local match for the GOCO grant.
- The City and the Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding which ensures that the City retains its responsibilities and decision-making role.
- The Foundation can help bring in outlying stakeholders and contributors.
- During the planning effort, each parcel will be assessed. One of the first products will be a user survey, funded by the Foundation. This helps quantify who uses the park, how they use the parks, and what they would like to see happen with the parks.
- The plan will help improve trail system connectivity with Jefferson Count trails and help shape a strategy for forest management.
- The Committee periodically will be briefed on the progress of the Master Plan.

5. Park Rangers Program

Susan Fry, Assistant Director-Parks Safety, introduced several people involved in the program, which is housed in the office of the manager of parks safety:

- Ran Sanders, Manager of Parks Safety;
- Fred Weiss, Director of Finance & Administration for Parks & Recreation;
- Dave Stewart, Denver Risk Management Office;
- Sergeant Walter Greene, Denver Police Department;
- Scott Bostick, Ranger for the Mountain Parks;
- Jeff Broida, Ranger for the East Parks Districts; and
- Jamie Salas, Ranger for Northeast and Northwest districts and the Rivers & Trails District.

Ms. Fry provided the attached handout and reviewed the goals of the program, emphasizing that the main roles of a ranger are:

- to provide customer service;
- to provide a safe environment in the parks; and
- to let the public know what is expected of them their parks.

Ms. Fry and Sgt. Greene discussed the program with the Committee, and the main points included:

- Rangers were trained through parts of the Police Academy, including bike training, and have the authority to issue citations for certain violations including dogs off leash and excrement. However, few citations have been issued.

- Ten rangers were trained in April; six remain.
- Uniformed but unarmed, rangers patrol routes seven days per week, logging daily activity. There have been no injuries or serious incidents.
- Ms. Fry can dispatch rangers as needed to other locations. Council members and the public can reach Ms. Fry at 303-880-0529.
- Assigning rangers to special events in parks this summer has helped raise public awareness of the program.
- The program would benefit from a central reporting location; a dispatch system; and recognizable vehicles. An empty but marked vehicle parked at one park is credited with a decrease in incidents.
- The program is truly an inter-agency effort with lots of excellent help from the Police Department, Animal Control, and Environmental Health.
- The rangers are the eyes on the parks the department needs in order to get in front of problems and issues at the various parks. The rangers can perform more functions than patrol.
- Requested 2007 funding would have doubled the 2006 funding of \$118,000. The Mayor's recommended budget includes the same amount for 2007.
- The rangers represent both a large investment of resources in training and lots of experience. Not continuing the program year-round is a loss.

Gretchen Williams
9-9-06

S:committees/public amenities/summary