

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date	May 4, 2009
	Agenda Item No. 60 Roll Call No. <u>09-</u> Communication No. <u>09-297</u> Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp Park and Recreation Director	

AGENDA HEADING:

Approval of 2009 Financial Hardship - Reduced Fee Program For Various Park and Recreation Department Recreational Facilities and Programs and Certain Cemetery Fees.

SYNOPSIS:

Approve proposal to expand eligibility for the Park and Recreation Scholarship Program, which subsidizes recreational program fees, for the remainder of 2009 by waiving income parameters and other qualifying factors and eliminating grave opening and closing fees for “at need” burials at the municipal cemeteries for residents of the City of Des Moines.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: Estimate to be revenue neutral with potential for loss of income.

Funding Source: Revenue loss from non-subsidized fee reduction to various Park and Recreation programs and services.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Park and Recreation Department staff, the City Manager, and the Park and Recreation Board are recommending that, due to the wide-ranging adverse financial repercussions and number of people impacted by factors currently affecting the nation’s economy, a program to temporarily reduce fees for those affected should be implemented. Additionally, we recommend that any other metropolitan area municipality offering similar reduction in programs and services be allowed to reciprocate with the City of Des Moines by mutual consent.

The current scholarship program, which is administered for the Park and Recreation Department by the City’s Community Development Department staff through their four Community Services site offices, provides a 50% subsidy to recreation programs, including: daily skating admission at Brenton Skating Plaza, individual and family season swim passes, park shelter rentals, The First Tee youth golf and swimming lesson fees. This program requires a qualification process which uses stringent criteria based on Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, including household size and income. In the past twelve months, the program has served 258 Des Moines households and benefited 1,041 individuals.

Under the 2009 Financial Hardship Reduced Fee proposal, the program would be extended to all residents who request it, based on their income being reduced in the last twelve months. Applicants will

simply need to state that their income has been reduced. They will also be asked to complete a simple anonymous 6 question survey (see survey attached to the roll call).

Staff recommends temporarily expanding the list of applicable recreation programs to include a 50% reduction of the following:

- monthly fitness membership and all program fees at the Archie Brooks and Four-Mile Community Centers,
- individual youth basketball and soccer registration fees,
- tennis lesson fees and
- Gray's Lake Park watercraft rentals.

Additional fee reductions would include:

- 25% reduction on weekday golf rounds at Grandview and Waveland Golf courses,
- 25% reduction on fall softball and flag football registrations and
- Elimination of grave opening and closing fees for "at need" burials at the municipal cemeteries.

Residents wishing to participate in the reduced fee opportunity will be issued a 2009 Reduced Fee Program card which they can show at various recreation point-of-sale locations. In addition to the four Community Services site offices, cards will be issued at the Archie Brooks and Four-Mile Community Centers, Park and Recreation Administrative offices located at 600 East Court, and the City Hall Information Center desk. Along with the card, residents will receive a flier indicating available subsidized programs and their rates, as well as, information regarding free recreational opportunities such as disc golf, Yoga in the Park, wading pools, recreational trails, story hours, conservation programs and community center events.

Availability of the program will be announced through various channels including: signage at City recreational facilities, Community Development Service site offices, United Way and Workforce Development locations, press releases, the City Source resident newsletter, and City Cable Channel 7. The media will be asked to assist in notifying the public through public service announcements. In addition, metro area employers, outplacement agencies, labor unions, financial institutions, health and wellness agencies/facilities/insurance companies and utilities will be asked to assist in informing likely candidates for the program.

The program has been formatted to assist citizens of all ages and income levels who are currently undergoing difficult financial circumstances due to reduced household employment, work hours and wages to pursue healthy, family recreation and social activities through a simple process which minimizes their time to qualify to participate in this program. An estimated range of fiscal impact has been indicated, as it is not possible to approximate the number of households and/or residents who will be assisted through the program, or which recreation opportunities will be most often used.

The Park and Recreation Director has the authority to temporarily reduce certain recreational facility and program fees and cemetery fees under City Code Section 74-187, which provides that:

Temporary fee adjustment. Fees as determined in sections 74-176 through 74-186, and section 34-69 of this article may be changed at the discretion of the park and recreation director upon the approval of the city manager for engaging in special projects, programs or promotions that justify such change,

including reduced fees to provide access to park and recreation programs and facilities to low income residents.

Due to the size and scope of this recommendation, staff requests City Council support for this expanded program to be made available through a simple, hassle-free approach.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

PREVIOUS BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): Park and Recreation Board

Date: April 28, 2009

Action: Recommended support of the fee reduction for 2009 and reciprocal relationship with partnering central Iowa municipalities providing similar fee reduction offerings.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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