



Public Amenities Committee
Meeting Summary

Wed. May 14, 2008 10:30 a.m. Conference Room 391

Members Present: Lehmann, Johnson, Madison, Robb
Members Absent: None
Other Council Present: Garcia

Agenda: Accept Boettcher Foundation grant; create special revenue fund for the Art Biennial
Results of Performing Arts Survey
Extension of Parks on-call contracts
2008 Game Plan Strategic Vision

1. Denver Office of Cultural Affairs

Committee Action

The Committee approved filing a bill to:

- accept a \$1 million grant from Boettcher Foundation for the Art Biennial; and
- create a new Art Biennial Donations special revenue fund.

Summary of Discussion

Erin Trapp, Director of the Office of Cultural Affairs (DOCA), said that the Boettcher Foundation is donating \$1 million in support of the Biennial de las Americas, and a special revenue fund needs to be created for the receipt and expenditure of such private grants in support of the event, which is scheduled for 2010. The goals are to:

- reinforce Denver as a world cultural center;
- foster civic pride;
- provide residents with a world-class cultural experience; and
- promote cultural tourism.

The Boettcher donation will be used to work with visual arts institutions to develop qualifications for an artistic director and engage in an international search for that individual. DOCA is working with several academic institutions, such as University of Colorado, Denver University, and the Aspen Institute. Committee members suggested the International School, Denver School for the Performing Arts, and the Auraria Campus.

The central location of the event will be Civic Center. It will fall between the Peoples Fair and the Taste of Colorado, with several weeks of exhibits in June and July.

Ms. Trapp also reported on the results of DOCA's Survey of Live Performing Arts Audiences.

Findings include:

- Denver residents generally have a positive view of and strong interest in the live performing arts and have a strong awareness of the options available.
- Word of mouth (58%) and newspapers (45%) are the most common source of information about live performances.
- Live performing arts activities are part of the activities associated with spending time with friends and family (75% said they would attend live performances if others went with them).
- 58% reported attending a live theatrical performance in the past 12 months.
- 41% attended a performing arts festival in the past 12 months.
- 34% attended a live music performance in the past 12 months.
- Dance performances do not fare as well as other, as dance groups have been reporting.
- 69% would rather attend an event in person; 31% would rather watch on TV or on-line.
- 48% of the 65+ age group preferred to watch performances on TV or on-line. Only 30% of those aged 18-25 would rather watch at home.
- 59% would rather attend live performing arts in locations near their home than near work.
- 75% said that tickets are often too expensive; 33% said they skipped a performance due to ticket price. Ticket expense is a significant barrier to participation in live performing arts.
- 82% would definitely or probably use last-minute half-price ticketing for live performances.

While many performance groups are resistant to discounting tickets, they recognize that it might be beneficial. DOCA will explore the range of options for this service.

2. Parks & Recreation – Extension of on-call contracts

Committee Action

The Committee approved filing a bill to:

- extend for 2 years each of 6 on-call contracts (lengthening them into 2012);
- increase the contract maximum of each contract from \$485,000 to \$1,455,000; and
- amend the bonding language to allow bonding based on cost estimate for each project rather the total \$1.5 million, which is cost-prohibitive for most contractors.

Summary of Discussion

Gordon Robertson, Director of Parks Planning, said the Department has a lot of work to do, and the on-call contracts are the most efficient way to ensure progress. The terms on these contracts are not as important as increasing the monetary limits, and this amendment would triple the amount available. All of these contracts have almost exhausted the original \$485,000.

The contracts under discussion are with:

Goodland Construction
T2 Construction, Inc.
American Civil Constructors

CTM, Inc. dba CO Total Maintenance
Richdell Construction
Colorado Designsapes

Councilwoman Robb asked if Parks has enough planning staff to adequately oversee all of the bond projects. Mr. Robertson said the department is staffed to handle the regular annual capital improvements program (CIP), but he is analyzing the staff required to handle the \$90 million in bond projects. Limited-time “private” project managers hired for specific projects with described lengths of time is the best way to handle the bond program.

Councilman Garcia asked Mr. Robertson to share his observations regarding Parks' contracting. Mr. Robertson said he has observed in his 11 months and 2 weeks with the department that there is too often a lack of timely communication to Council members concerning reasons for delays on projects. Delays are inevitable, mostly caused by weather, staff turnover, permitting; and the public planning process, which often is longer than anticipated.

Councilman Garcia said he sensed a reluctance to use liquidated damages when a contractor does not perform. Mr. Robertson said liquidated damages, which is a charge – generally \$250 to \$500 per day – to contractors when they exceed the number of days specified in the contract for elements of the work. These are used when they are reasonable and necessary. Charging liquidated damages for weather delay is not a reasonable approach. It is a negative course of action, and he prefers incentives. Contractual period for performance will be enforced, he said.

Councilman Garcia asked if there are opportunities for a variety of firms to get work. Mr. Robertson said these on-call contracts were heavily advertised, and the department was happy to receive these six qualified bidders. He added that within a month, he will have an assistant director who will focus on contracting, which will increase oversight and efficiencies of all the contractors.

3. The 2008 Game Plan Strategic Vision

Committee Action

The Committee will present a proclamation to Council recognizing the Park & Recreation Department's 2008 Game Plan Strategic Vision.

Summary of Discussion

Kim Bailey, Manager of the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR), and Angela Casias, Management Analyst, presented an update on implementation of The Game Plan, which was adopted by Council in 2003. It is a 50-year visionary guiding document. The core values of the plan are:

- A sustainable environment;
- Equity in facilities and services;
- Engagement of the community; and
- Sound economics.

These are the determining criteria for allocating resources, for management and accountability, for partnership with the public, and for protecting Denver's open spaces for the future. They have served the department and the community well. In order to ensure that the values are kept current, the department recently reconsidered the definitions to ensure that the framework for measurable outcomes evolves over time. The department should revisit these every four to five years.

Points made during the presentation of the 2008 Game Plan Strategic Vision included:

- DPR is emphasizing outreach, marketing and public input. The Ruby Hill Rail yard is one example of response to interest in new types of recreation.
- The bond projects are an opportunity to make Parks' dollars go further, as Parks projects are bundled with Public Works projects.

- DPR is working to integrate maintenance standards into its planning, and it is seeking buy-in of all of the staff, down to the mowers. All supervisors have been trained in The Game Plan's values and the need to comply with the standards. Maintenance standards are being built into the bond projects, the DPR capital improvements program, and the 2009 bonus plans.
- DPR has acknowledged the planning hierarchy to help ensure a sense of continuity from planning documents to everyday decisions. The hierarchy forms a pyramid, starting with the planning documents with the broadest community engagement and moving up to internal operating policies. Level of plans are shown here inversely:
 - Citywide plans (Comprehensive Plan 2000, GreenPrint Denver) form pyramid's base.
 - Departmental plans (Game Plan, BluePrint Denver) reflect the citywide plans.
 - System master plans (Playground Master Plan, Cost Benefit Analysis).
 - Standards and assessments (Maintenance Standards, park specific plans).
 - Rules & regulations (adopted by manager, legally enforceable, such as alcohol use in parks and general rules about use of parks).
 - DPR policies (internal operating procedures not legally enforceable, such as staff uniforms and utility policy).
- DPR has developed Master Plan Summary Sheets to document decisions and how they conform to adopted plans.

The conversation included the following points:

- Councilwoman Robb: Council does not adopt the master plans for specific parks, but perhaps Council should at least adopt a proclamation recognizing each of those plans.
- Councilwoman Lehman asked if the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) had seen the hierarchy and revised definitions of the four core values. Ms. Bailey said yes, and the members are pleased with it and understand where the PRAB's points of input are.
- Council Johnson: Like the model playground, parks and recreation centers get custom tailored to the neighborhood, which is important and sustainable. She added that the consultant for the recreation center assessment referred to the center managers as "facilities managers", but she thinks they are "program managers".
- Councilman Garcia: There is a perception in northwest Denver that DPR is not delivering equity in that area of town. He said Council should consider reaffirming that equity is a core value, possibly with a proclamation "adopting" the updated definitions of the core values, with a defined period of time before another review. How the City approaches this is important for the neighborhoods.
- Councilwoman Lehmann said it is most important that there is a process to keep the plan and its vision up-to-date. The Committee will present a proclamation as a way of telling the community why we are doing this, how we arrived at it, and what it means.