

Council mulls raising use fees for parks

By Jeanne Davant

Use fees for Manitou Springs city parks would rise under a proposal presented to City Council on Tuesday. Council also is considering tightening up its policy on waiving fees for special events.

Council members Matt Carpenter and Aimee Cox drafted the proposal to increase use fees after studying use patterns and the amounts the city has collected in the past year.

Fees would increase as follows:

Seven Minute Gazebo: Fees for Manitou resident users would increase from \$150 for three hours and \$250 a day to \$200 for three hours and \$300 a day; fees for nonresident users would rise from \$200 for three hours and \$300 a day to \$250 for three hours and \$350 a day

Mansions Park Pavilion: Resident fees would rise from \$50 a day to \$75 a day plus \$50 for 100 persons or more (maximum use is 200 people); nonresident fees, currently \$100, would remain at \$100 for less than 100 people, but an additional \$50 would be charged for more than 100.

Soda Springs Park Pavilion and Memorial Park: Local use fees would rise from \$50 a day to \$75 a day plus \$50 for 100-499 people or \$100 for 500 or more; nonresidents, who have been paying \$100 a day, would pay \$100 a day plus \$50 for 100-499 or an additional \$100 for 500 or more

Memorial Hall: Fees would remain unchanged at \$200 a day for residents and \$400 a day for nonresidents.

Carpenter said the goals in developing the new fees were to create a structure so that users who have the biggest impacts on parks would pay the largest fees, and not to overprice in comparison with facilities in Colorado Springs and El Paso County.

Finance Department staff has also suggested raising the fee for vendor permits from \$4 to \$10 a day.

The city collected about \$2,700 in 2009 for event permits. At \$10 per permit, the fees would amount to nearly \$7,000.

Council directed Acting City Clerk Kari Kilroy to post the proposed increases. Council would adopt the new schedules by enacting a resolution.

Council also postponed requests for waiver of use fees for the Manitou Springs Energy & Climate Fair, the Carnivale parade and Clayfest until it considers a new special events policy.

"That's a hot issue right now," Mayor-elect Marc Snyder said, given the city's tight budget. Council has been routinely waiving fees for many community events and asked the Finance Department to track the amounts it would have collected.

This year, "the city could have collected \$21,000 in fees, but we waived \$18,000," Snyder said. "That's a pretty disturbing trend."

Snyder said he would ask Council to immediately draft a new special events policy Jan. 5 after the new members are seated.

Council also postponed Parking Authority Board Chairman Val St. Cloud's request for reappointment and David McDonough's appointment to the board until the position is advertised.

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