April 9, 2015

To: Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board; Lauri Dannemiller, Manager, Denver Parks and Recreation; and Scott Gilmore, Deputy Manager, Denver Parks and Recreation

From: Cheesman Park Advocacy Group (CPAG)

RE: CPAG Motion to oppose adding Cheesman Park to the list of Private Outdoor Fee-Based Activity Parks

Introduction: The entire Board of the Cheesman Park Advocacy Group (with the exception of one member who is out of the country and unable to vote) unanimously approved a motion on April 3, 2015 to remove Cheesman Park from the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) recommended list of parks in which private outdoor fee-based events (POFA) could occur. (1)

Motion

The Cheesman Park Advocacy Group, a non-profit registered neighborhood organization, urges the Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to remove Cheesman Park from the DPR’s recommended list of parks in which private outdoor fee-based events (POFA) may occur. Our board does not support commercialization of Denver's public parks, in general, or the POFA initiative, in particular. By permitting businesses to charge individuals to engage in activities on public parkland, the initiative excludes non-paying members of the public from portions of the park. This policy also advantages those few businesses able to obtain permits thereby undermining "fair play" in the business community.

The placement of Cheesman Park on the list of POFA parks is misguided for these reasons:

1. The City's master plan for parks, The Game Plan, and the Cheesman Park Master Plan classify Cheesman as a passive park. We assert this means that deliberate efforts will not be made by DPR to increase organized activities in this park;

2. There are homes and residential buildings contiguous to parkland on three of the four sides of the park (i.e., there is no street that divides these homes and buildings from the park), and the addition of POFA events that may occur many times during the day and week will disturb park neighbors;

3. The use of Cheesman Park has increased exponentially over the past few years. The traffic and parking in and near the park will increase even more, as a result of POFA in a neighborhood that is already experiencing heavy congestion, as a result of both; and

4. Capitol Hill, the area in which Cheesman Park is located, has more people living in newly-constructed residential buildings than in the recent past. As a result, increasing numbers of young people who cannot afford a car and cannot drive to open space outside their neighborhoods; older people who need a place to walk; disabled people who need a place to be outside; and children who need a place to play all need Cheesman Park to be free and open to the public. The addition of up to 75 fee-paying people engaged in organized activities in the park, from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., numbers and times allowable under the POFA policy, would undermine this worthy communal goal.

Conclusion:

There is not a demonstrated need for this policy within the Denver park system, in general, and in Cheesman Park, in particular. In the report of the Denver Parks and Recreation Annual Review of the Private Outdoor Activities Program, it was noted there were 114 approved sites within 27 parks for these activities, but only 14 POFA permits were issued in 2014 system-wide. These data show we need neither more parks nor more sites for this program. In fact, it almost appears there is an effort to create rather than respond to a need. Nonetheless, we urge that Cheesman Park be removed from the Recommended List of Parks for this program.
The Cheesman Park Advocacy Group was established in 2004 by Denver City Councilwoman Jeanne Robb to address community concerns about Cheesman Park regarding crime, safety, traffic, park restoration and park maintenance. Our mission is to preserve, improve, and maintain the historic integrity of Cheesman Park in a diverse, people-friendly environment. In 2008, CPAG became a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization. We receive funding through donations (deductible as charitable contributions to the extent allowed by law) and fund-raising activities.
April 9, 2015

To: Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
   Lauri Dannemiller, Manager, Denver Parks & Recreation
   Scott Gilmore, Deputy, Parks

From: Friends and Neighbors for Cheesman Park: Jay Rust, President; Greg Sorensen, Vice President; Kathleen Rust, Secretary; Paula Kauffman, Treasurer; Judith Bledsoe

Subject: Resolution in Opposition to Private Outdoor Fee-Based Activities in Denver Parks

WHEREAS, Denver parks are created for free public enjoyment, are open to all, and are paid for by citizens through taxes;

WHEREAS, Cheesman Park is proposed for Private Outdoor Fee-Based Activities (POFA);

WHEREAS, the issuance of POFA permits establishes a precedent for expanding fee-based activities in public parks;

WHEREAS, Cheesman Park is a passive park, as stated in the park’s Master Plan, and is not suitable for fee-based activities;

WHEREAS, POFA permits expand commercialization within public parks by private, for-profit businesses;

WHEREAS, POFA-permitted activities compete with the private business community;

WHEREAS, Cheesman Park exists in a highly dense urban setting, which already results in high park usership;

WHEREAS, it is proposed that Cheesman Park be eligible for three POFA permits per year, with 25 participants possible per permit, eight hours per day (between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.), seven days per week, six months per year, resulting in increased park use and neighborhood parking shortages;

WHEREAS, only 14 POFA permits were issued last year for 114 eligible sites within 27 city parks; and

WHEREAS, it is shortsighted to promote POFA permitting as a means for controlling business ventures within public parks instead of charging park rangers with enforcement for the elimination of private for-profit enterprises;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Officers of Friends and Neighbors for Cheesman Park are unanimously opposed to all proposed POFA permit expansions, and further we support the elimination of POFA permitting for all public parks within the City and County of Denver.