



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

52

Date October 10, 2016

Communication from the Chair of the Park and Recreation Board regarding financial assistance program for various Park and Recreation Department programs and facilities.

MOVED by \_\_\_\_\_ to receive and file.

Approved as to Form:

*Ann DiDonato*

Ann DiDonato  
Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
HENSLEY				
MOORE				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk



September 27, 2016

Honorable Mayor  
And  
Members of the City Council

Re: Financial assistance program

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

Des Moines Parks and Recreation has a variety of programs and facilities that have a tremendous impact on the quality of life in Des Moines. Every Des Moines citizen deserves the opportunity to participate in these programs and facilities regardless of their ability to pay.

On May 4, 2009, by Roll Call No. 09-799, the Des Moines City Council approved the temporary expansion in eligibility for the Park and Recreation Scholarship Program, which subsidized recreational program fees, and was then administered by the City's Community Development Department through the Community Services site locations (which became the Des Moines Community Action Agency of the City's Housing Services Department). The expanded, "Fun Pass" scholarship program, which was originally to last for the remainder of calendar year 2009, waived income parameters and other qualifying factors for residents of the City of Des Moines and was recommended by Parks and Recreation staff due to the wide-ranging adverse financial repercussions and number of people impacted by factors such as loss of employment, reduction of work hours, or reduction of wages then affecting the nation's economy.

The program was offered again in 2010 as the City and nation struggled to recover from the financial downturn. The relaxed-qualification scholarship program offerings, amounts of subsidization and qualifications evolved as it continued year after year, and into 2013. The lenient application process, that did not require verification through presentation of personal information documentation continued, with the subsidy cards, now known as GRASP (Greater Des Moines Recreational Activity Scholarship Program) being issued primarily through the Parks and Recreation administrative office, but also at Pioneer Columbus and Four Mile Community Centers, and the Community Action Site Office.

At the end of 2010, Des Moines' unemployment rate peaked at 6.3%. The nation's unemployment rate continued to be more than 7%; however, the City's unemployment rate shows the strength of the local economy and decreased at that time to 4.5% at the end of June 2013.

Although the City's economic climate is in a much different place today than when this scholarship program temporarily expanded its eligibility back in 2009, the number of people signing up for the program increased following this time and has steadily continued to increase in the number of people accessing this service in the last few years. Since 2011, when the exception to qualification was in place, 411 cards were issued in that year. In 2012, 1226 cards were issued and in 2013, 1719 cards were issued, the highest amount to date. Once the qualification criteria was reapplied in 2014, 560 cards were issued that year with 601 in 2015, and another increase up to 654 cards in 2016. This demonstrates that while the need for this program has declined there are still those who benefit from this service. As would be expected, scholarship card usage, along with the cost of lost revenue from these discounted activities, had also risen dramatically. That number is also shrinking as the need decreases but has not gone away.

When the registration system of participants self-declaring their income ran its course and the change was made to identify an application process for approval this laid the foundation for the program to continue. On October 8, 2013 the Parks and Recreation Department, with recommendation by the Park and Recreation Board, approved to discontinue the temporary expansion in eligibility and reactivate the Park and Recreation Scholarship Program which was reinstated and carried out only by Des Moines Community Action Agency staff, who reviews the required personal documents which verify income and residency. That same application process qualifies applicants for such community services as energy assistance, for which the program year begins in October.

On May 18, 2015, by Roll Call No. 15-0871, the Des Moines City Council approved an agreement with Red Rock Area Community Action Program, Inc. for conveyance of Des Moines Community Action Agency programs and service area. Des Moines Community Action Agency previously administered the Park and Recreation Scholarship Program, called GRASP but has been eliminated as part of the city structure. Parks and Recreation staff recommended that the approval process for the Park and Recreation Scholarship Program qualification be reinstated by Red Rock Area Community Action Program.

Effective October 1, 2015 Red Rock Area Community Action Program changed their name to Impact Community Action Partnership.

To align with this change and that of the elimination of this service through the City's Community Development Department, Impact Community Action Partnership staff reviewed the required personal documents which verify income and residency.

The current eligibility level is illustrated below:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>2016 program</b>	\$29,700	\$40,050	\$50,400	\$66,875	\$71,100	\$81,450

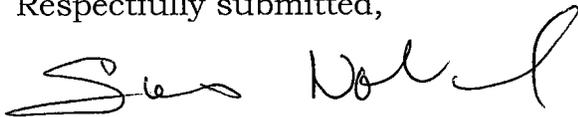
To remain in place as a part of the agreement, Parks and Recreation will pay \$3,000 in FY17 to now Impact Community Action Partnership for administrative support for verifying income and issuing GRASP cards as a component of their assistance programs. It has been agreed that this fee will increase to \$4,500 for FY18 and FY19 as part of this extension. Marketing for the reduced-fee program will be through the Impact Community Action office and the Park and Recreation Department.

This letter is to notify Council that the Park and Recreation Board approved the continuation of this service and the extension of these qualification criteria for a recommended three years. This has been a year-to-year extension since its inception but the success of the program justifies a more lengthy commitment by these two entities.

Partial funding of the scholarship program, in particular the subsidization pertaining to swimming lessons, is still underwritten by the Friends of Des Moines Parks and Recreation dating back to 2008.

The Park and Recreation Board is proud to work with a department committed to meeting the needs of all citizens in Des Moines and appreciates City Council's support of the financial assistance program over the years.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Noland  
Park and Recreation Board Chair

Cc: Scott Sanders, City Manager  
Benjamin R. Page, Park and Recreation Director