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## Public Amenities Committee Summary

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**Oct. 28, 2009**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Conference Room 391**

**Committee Members Present:** Lehmann, Madison, Johnson

**Other Council Present:** Linkhart, Nevitt, Robb

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*Agenda: Parks & Recreation 2010 Fees*

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### **Parks & Recreation 2010 Fees**

#### Committee Action

The Committee approved filing a bill adjusting the Denver Parks & Recreation fees and charges for 2010 as proposed by the department, to be effective Jan. 1, 2010 (except for the Youth Athletic Permits, which will be effective July 1, 2010, to accommodate the budgeting year of those programs). Councilman Linkhart dissented.

#### Summary of Discussion

Kevin Patterson, Manager, Denver Parks & Recreation (DPR), and Fred Weiss, Director of Finance & Administration, DPR, presented the proposed fee schedule for 2010.

Many proposed fee increases reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI); most are less than \$5, although not all. Most youth fees remain the same. For example, proposed recreation center annual memberships are increased from \$65 to \$85 for seniors; \$150 to \$190 for adults; and remain at \$35 for youth.

DPR has over 330 individual fees for its vast array of programs and services, ranging from all kinds of classes to picnic shelter permits to Buffalo Bill Museum entrance fees to mobile stage rental. All DPR fees are approved by Council and set forth in Section 39 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. Fees have not been changed since 2006.

The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) and the Recreation Center Task Force recommended adjusting fees by the CPI this year, except in the youth category, to start bringing fees more in line with surrounding jurisdictions. PRAB recommended that DPR achieve a more effective cost recovery model within 5 to 10 years. Current cost recovery for all of DPR is 12%; Recreation Division recovery rate is 20%.

The proposed fees have been discussed with various stakeholders groups, such as the Athletic Field Advisory Board, Special Events Task Force and the Golf Advisory Committee. All were supportive of the proposal, with some advocating for larger increases.

Councilman Nevitt said the proposed increases, generally no more than \$1 or \$2, are not sustainable. He said it is difficult to justify to his constituents the transition of their recreation facility when DPR is charging so little for its services and not recovering its costs.

Mr. Patterson responded that DPR is trying to achieve a balance between the hardships people are facing due to the current economic conditions and the goal of full cost recovery. Also, when comparing fees with others, we need to fit the fee with the level of service provided. Annual increases over several years will be needed in order to reach full cost recovery. It cannot be done in one year.

The total DPR budget is \$40M, 12% of which is derived from fees and charges. Costs generally increase at CPI, except that labor and benefits increase more. If this proposal is adopted, the increases will result in \$228,000 in new revenue. It was noted that Golf is an enterprise fund and receives no tax revenue and its revenues do not support other programming.

Recreation centers granted 5300 scholarships last year, a \$217,000 value. The My Place Program provides free annual recreation center membership to all children at any school, including charter schools, with 75% of students eligible for the free lunch program. Membership in the program includes 50% off any program or activity, except summer day camp.

Councilman Linkhart expressed concern that not all of the recommendations of the Recreation Center Task Force were being implemented. He suggested that the Advisory Board be brought to Committee to discuss its philosophy that led them to conclude DPR needs higher cost recovery. He said recovery should vary by program since each program has different goals. The free swimming program resulted in less crime, proving that making it easy for kids to use the centers and pools does have a positive impact. For this reason, the youth day pass should not be increased from \$2 to \$2.25 when most kids using the pass are from low-income families. DPR should be looking to other major core cities as comparables rather than the suburbs.

Councilman Nevitt said the fees are generally too low, even with the very modest increases proposed. CPI is not the appropriate multiplier if the goal is to keep pace with inflation, in which case the percent cost recovery will only decrease. He suggested using the change in metro area median income. Pricing for the special event venues (Washington Park Boathouse, City Park Pavilion, etc.) should be more strategic, such as adopting higher evening and weekend rates.

Councilwoman Robb said Denver Public Schools charges much more for use of its fields. The City and DPS need to be more coordinated. She was concerned that revenue produced at recreation centers goes into the General Fund and not back to improve the centers.

Councilwoman Johnson said many of the teams using the fields are not picking up litter after their games, but it is impossible to tell which ones are not complying with the rules. She suggested posting signs alerting all users that they are all in danger of losing use of the fields if they aren't kept clean. She wanted to ensure that the scholarship program remains robust, and she asked DPR to work with the Denver Housing Authority to get My Place rates for the kids in an area of subsidized housing.

Councilwoman Lehmann asked the golf fee package be brought to Committee next year prior to the Mayor's draft budget. She said the proposal is a modest increase overall, but it is a start for 2010. Before the 2011 budget is compiled, we should work to make sure the fees will cover a higher percent of costs. She recommended that the Committee moved the proposed ordinance to the full Council.