



May Board Cycle

Milwaukee County Parks

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Date: May 15, 2018
To: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors
From: Guy Smith, CPRP, Interim Parks Director
Subject: **Response to File #18-388**

Issue

Response to request for information in Milwaukee County Board File 18-388 “From the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, requesting a written informational report from the Interim Director, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture, regarding the status of the Winter Farmers Market at the Domes Annex.”

Background

The Fondy Food Center’s Milwaukee Winter Farmer’s Market (MWFM) is a popular and well-attended event that has been held at the Domes Annex building since 2013. After the Domes Annex was constructed, Milwaukee County desired to raise awareness of that facility as an event rental option and the MWFM was looking for a new location as they were moving away from their prior location at the State Fairgrounds. The partnership has been a great success in terms of increasing exposure to the Domes Annex, providing a space for the MWFM to grow its reach and customer base, and providing a fun winter activity in the Parks system. Despite these benefits, the event also places an inordinate burden on the County staff at the Domes as well as County Park Rangers for the production of the event. This season was determined to be the last that is hosted at the Domes Annex as the burdens of the event have become unsustainable for the facility.

At the end of the 2017-2018 winter market season, the Market manager was informed that the Domes Annex could no longer host the event as soon as the decision was made and a search committee was formed to find an alternate location. The primary concerns of a continued MWFM at the Domes Annex include the stress on Parks staff of the logistics of staging the Market, inadequate parking accommodations, and lost revenue to the County due to 3 effective days of controlling the facility for 23 weeks. Milwaukee County Parks is pleased that



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the Market has succeeded and grown to a point where they require a larger space and we will continue to work with the Fondy Food Center to find locations within the Parks system that could continue to host the event.

Event Logistics/Staffing

The MWFM has been hosted on Saturdays but preparation and set up begins on Fridays. A Parks worker helps run the set-up of this event, logistics on the day of the event, as well as the tear down and clean up that begins on Saturday and continues into Sunday. Effectively the entire weekend is booked by the MWFM but only Saturdays are programmed for the market. This is an unsustainable turnaround time for an event rental facility if that facility is planning to accommodate other events and rentals.

In addition to Domes Parks employees that assist with the staffing of the event, the Domes also carries the cost of commodities which are primarily to stock the restrooms and trash disposal. The Domes also carries the cost of utilities during the entire weekend of the event which are significant considering we are heating a greenhouse in the winter. Parks Rangers help staff the safety of the event as well as parking operations.

The cost of staffing and hosting the event by Parks workers are as follows. The MWFM pays a \$600 fee per event with the funds split between the Domes and Park Ranger staff –

Parks Responsibility	Labor (per event)	Expense (per event)
Friday night Annex Preparation: PW Seasonal	5 hrs (@\$14.64 hrly)	\$73.20
Saturday Market staffing and oversight: PW Seasonal	8 hrs. (@\$14.64 hrly)	\$117.12
Saturday Market/Annex cleanup: PW Seasonal	4 hrs. (@\$14.64 hrly)	\$58.56
Sunday Market/Annex cleanup: PW Seasonal	8 hrs. (@\$14.64 hrly)	\$117.12
Manager Oversight	4 hrs. (@\$38.12 hrly)	\$152.48
Annex Commodities (bathroom supplies, trash, etc.)		\$50.00
Traffic and Security: Two Park Rangers	2 staff for 6 hrs. each (@\$15.25 hrly)	\$183.00
Rangers gas and traffic supplies		\$50.00
TOTAL PARKS EXPENSE	41 hours	\$826.99 per event

Simply increasing the fee from \$600 to \$830 (plus utility expenses) is not the only consideration as the 41 hours of staff time spent on hosting the event are otherwise not spent on other Park duties at the Domes and throughout the system. Additionally, the well-attended MWFM event tends to crowd out parking for regular visitors to the Domes. The Mitchell Park parking lot contains approximately 500 striped parking stalls, and this is adequate to accommodate the approximately 1,800 daily Saturday visitors to the Domes. When market



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attendees are added into the usage of the parking lot the lack of availability of parking is a deterrent to regular attendance at the Domes.

Opportunity Cost

Milwaukee County Parks loses about \$230 for each MWFM event but the opportunity cost of not renting out the Domes Annex is far more significant. During the 23 weeks that the MWFM is hosted, the Domes cannot program the event space on weekends. The base rental rates of the Domes Annex are as follows –

- Friday nights - \$2,500
- Saturdays - \$3,500

This rate is the base rental rate for the room and does not include the commissions Parks also makes from Zilli's Hospitality Group (ZHG) on food and beverage sales or the lost programming on Sundays due to event clean up. Assuming the Domes Annex could be fully reserved for weddings and other special events through the 23-week MWFM season, the Domes could potentially collect \$138,000 in base rental revenue for Fridays and Saturdays. Projecting food and beverage sales from the ZHG agreement, the Domes could collect an additional \$50,000 in commissions from sales.

It should be mentioned that revenue generation and providing free community events need not be mutually exclusive within a balanced schedule of events. In fact, the Future Path and Feasibility consultant's 2018 presentation to the Domes Task Force on facility recommendations for the Domes identifies "Enhance Annex as a venue for farmers market and facility rentals, add catering kitchen" as an opportunity to enhance the facility under a variety of options (see Line #9 on [Attachment 1](#)). The reality is that the current 3-day, 23-week MWFM event operates at a financial loss for the Domes and prevents opportunities for significant revenue generation.

Relocating within the Domes

It has also been suggested that the MWFM move to a different location within the Domes facility. The Annex is the only greenhouse structure that is appropriate for a public event as the others do not have the required occupancy designation and contain sensitive plants and chemicals used for horticulture operations. The main Domes lobby has hosted the MWFM when the Annex was under construction. Long term, the main Domes lobby is not seen as a viable alternative because the current MWFM has outgrown the space. This was previously discussed with the market representatives, but the space requirements for the vendors as well as the room to accommodate patrons and visitors was not adequate for their needs. Additionally, the market is a free event to attendees at the Annex. Even if we could accommodate as far as space in the lobby or Domes areas, we would assumedly not be collecting revenues on Saturday morning during some of our busiest weekends - resulting in huge revenue challenges. Also, the same set up challenges would remain as the Domes lobby is often programmed with shows within the Domes and is an event rental space.

There is a commonly held belief that as attendance at the MWFM has increased over time that this has a positive impact on attendance at the Domes. There is no evidence to suggest that this is true, please see the



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attached “Attachment 2 – Attendance” for more information. In summary, here is the total Saturday attendance at the Domes over the last few MWFM seasons –

November - April	Saturday Attendance
2013-14	58,852
2014-15	53,824
2015-16	34,875
2016-17	31,850
2017-18	40,407

Other County Parks Facilities

Milwaukee County Parks remains committed to assisting the Fondy Food Center in re-locating the event and fulfilling the original goals of increasing exposure of County facilities to the public. The MWFM has the unique potential to address issues of food scarcity and food deserts in Milwaukee County and to that end Milwaukee County can assist in locating appropriately sized facilities in areas of food scarcity to assist in this task.

Recommendation

No action requested. Informational item unless further action required.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Task Force Presentation
- Attachment 2 – Attendance



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Facility Elements in Options for the Future of the Domes

		Options that bundle Opportunities to create a vision for the future							
		Option 1 "Do Nothing"	Option 2 Demolish Domes	Option 3 Address Deferred Maintenance	Option 4 Targeted Investments	Option 5A EcoDome Destination Attraction	Option 5B Adventure Dome Destination Attraction	Option 6A Hybrid Redevelopment EcoDome Destination Attraction	Option 6B Hybrid Redevelopment Adventure Dome Destination Attraction
Opportunities to Rehabilitate and Expand Domes Facilities			Capital Cost Allowance \$10 to \$15 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$20 to \$30 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$40 to \$50 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$70 to \$95 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$70 to \$95 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$70 to \$95 Million	Capital Cost Allowance \$70 to \$95 Million
#	(Preliminary Estimates for Discussion Only)								
1	Repair All Domes Building Envelopes								
2	Repair Desert and Tropical Domes only; Replace Show Dome with new Destination Attraction								
3	Substantially improve structure or replacement								
4	Upgrade HVAC Systems								
5	Improve / expand guest entrance, ticketing sequence and group arrival areas								
6	Add classrooms, meeting space, staff offices, storage								
7	Add improved retail space, and food service with small seating area								
8	Improve connections to greenhouses and Annex								
9	Enhance Annex as a venue for farmers market and facility rentals, add catering kitchen								
10	Increase parking capacity and site wayfinding								
11	Improved connections to park and trail								
12	Improve exhibit experience in Horticultural Domes								

Attachment 2 - Attendance

Winter Farmer's Market

2013 - 2014 WFM		2014-2015 WFM			2015-2016 WFM			2016-2017 WFM			2017-2018 WFM	
Date	Attendance	Date	Attendance	\$1 Off Coupons	Date	Attendance	\$1 Off Coupons	Date	Attendance	\$1 Off Coupons	Date	Attendance
02-Nov-13	1,702	01-Nov-14	1,788		07-Nov-15	1,475		05-Nov-16	1,183		04-Nov-17	1,940
09-Nov-13	1,886	08-Nov-14	2,488		14-Nov-15	1,373		12-Nov-16	1,300		11-Nov-17	1,590
16-Nov-13	1,308	15-Nov-14	2,314		21-Nov-15	868		19-Nov-16	1,458		18-Nov-17	1,607
23-Nov-13	2,288	22-Nov-14	2,351		28-Nov-15	Holiday		26-Nov-16	Holiday		25-Nov-17	Holiday
30-Nov-13	Holiday	29-Nov-14	Holiday		05-Dec-15	2,000		03-Dec-16	1,264		02-Dec-17	1,532
07-Dec-13	1,747	06-Dec-14	2,111		12-Dec-15	1,579		10-Dec-16	1,073		09-Dec-17	1,578
14-Dec-13	1,014	13-Dec-14	2,284		19-Dec-15	1,612		17-Dec-16	690		16-Dec-17	1,520
21-Dec-13	1,757	20-Dec-14	3,311		26-Dec-15	1,050		24-Dec-16	Holiday		23-Dec-17	1,351
28-Dec-13	1,946	27-Dec-14	Holiday		02-Jan-16	1,761		31-Dec-16	Holiday		30-Dec-17	1,374
04-Jan-14	1,739	03-Jan-15	3,195		09-Jan-16	2,043		07-Jan-17	2,096		06-Jan-18	2,313
11-Jan-14	2,013	10-Jan-15	2,945		16-Jan-16	2,064		14-Jan-17	2,001		13-Jan-18	2,112
18-Jan-14	2,747	17-Jan-15	GH		23-Jan-16	2,442	279	21-Jan-17	2,062		20-Jan-18	2,110
25-Jan-14	2,460	24-Jan-15	GH		30-Jan-16	3,032	174	28-Jan-17	1,811		27-Jan-18	2,230
01-Feb-14	1,905	31-Jan-15	GH		06-Feb-16	1,760	0	04-Feb-17	1,871		03-Feb-18	1,875
08-Feb-14	3,053	07-Feb-15	GH	124	13-Feb-16	1,439		11-Feb-17	1,980		10-Feb-18	1,774
15-Feb-14	3,086	14-Feb-15	GH	172	20-Feb-16	1,812	0	18-Feb-17	1,824		17-Feb-18	1,818
22-Feb-14	3,294	21-Feb-15	GH	0	27-Feb-16	1,510		25-Feb-17	1,170		24-Feb-18	1,991
01-Mar-14	3,306	28-Feb-15	GH	239	05-Mar-16	1,249	0	04-Mar-17	1,965		03-Mar-18	1,887
08-Mar-14	3,129	07-Mar-15	GH	0	12-Mar-16	1,101		11-Mar-17	1,279		10-Mar-18	1,821
15-Mar-14	2,972	14-Mar-15	GH	107	19-Mar-16	902		18-Mar-17	1,658		17-Mar-18	1,636
22-Mar-14	3,743	21-Mar-15	GH	53	26-Mar-16	1,164		25-Mar-17	1,730	102	24-Mar-18	1,306
29-Mar-14	4,000	28-Mar-15	GH	Free Day	02-Apr-16	1,021		01-Apr-17	1,890	38	31-Mar-18	1,559
05-Apr-14	2,875	04-Apr-15	GH	69	09-Apr-16	1,618		08-Apr-17	1,545		07-Apr-18	1,939
12-Apr-14	2,454	11-Apr-15	GH	0	TOTAL:	34,875	453	TOTAL:	31,850	140	14-Apr-18	1,544
26-Apr-14	2,428	TOTAL:	53,824	764							TOTAL:	40,407

TOTAL: 58,852

***NOTE:**

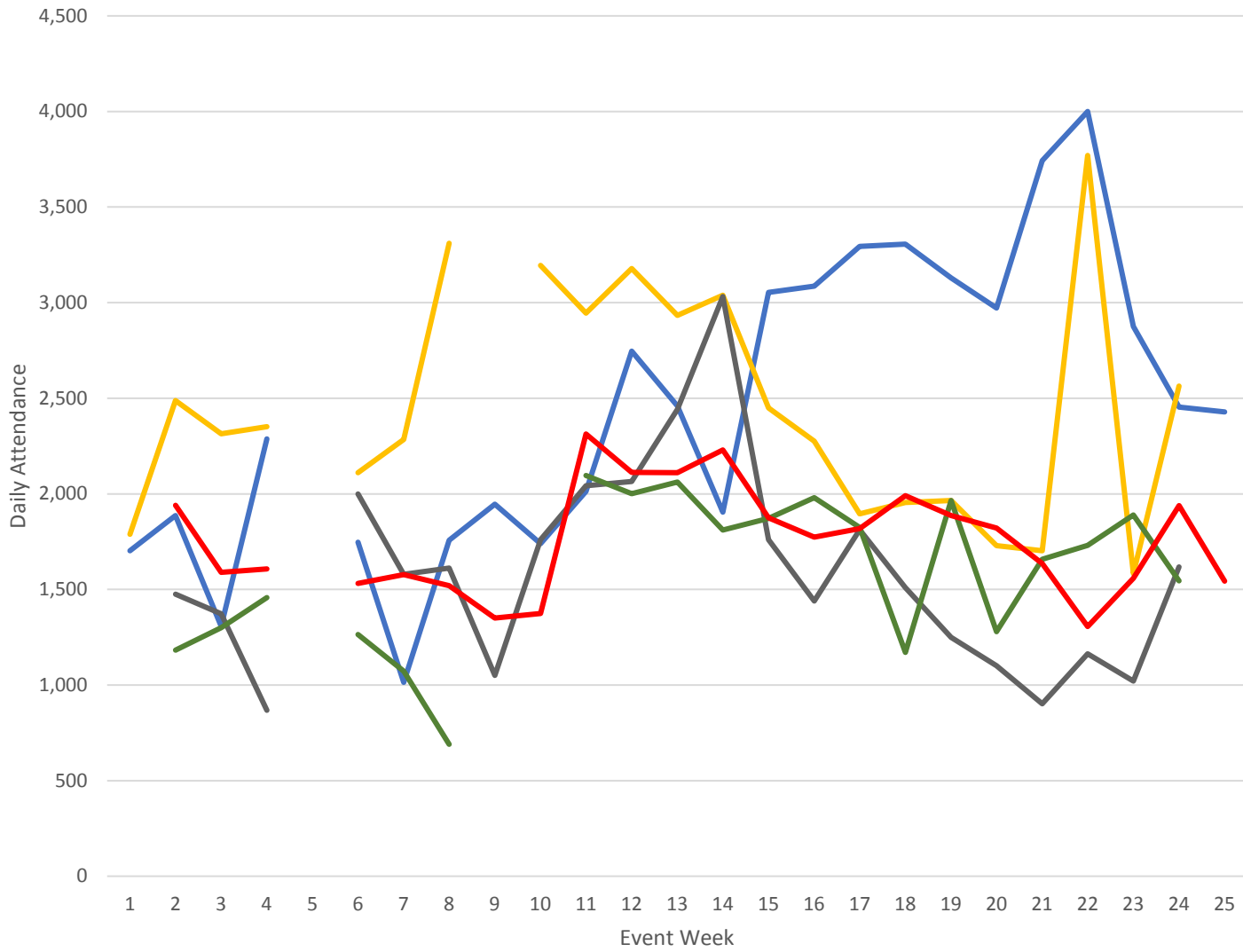
10/31/14 - WFM Button Created

***NOTE:**

Used button

"Dome Other Free Admission"

Domes Saturday Attendance During MWFM



2013/14 2014/15 2015/16 2016/17 2017/18