

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/22/2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks

Subject: Potential for Roller Skating at Red Arrow Park Ice Rink

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

Informational report on the use of Red Arrow Ice Rink as requested by Resolution 22-396.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

Related File Number	22-396
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Red Arrow Park was developed in 1970 and redeveloped in 1999. This redevelopment included the creation of a 9,000 sq ft refrigerated ice rink within the park commonly known as the “Slice of Ice.” At the March 2022 Parks, Energy and Environment Committee meeting, Parks staff was asked to investigate the possibility of using the ice-skating rink as a roller-skating rink during warm weather months when the rink is not being used for ice skating.

The rink at Red Arrow was installed by Commercial Refrigeration Services in 1999. Commercial Refrigeration Services has installed similar rinks in communities around the Midwest and Northeast, including at the Guidant John Rose Oval in Roseville, Minnesota, St. Louis Park Outdoor Recreation Center in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, and the Olympic Center in Lake Placid, New York. Commercial Refrigeration Services has noted that a number of these communities have allowed the use of roller skates on various rinks. Follow up calls to Park and Recreation departments for these communities confirmed that this activity has occurred to varying degrees in the past.

Slice of Ice is a downtown Milwaukee institution and is one of the most popular outdoor recreational amenities offered in Milwaukee's winter months. In the 2021-2022 winter, ice skate rentals at Red Arrow generated \$79,654 in revenue and in the pandemic-impacted 2020-2021 winter Parks was still able to generate \$51,652 in ice skate rental revenue. In the 2019-2020 winter prior to the pandemic, ice skate rentals generated \$85,611 in revenue at Red Arrow.

Parks seeks to preserve the condition of the concrete surface at the ice rink to ensure the long-term operation of Slice of Ice. This surface needs to be kept in the best condition possible or it will directly affect the creation of the ice sheet. Any stains, surface contamination, or damage from adhesives, roller skate brake pads, and other possible uses will affect the sheet. The creation of the ice rink is challenged by the solar reflection of the building to the north of the rink, 1000 N Water St. The existing rink is made of a cast-in-place concrete mix that has insulation, pedestals, and pavers that protect the ice rink system's cooling system.

Other peer communities have developed programming that uses ice skating rinks for roller skating activities. In particular, the use of the Rothman Orthopaedics Ice Rink at Dilworth Park in Philadelphia as a roller-skating rink offers a possible model for implementation at Red Arrow Park. Dilworth Park and ice rink is maintained and operated by the Center City District BID (CCD) on behalf of the City of Philadelphia. The CCD hired a private firm named All Year Sports Galaxy to construct a temporary frame over the existing ice-skating rink that preserves the ice rink's infrastructure and surface and limits potential damage to the rink surface and coolant piping below the rink. The temporary roller rink was opened for almost two months in 2021 and will be open for three months in 2022. The CCD provided funding for the temporary rink and manages the staffing of this temporary use. Parks has sought quotes for a similar type of temporary framing that could potentially be installed at Red Arrow ice skating rink with a cost of \$58,000 per month. This is a preliminary cost estimate and should not be used for budgetary purposes without conducting a separate procurement process. This also does not include the potential need to seasonally remove and then re-install the rinks' perimeter infrastructure that may be necessary to accommodate the installation of temporary roller rink framing.

Rochester, Minnesota provides another possible model for activating ice rinks in warm weather months. In 2021, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) which is a non-profit downtown civic association with dedicated property tax levy funding created a 22-foot by 28-foot roller skating rink on a hardscape surface for a Roller Derby weekend in Peace Plaza, a linear park located in the heart of downtown. The RDA used this existing linear park to activate the space for a weekend of activities in October 2021, including a roller derby. This temporary roller-skating rink was installed in a location that did not already have an ice-skating rink and could be seasonally re-installed without significant damage to the underlying property.

Milwaukee County Parks will explore partnerships with other non-profit entities like in the examples of Philadelphia and Rochester. Parks welcomes the opportunity to expand the use of Red Arrow Park, but any efforts should ensure the preservation the Slice of Ice and the existing ice rink infrastructure. Parks is also open to conversations about other uses of Red Arrow Park in non-winter months including special events, concerts, and temporary uses that activate the ice skating rink space.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity – Increasing athletic activities will improve individual and public health.


FISCAL EFFECT

Milwaukee County Parks has no funding budgeted to develop the temporary roller rink or program roller-skating activities at Red Arrow Park.

PREPARED BY:

Peter Bratt, Director of Operations & Skilled Trades, Milwaukee County Parks

APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Parks Executive Director 

ATTACHMENTS:

Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 letter of support, April 13, 2022

cc:

David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Parks, Energy and Environment Committee Members
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services
Joseph Lamers, Fiscal & Budget Director, DAS
Vince Masterson, Fiscal & Strategic Asset Coordinator, DAS
Pamela Bryant, Capital Finance Manager, Comptroller's Office
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