

MEMORANDUM

TO: Park Advisory Commission

FROM: Julie Berson Grand, PAC Chair
Colin Smith, Parks & Recreation Services Manager

DATE: June 18, 2013

SUBJECT: Resolution to recommend waiving park space rental fee for Liberty Plaza

Liberty Plaza has long been identified by many as a 'problem' park that could benefit from improvements. Staff and the PAC Downtown Park Subcommittee have been working to identify best practices for successful urban parks and plazas. A recurring theme is that successful downtown parks are activated through planned programming.

Liberty Plaza is commonly perceived as difficult to activate. There have been, however, notable exceptions. For a number of years, Herb David Guitar Studio hosted music in the park. More recently, the Bank of Ann Arbor has used Liberty Plaza as the venue for their popular Sonic Lunch series. In each of these cases, fees for the rental of the park space have been waived to encourage activity.

In an attempt to further activate Liberty Plaza staff recommend that fees for the rental of park space be waived for a one-year trial basis, through July 1, 2014. The waived rental fee can then be promoted with a goal of attracting additional musicians, performers, and other events at Liberty Plaza.

While the rental fee would be waived, other 'hard' costs the City might incur for an event would be passed on to the user. Examples of hard costs could include: electricity, site cleanup, and equipment rental. All groups wishing to reserve Liberty Plaza would work with the Parks Customer Service Office and would be issued a permit outlining the respective obligations of both parties once their event is approved. Additionally, approved events are still subject to all other park rules unless specifically waived for an event.

Eliminating rental fees at Liberty Plaza would also enable 'Pizza in the Park' or similar humanitarian efforts to continue without the financial constraints of park fees. Such an approach would simultaneously remove the need for staff to determine which activities are worthy of waiving fees. Instead, any number of social, cultural, and recreational activities that are of benefit to the community could take advantage of the proposed fee waiver.

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND WAIVING PARK SPACE RENTAL FEE FOR LIBERTY

Whereas, Liberty Plaza has long been identified as a park space that could be improved;

Whereas, Previous events have taken place in Liberty Plaza with no rental fee charged and have activated the space;

Whereas, It is the goal of staff and PAC to further activate Liberty Plaza by increasing social, cultural, and recreational activities that take place there;

RESOLVED, That PAC recommends that City Council authorize the City Administrator or designee to waive any fees related to the rental of park space in Liberty Plaza until July 1, 2014; and

RESOLVED That PAC reviews the efficacy of this fee waiver prior to July 1, 2014 and provide City Council with a recommendation as to whether the fee waiver should become permanent.