

Dublin City Council
PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 24, 2015
Council Chambers – 6:30 p.m.

Minutes of Meeting

Ms. Salay, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Committee Members present: Ms. Salay, Chair; Mr. Reiner and Mr. Lecklider.

Staff members: Ms. LeRoy, Ms. Mumma and Chief von Eckartsberg (arrived at 7:50).

Mr. Reiner moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2014 Public Services Committee meeting.

Mr. Lecklider seconded the motion.

The minutes were unanimously approved.

July 4th Event – Proposed Changes

Alison LeRoy, Manager, Events Administration reviewed the background regarding the proposed changes. The City has had several years of inclement weather for this Independence Day event, but last year, the day was beautiful. Not only did the weather encourage a larger turnout for the event, the main act was Earth, Wind and Fire, which would draw a crowd. They recognized the size of the crowd might prove to be an issue and prompt a need to close the gates. She, Chief von Eckartsberg and Steve Skeldon from the Fire Department watched the crowd grow, trying to evaluate when/if there was a need to close the gates. They made that decision at 9:00 p.m., immediately before Earth, Wind and Fire took the stage. At that point, they received many complaints outside the gate. Although some people were from out of town and coming to a free July 4th event, many were Dublin residents who had been coming to this event for years. City staff explained that there was a need for safety. The food vendors were completely overwhelmed, groups of teenagers congregated at the gates, yet there were some swaths of empty land in the farthest reaches of the stadium grounds. It was evident that some changes were needed. Two of the proposed changes are:

Limiting the Table Sales to One per Resident.

In the past, staff was able to accommodate everyone who came to purchase tables on the day table sales were opened. Last year, staff had to close table sales at 8:30 a.m.; table sales had opened at 7:30 a.m. Previously, residents have been permitted to buy two tables, but many of their guests at those seats could be non-residents. By limiting the purchase to one table per resident, the chances are higher that more residents will have access to the event. In addition, there would be more tables available for resident purchases.

Ms. Salay inquired if staff did not previously verify resident status of those purchasing the tables.

Ms. LeRoy responded that they verified that the person buying the table was a Dublin resident, but there is a potential for 19 additional guests at the two tables. Neighborhood residents have bought tables for one another so they can all sit near one another. If the table purchase is limited to one, twice as many neighbors would need to come in to buy the tables, but we would be guaranteeing that the tables are going to actual residents.

Mr. Reiner inquired how long the City has permitted the purchase of two tables by one individual.

Ms. LeRoy responded that their table sale records go back 17 years, but she believes they were sold a year or two earlier, as well.

Set a Capacity Limit of 10,000 Event Attendees

Ms. LeRoy stated that the 10,000 number is in addition to the 4,800 people on the field, so the total capacity is approximately 15,000. They will work with the Fire Department and Police to determine if that is a solid number. The wristbands would be sold at the Rec Center before the event. Essentially, the wristband guarantees the wearer entrance into the event. If all the wristbands are not sold before the event, they would be given out at the gate on a first-come, first-served basis. They would be given out free of charge to avoid the need to handle cash at the gate. They discussed making the admission ticket free, but past experience indicates that when people obtain free tickets, there is a higher percentage of no shows. A \$5.00 charge is nominal.

Mr. Reiner inquired what amount would the City recoup.

Ms. LeRoy responded that if all 10,000 wristbands are sold, the revenues would be \$50,000. However, staff members who work the event would receive a certain number of wristbands for their family as well.

Mr. Reiner expressed concern about the negative response from the residents.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the first year the change is made, a negative response is likely. Some people may show up without wristbands expecting the usual free admission. The intent is to announce this change along with the announcement of the band for this year's event. There will need to be significant community education of the change. Although some people will be upset, anyone who attended last year recognizes that continuing the current arrangement is no longer possible.

Mr. Reiner inquired if staff had considered family passes purchased only by Dublin residents. He would like the people who gain access to the event to be Dublin residents and their family or friends.

Ms. Salay stated that if the wristbands were sold at the Rec Center to Dublin residents, similar to Rec Center memberships, proof of residency would be required.

Ms. LeRoy responded that staff discussed the potential of handling the sale of wristbands similar to the table sales. Only residents could purchase them up to a certain date; any wristbands remaining after that date could be purchased by nonresidents.

Ms. LeRoy stated that the intent is not to use Sunny 95 for the simulcast this year, due to the event promotion they provide. It is that promotion that has brought in many people from outside Dublin. They are working with Bruce Edwards to determine if there is a way in which staff has the technology to do this. We attempted it several years ago, but technology has advanced significantly since that time. It may be possible to use the same process that is used for Council meetings -- if it possible to ensure there is no delay.

Mr. Lecklider stated that if the wristbands are pre-sold at the Rec Center, it is likely that it will be Dublin residents buying the wristbands. When would that occur – June 1st?

Ms. LeRoy responded that the table sales are scheduled on the first Wednesday in May. The wristbands would be sold a couple weeks later, probably in June.

Ms. Salay stated that there may be an issue with the sales to Dublin residents related to the overlap between Dublin and Hilliard School Districts. In regard to the revenue generated -- while it would be nice to have that, perhaps there would be less public complaints if the monies were being donated to a charity or cause; but perhaps that isn't permitted.

Ms. Mumma responded that the City has to be cautious about using public dollars for donations, but she could look into that.

Mr. Reiner stated that he is hesitant about getting into the charity business.

Ms. Salay stated that the City would need to select a charity.

Mr. Lecklider stated that the City is essentially in the charity business with the Irish Festival, given the monies raised by community groups with beverage sales.

Mr. Reiner stated that the public understands there is a significant expense with having a good band. They have the opportunity to attend a first-rate concert at no cost, when normally, it would cost them \$80-\$150/ticket.

Mr. Lecklider stated that he has questions related to the survey comments. What is the timing in which Council receives the survey results?

Ms. LeRoy responded that the survey is posted online immediately after the event. Typically, the respondents are very happy or very angry. The surveys are taken for every event and the results summarized. Although a report is not given to Council for every event, they could provide it.

Mr. Lecklider inquired when, ideally, that report should come to Council.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the survey is closed approximately six weeks after it is posted.

Mr. Lecklider noted that the Dublin Irish Festival falls shortly after the Independence Day event, so it may not make sense for Council to look at a report prior to September.

Ms. LeRoy responded a report could be provided before the budget review, so Council could have that for any potential budget considerations.

Mr. Lecklider stated in regard to Mr. Reiner's comment about the value of this entertainment, that perhaps the City has gone too far in that regard. When he first began to attend the event 20 years ago, it was a smaller event. People parked at the Rec Center, pulled the kids in wagons outside the stadium grounds, and watched the fireworks. That was the focus of the event – people were there to see the fireworks. This is not a criticism of where the event has gone, as staff has only reacted to Council's direction and Council has authorized the spending of more money. But what is the purpose of this event? Why is the City providing all this entertainment for the Fourth of July? Most people in Dublin can afford to go see a performance by a favorite band, if they want to see one. What do we really want this event to be? He is concerned about some of the comments he has read. He has a front row seat at this event, but perhaps where Council needs to be is in the bleachers or outside the stadium fence. Maybe if Council had that experience, we would have a different perspective on this event. He appreciates the convenience he enjoys, including the special place in the parking lot, although Council doesn't have a better experience of a faster route for exiting the event than anyone else. However, he is concerned about the crowd this event is attracting due to the entertainment. Dublin's fireworks are as good or better than any others in central Ohio, so even with a lesser act, our fireworks would still attract many who do not want to deal with the "Red, White and Boom" crowd in Columbus. Although he has enjoyed the acts, is this what is necessary? In Dublin, it always seems to be a matter of "bigger, better, best;" "look who we've got;" and "other communities can't do this." We do want to put on a good show for our residents, but is this truly a family and neighbor event? The survey comments reflect otherwise. He has found it impossible to converse with his family or friends at the event, because it is too loud. It is not the place to have any conversation. Is it our intent that the event be a rock concert with some fireworks afterward? Or would it be fine to have, for example, Phil Dirt and the Dozers or another local act – some music -- with the focus as the fireworks. People could still be on the stadium grounds, have a picnic, decorate their tables, have the inflatables for the kids and perhaps we could provide some activities for the teenagers. Where does it stop with the money? He is

concerned that at some point, the City will be criticized for the amount of money spent on this event.

Mr. Reiner responded that at this point, though, there is now an expectation. Many people really enjoy the bands. There are also people who just drive to and park near the stadium and watch the fireworks.

Ms. Salay stated that there appear to be two groups – one likes the concerts; the other prefers the fireworks, and people can choose which experience they want. She has not heard any complaints about the bands being too good, but perhaps this is a good question for next year's community survey. She is interested in the Dublin residents' perspective regarding whether the event is too large and draws too much of a crowd. However, if Sunny 95 isn't involved and no longer announcing the band Dublin will have, the news will be shared with our community, but not with a span of 12 counties. That alone may dial it back somewhat. She supports offering a show the Dublin community wants; it needs to be Dublin-centric. She does not want the greater county outreach.

Mr. Reiner concurred.

Mr. Lecklider stated that is his point. This is no longer a local event; it has become a regional event. At some point, criticism will come about the costs. If he were an outside observer, he would focus on that factor immediately. He thought some would believe the previous \$90,000 threshold was a fair amount to be paying for the entertainment.

Mr. Reiner stated that if the cost of the event is divided by the number in attendance, it is a reasonable cost per person. However, if the total cost of \$150,000 is considered, it seems substantial.

Ms. Salay inquired what the budget is for the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the 2015 budget is just under \$25,000.

Ms. Salay inquired if the July 4th parade is also \$25,000.

Ms. LeRoy responded that it would be. The 2015 budget for the July 4th event is \$427,150. The evening event is \$400,000 – of that, the fireworks portion is \$57,000. She noted that as the attendance inside the stadium has increased, the crowd outside the stadium has increased as well.

Ms. Salay inquired what the budget is for the band.

Ms. LeRoy responded that it is \$150,000.

Mr. Lecklider inquired if that included the booking agent's fees.

Ms. LeRoy responded that it does.

Mr. Reiner inquired what other items are included in the budget.

Ms. Mumma stated that, minus the fireworks, the cost divided by 15,000 people results in a cost of \$23/person for the event.

Ms. LeRoy stated that the items included in the budget are:

- Fireworks - \$57,000
- Hotel/food - \$11,000
- Kids' activities - \$25,000

Mr. Reiner inquired if tickets for those activities are purchased inside the stadium.

Ms. LeRoy responded that they are. With the new proposal, the wristband would not be required to access the kids' area. Because there is a charge for the kids' inflatables, we don't want to make them pay twice.

Mr. Lecklider inquired how those transactions are handled, since we don't want cash transactions inside the stadium.

Ms. LeRoy responded that cash transactions are used in that area. Previously, there were two ticket booths; this year there will just be one, to reduce the risk. The booth will be larger and located against the fence.

Ms. Mumma stated that the expectation is that it is cash only; no credit cards/checks.

Ms. LeRoy continued.

Other items in the budget are:

- Electrician - \$6,000
- Meteorologist – \$2,000
- School stadium rental - \$12,000
- Generator - \$7,500
- Bathrooms - \$12,000
- Tables/chairs - \$10,000
- Cleaning crew - \$6,000

Mr. Reiner inquired about the costs of bathrooms.

Ms. LeRoy stated that the bathroom facilities were insufficient last year. This year, they have been increased by 20-30%. Those facilities will be located outside the stadium.

Mr. Reiner inquired about staffing costs.

Ms. LeRoy responded that staff costs are not included in the budget. The staff cost is more if holiday pay is required; that won't be necessary this year. This year, staffing costs are:

- pre- and post-event costs - \$42,000
- event day costs - \$46,000
- Total = \$88,000

That includes the parade, as well. Staff is needed to handle the parade route needs. As a comparison, the total staffing costs last year for the St. Patrick's Day parade were \$35,000.

Mr. Lecklider inquired why premium pay wouldn't be necessary this year.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the City staff holiday this year is actually observed on Friday, June 3. Saturday is not staff's holiday. The exception to that is with Police – Saturday is their holiday and so the Police staffing will require holiday pay. The intent is to limit the number of staff who will be working on Friday, the staff's holiday.

Ms. LeRoy noted that with the advent of social media, awareness of City's events has increased. Some of the growth of the events is due to people sharing information.

Ms. Salay stated that the committee needs to consider two proposals tonight, although there are some larger questions for Council, events staff and City management to consider, as well.

Limiting the Table Sales to One per Resident

Mr. Reiner inquired if there was consideration given to increasing the price of a table.

Ms. LeRoy responded that because the cost was increased from \$100 to \$125 last year, it was not a consideration this year. There were no complaints from the public about that increase. Staff's recommendation is to limit the table sales to one table.

Mr. Reiner inquired if there are complaints about the long lines to purchase the tables.

Mr. LeRoy responded that there have been, and some people do not even attempt to purchase tables because of the long lines.

Mr. Lecklider stated that it concerns him that this is a weekday sale. Although it may be a burden to some staff, he believes the table sales should occur on a Saturday, when people are not at work. With the current schedule, we are limiting the tables to a certain category of residents – those who have the ability to stand in line on a weekday to get a table.

Ms. LeRoy noted that a survey conducted several years ago indicated that the public was fine with the weekday sales, but that was not the same in the recent survey. Saturday table sales can be tried this year to determine the community's response. It would not be a major inconvenience to staff. The sale will continue to be done early, however, so it does not conflict with soccer schedules, etc.

Mr. Lecklider inquired if there is a particular door near which the people "camp out."

Ms. LeRoy responded that there is a designated door. The sale begins at 7:30 a.m., and there are typically 200 people waiting in line.

Mr. Lecklider inquired where the sale occurs inside the facility.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the sale is conducted in the Tallas. At 5:30 a.m., the door opens and the line moves inside, where coffee/beverages/pastries are provided.

Committee consensus was to recommend:

- Limit table sales to one table per Dublin resident household; table sales to occur on a Saturday
- Add a general admission charge of \$5.00 per wristband, available to Dublin residents only prior to the day of event.

Ms. LeRoy noted that they would have the band include the message on their website that for the July 4th event in Dublin, admission pre-sales are limited to Dublin residents. Remaining wristbands would be available on a first-come, first-served basis for free gate entrance on the day of the event.

Event Traffic

Ms. Salay inquired if parking remains available at the Verizon and Cardinal sites.

Ms. LeRoy responded that because Verizon has a 24-hour operation, they limit their parking primarily to their employees; only a small portion is available for public parking. Cardinal Health keeps a certain portion of their parking lots for their employees, but approximately two-thirds of their parking lots are available for public parking. That area is popular for tailgating purposes.

Mr. Lecklider suggested that, with Cardinal's permission, signage be placed to indicate where public parking is not permitted.

Teenage Crowd Issue

Ms. Salay inquired if there is a way to discourage the teenage congregation near the gates.

Ms. LeRoy responded that she will defer to Chief von Eckartsberg to address that question.

Mr. Lecklider suggested that perhaps an activity could be added that would be of interest to teenagers.

Ms. LeRoy responded that she has looked into this issue at national conferences, etc. The issue is that teenagers don't participate in provided activities. They want to be undirected, to just go and hang out with friends. Their interest is to "go and be seen." They will continue to investigate the opportunities.

Ms. Salay stated that if an activity cannot be added, then perhaps another place to congregate can be provided -- away from the gate entrance. She has heard many complaints about that group blocking the movements of others.

Shuttles for Elderly/Disabled

Ms. Salay stated that there is need for a shuttle to help people with mobility issues.

Ms. LeRoy stated that there has been some discussion about moving the handicapped parking from the Rec Center to the Verizon lot for the Irish Festival, if it is available. It is closer to the east gate and would provide greater capacity. They can look at the possibility of running a shuttle for this event as well. People arrive at different times, but everyone leaves at the same time, creating a congestion issue for everyone.

Ms. Salay inquired what issue occurred last year when the inflatable truck was unable to leave the event because Coffman Road was shut down.

Ms. LeRoy stated that she is unsure what occurred. They encourage the bands to leave before the fireworks. Staff has escorted the entertainers out, but no one else receives an escort.

Mr. Lecklider stated that there was also comment in the community survey about alcohol and marijuana use at the event. If he was outside the stadium with a young family, he would have a real concern with that. He has a problem with that, regardless, and with the comments he read regarding smoking in general. He wondered if the Citizens Police Academy graduates could be utilized that day.

Ms. LeRoy stated that it is impossible to check everything and everyone that enters the stadium, but the officers do try to watch for signs of consumption. It may be possible to increase that surveillance, however.

Mr. Lecklider stated that he does not understand how alcohol gets into the stadium.

Ms. LeRoy responded that the bags are checked at the gate, but some people have become very adept at sneaking items in. On the other hand, we have some overzealous checkers. The rule is no cigarettes and no gum inside the school grounds, and there were some guards taking gum from people. We had to tell them that wasn't necessary.

[Chief von Eckartsberg arrived.]

Mr. Lecklider stated that the survey indicated an issue with the use of marijuana and alcohol at the July 4th event last year, although most of it was likely used outside the stadium. He wondered if it would be possible to use Citizens Police Academy graduates to watch for evidence of this. If it really isn't much of a problem, however, it may not be worthy of any particular effort.

Chief von Eckartsberg responded that they have only heard rumors that it occurred. They have really not had any particular disturbances. They have become concerned the last couple of years about the size of the crowd. This year, it may have been somewhat of an anomaly due to the entertainment act and the perfect weather. Their plan is to use more CSOs this year, however, because there are more available. They will have 20 by July 4 this year.

Mr. Lecklider stated that it may not be widespread, but it would be a real concern to any young family that witnessed the use of marijuana near them.

Chief von Eckartsberg stated that he does not recall any "runs" last year for marijuana use. It is easy to detect, as it can be smelled from a distance.

Ms. Salay stated that the exiting traffic is a significant problem. What is the plan this year?

Chief von Eckartsberg stated that the roundabout at Brand and Coffman has helped tremendously. Previously, traffic backed up in that location; now the traffic moves smoothly through. In addition, not having the private parking lot at Eggspuehler's has helped. North of the High School, massive amounts of people are exiting from private parking areas, such as Dublin Baptist Church. All that traffic creates stoppage for vehicles moving north. The Eggspuehler lot caused the most disruption,

because of its location immediately across from the school central office lot, where approximately 500 cars are parked. One-way traffic is operated from the school south, at least initially. It's difficult to have drivers to comply, but it does expedite the exiting traffic. Initially, we do have to shut off the turn onto Emerald Parkway heading toward Riverside Drive. The reason is that we have to get the cars out of the Verizon parking lots. It causes a major backup if traffic exiting from Coffman is moving down Emerald Parkway. Another issue there is that, until the Fire Department indicates the firework zone is clear, we cannot open that roadway up. Sometimes the plan is modified midway, according to available roadway. One factor that backs up the southbound traffic is the massive amounts of people crossing the roadway, although officers try to limit them to the crosswalks only.

Ms. Salay inquired if the travel routes are publicized.

Ms. LeRoy responded that we publicize where the public parking lots are located; none of the private lots are shown on the map. We have not shown a designated exit route, however. It is difficult because the route often changes, but we can look at that possibility.

Ms. Salay stated that if people understand the method, they are more apt to comply.

Chief von Eckartsberg responded that they could look into that, but having good signage and good traffic direction is what makes those plans work. Very few people will remember what they saw in the paper when they are trying to exit the parking lot. We try to concentrate on signage and having enough people to direct traffic.

Ms. LeRoy stated that it may be helpful to explain that the City does have a plan.

Chief von Eckartsberg stated that a few years ago, staff publicized a traffic plan and it was very confusing. He agreed to look at that possibility again, however.

Ms. Salay stated that this year we will have the public's attention because of the changes related to the tables and the wristband admissions, so it may provide more opportunity to have their attention regarding traffic plans, as well.

Mr. Lecklider stated that he has been trying to think of any other opportunities to entertain people so there isn't quite the rush to the cars at the end of the fireworks.

Ms. LeRoy stated that staff has considered that, as well. The top of the main stage is removed so that it doesn't block the fireworks, so the main stage would not be available. We looked at the possibility of putting a local band on the City's showmobile. We haven't tried that.

Mr. Lecklider stated that people may be interested only in leaving.

Ms. Salay stated that at that point, it has been a long day for most people.

Ms. LeRoy noted that this item would be placed on the March 9 Council agenda. In addition, the Irish Festival entertainment is announced on March 13. The intent is to advertise the July 4 changes a couple of weeks later.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.