



FRIENDS OF DUFFERIN GROVE PARK

Problems & Follow-up

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Description: Request to evaluate large picnic permits through Recreation staff

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posted Nov.4 2006

Permit Rules

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.15 2006

Picnic Permits are issued by Heather Chislett...397-9982. I will reminder her that the picnic permit area is at the south end of the Park near Slyvan Ave, just east of Dufferin St., as marked, so that she can advise picnic permit holders.

Heather will not be calling or advising me of any Picnic Permits, as this area can only be permitted by her and has been set aside for such activities.

The only permits I get notified on are, special events.

From Parks manager Sandy Straw to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.15 2006

It would be helpful if Peter Leiss also received notice and gave input so we could avoid this situation

What do you think?

From Jutta Mason to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.15 2006

Re letting park staff know about picnics:

Because of the (good) way this park functions, and because it's so busy, I'm wondering if Heather might be able to change her large-picnic protocol slightly?

1. If a picnic is over 50 people, they often have an effect on the playground or other parts of the park as well. That's great, only it helps Mayssan and the other staff to know that, for when to schedule jointly-sponsored events.
2. This past summer there were two very large picnics I can think of:

St.Anthony's Church

Midwives' Collective

Neither of them set up in the permit area. St.Anthony's always sets up to the north and west of the playground, and the Collective, as you know, went back to being right beside the playground at the south.

Did they both know the permit spot?

There's not necessarily any problem with a large group setting up in another spot, but it's so much better if there is direct communication with the park staff during the planning stage. So can the Dufferin Grove staff notification protocol be changed to include picnics over 50?

I'm sure that will only come up as an issue a few times a year, and it helps so much. Maybe Heather could e-mail Mayssan directly? Or, if she doesn't like to e-mail outside of the City system, maybe the City could now set up an internet link at the park?

From Parks supervisor Peter Leiss Sept.15 2006

Parks is notified. Apparently Recreation is not. I will ask for notification is also going to Tino for DufferinGrove permits.

Nancy could permits for Dufferin Grove Park be copied to Tino DeCastro?

From Permit staff Nancy Aranha to Parks supervisor Peter Leiss, Sept.19 2006

Most definitely permits can be copied to Tino. However, because different areas of the park are booked by different people, for example Jasmine permits out the soccer field, Metro Hall the picnic areas, and the rink by Wallace CC it would be in Tino's best interest to run weekly reports in CLASS.

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.19 2006

Hi, no problem running weekly reports. But would that not be too late, to provide input on a possible permit request before it is granted????? That is of course what the issue is at hand, Park staff would like to make sure that any possible permit fits into park programming before it is granted.

From Permits staff Nancy Aranha to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.19 2006

In that case I would suggest you deal with Jasmine and Metro Hall directly to avoid any permits being issued without your approval. I have cc'd them on this email.

From Permits staff Jasmine Uljarevic, Sept.20 2006

I have in the past sent permits to Tino to keep with updated with the permits that I are issued and I have no problem with doing the same so as Tino can have a copy of what is going on in the park.

From Jutta Mason to Permits staff Jasmine Uljarevic, Sept.21 2006

hello Jasmine -- I believe what's being asked is that there be consultation *before* permits of over 50 people are approved, because larger groups can occasionally create a program conflict with staff-run events in this unusually busy park.

Are you saying that you can only let Tino and the Dufferin program staff know about large permits *after* you have already given the go-ahead? (Maybe I misunderstood...)

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Jutta Mason, Sept.21 2006

Jasmine permits out the soccer field. As we know most of that time is already permitted out ie Toronto Eagles, Portugal 2004 and our community permit time.

From Jutta Mason to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.21 2006

So if Jasmine only permits games on the soccer field, who would be the permit staff that would check with you before approving picnic permits of over 50 people?

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Jutta Mason, Sept.21 2006

Hi, that would be Metro Hall the picnic areas, Heather Chislett, she will be letting me.

From Permits staff Jasmine Uljarevic, Sept.22 2006

I have only permitted the soccer field to the two groups that have had permits with us the Toronto Eagles and Portugal 2004 and they are the only two groups I permit to. You will need to check with the picnics permits staff for any additional permits issued out.

From Jutta Mason to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Sept.22 2006

so where does this leave us? Just catch me up -- who is the picnic permit person? -- who booked the soccer field for the pow wow? etc.

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Jutta Mason, Sept.23 2006

Picnic is Heather Chislett.

Soccer field is Jasmine

and then Pow Wow is special events, Jaime McCaig who can permit the entire Park cancelling all previously issued permits.

From Nancy Aranha, Parks, Forestry and Recreation permit officer, to Jutta Mason, Oct.30 2006

Thank you for your emails and questions regarding the Harmonized Permit Policy. We hope this email will clarify the Council approved policy regarding permits.

Please find attached the four Parks, Forestry and Recreation Staff Reports that Council adopted on this matter in 2004 and 2005 for your reference. [ed. [Report 1](#), [Report 2](#), [Report 3](#), [Report 4](#)]

During the 2004 Operating Budget process, Council approved the new artificial ice rink rates, setting a rate of \$34.24/hour for youth. In June 2004, the General Manager directed staff to implement all new rates for the coming season. Prior to Council approving these new rates the former City of Toronto did not charge a permit fee for youth to use artificial ice rinks. Based on this fact, the Director, Parks and Recreation, South District waived the permit fees for the upcoming season. Staff continued to follow this practice in 2005/2006.

In 2006, staff have been directed by the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to implement all Council approved fees for all parks and facilities.

A formal Staff Report was not required during the 2004 Operating Budget process.

A Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff person can only request fees to be reduced to zero for any and all activities and events organized by Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff. Similarly a City Councillor can only request fees to be reduced to zero for any activity or event directly organized by the Councillor or his office.

Permit fees for events/activities organized by Not-for-Profit community groups fitting certain criteria can be considered for a reduction in fees provided that the community group formally applies in writing, 30 days prior to the event date, through the General Manager's Office. The Reduction in Fees Policy was previously provided.

To clarify Mayssan's question, fees are researched and put forward by the Division for Council consideration and approval with the intent that such fees reasonably offset the cost of delivering an activity/program/facility. The general tax levy (i.e. property taxes) supports all City Divisions and services. Whereas, our fees offset the costs of programs, services, and the maintenance of facilities within the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division.

I trust this clarifies your concerns.

From Jutta Mason to Nancy Aranha, Parks, Forestry and Recreation permit officer, Nov.19 2006

I've now had a chance to read your attachments more carefully. The timeline chart in your Attachment #2 said that this September to November there would be an "Internal review of Permit allocation process."

Could you put me in contact with the staff person responsible for this review? CELOS (The **CE**ntre for **LO**cal research into public **S**pace) would like to draw their attention to the problem I mentioned to you, about youth-initiated one-off shinny hockey game permits. The policy principle here is that youth are a priority group (I think?) and that those youth who are considered most vulnerable are not eligible for a fee waiver, since they are by definition not an incorporated group.

CELOS would therefore like to submit a report on the "unforeseen impacts" of the permit fee policy on such youth. We will need to hurry, since the deadline for the review is a week from now. To whom may we send it?

From City recreation manager Kevin Seow to Jutta Mason, Nov.20 2006

Here's what we can do this season. If youth express a need for more recreation opportunity; Recreation staff will work with them to come up with the time that works. If we need more shinny, staff can run an extra program to accommodate the extra volume of youth shinny players. This will then become an additional program offered to the community. The permit for this program will be under PF and R.

From Jutta Mason to City Recreation manager Kelvin Seow, Nov.20 2006

-- thanks for interjecting. I agree there are ways to get around this. What's missing is the important idea that if rather marginal youth have the gumption to organize a one-hour permit for themselves and their marginal friends, that's great! Dufferin Rink staff supported this a lot, and I think that it should be supported, but can't be under the present system. It seems to me that's still worth writing a letter to the internal review people about. Do you agree?

Of course, if all they're doing is crunching numbers, we'd be wasting paper and ink. Please let me know.

From City recreation manager Kevin Seow to Jutta Mason, Nov.20 2006

I've always believed that it's important that community groups and residents provide their feed back. My solution, as you know, is intended to work within the current policy. At our last meeting we spoke about liability and insurance.

This will be an issue that will be raised. You may want to address it in your correspondence before it's raised.

From Jutta Mason to City Recreation manager Kelvin Seow, Nov.21 2006

thanks so much for your thoughts here.

Liability and insurance: A freedom of information request by one of the on-site Dufferin Rink staff has just turned up the information that there were three claims against the City for injuries at outdoor ice rinks since amalgamation. All claims (indoor and outdoor rinks together) added up to about \$36,000 payout. Sadly, no more details were offered, and of course we need to know more if we are to learn from actual events. So we'll follow up there.

I agree with you that the insurance issue is a factor in any discussion. Is there anyone in PF&R who know the insurance details, especially how much extra premium the City has to pay to allow permits to play, on top of its own sports program insurance?

Or do I need to go to someone in Corporate Services to find out out the details? If so, can you suggest a name?

And finally: to whom can CELOS (our group) direct a letter raising the youth/permits issue? In other words, who is in charge of the Sept-Nov internal review mentioned in the material Nancy Aranha sent?

From Parks, Forestry and Recreation permit officer Nancy Aranha to Jutta Mason, Nov.21 2006

sorry for the delay in getting back to you.

The Internal Review of the Permit Allocation process has already commenced. At this point in time we are hoping to have our internal review completed by end of January 2007. Any recommendations or concerns that our department may have, will be addressed with the General Manager's Office at that time.

Please forward all reports, questions or concerns to:

Brenda Librezc General Manager

From Jutta Mason to Kevin Beaulieu, executive assistant to City Councillor Adam Giambrone, Nov.24, 2006

Friends of Susan Tibaldi Parkette approached me and also Dufferin Park staff last spring, about making their neighborhood parkette a less scary place. Staff have been working with them and Parks (Peter Leiss) helped clean up trash dumped there. The group has had several gatherings of families with young kids at the parkette, very successful.

Two weeks ago they said they would like to have a little campfire with hot chocolate, to keep up their campaign to "take back the parkette." Park staff assigned two staff to help run this event. They dropped the ball -- everyone thought that someone else had asked for permission to make a fire -- and this morning we realized there's no permission.

The rec staff need the okay from somewhere -- if there's anyone home -- to do this simple program supporting safety initiatives in the City.

When a group is just forming, it's very important to support them. These young families want to take back the parkette, but I'm afraid the bureaucracy may have got there first.

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Jutta Mason, Nov.24 2006

I will need to let the staff know once again that they must follow proper procedure. There is no reason for them not filling out all the necessary paperwork well in advance.

From Recreation staff Mayssan Shuja to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Nov.24 2006

For this case, to give you the details: The campfire will be at Susan Tibaldi Parkette from 5-7pm on Sunday 26th Nov. I will be directly responsible of the fire permit, as recreation staff. There will be two other rec staff that will accompany me as volunteers or CELOS workers. The friends of Susan Tibaldi Parkette, are Helen and Jerzy. You have their email address. Jerzy Jarmasz already has a file in class from previous events at Dufferin.

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Recreation staff Mayssan Shuja, Nov.24 2006

The fire permit is at Dufferin Grove under my name. You Mayssan are the lead Staff and please have a copy of the permit with you for this event

From Jutta Mason to Recreation manager Kelvin Seow, Nov. 25 2006.

Parks supervisor Peter Leiss told me on Friday that there is no longer a seasonal fire permit for the campfire program run by Parks and Rec at Dufferin Grove. He said that our 11-year program is no longer accepted and that anyone who wants to make a campfire at the park will have to give 6 weeks notice and pay \$53.50. That seemed to include staff programming too. He said that he got this information directly from Permits.

This most recent obstacle from Permits, blocking yet another element of what makes Dufferin Grove Park work well for the neighbourhood, is based on several misunderstandings.

1. I have the impression that some staff in your Division think that keeping the campfires as a program rather than a revenue-producing item is a trick, a rip-off, trying to duck the rules. What these folks forget is that campfires are one of the most successful park safety programs we have, and your Division's mandate to help make parks safe is higher on the scale than making money off permits. The campfire program gives "eyes on the park," with most of those eyes being unpaid -- a bargain for the City. Rec staff are enabled to do this part of their job -- working for park safety -- better, with the help of the campfires.

2. The Permits section apparently defines non-paid park activities as loss of revenue, which must only be considered if City Council comes up with a way of replacing this revenue. The Campfire program invented at Dufferin Grove Park was never intended to generate revenue. Since it was always a park program, no existing revenue is lost if it continues to operate. Jamming this program into the revenue-generating stream will not work -- it doesn't fit there.

3. I gather that at last Wednesday's city-wide advisory council forum, there were strong objections to similarly misguided Permit rules. Sadly, your general manager was not able to attend this meeting due to ill health, and so she didn't get to hear these messages directly. I've also been told that City Councillors across the city have been

getting calls from their constituents for similar reasons. Certainly, if a group of neighbours make a special effort, working with rec staff, to reclaim a neglected or even dangerous park space by having an event -- and then they suddenly find that they are expected to pay for their efforts -- that can raise serious questions about what's going on in your Division.

Please work with your staff and park friends to reinstate the campfire program at Dufferin Grove Park and to make it possible for rec staff at other parks. For my part, I will try to work with other park friends across the city to make on-going connections with the new "Recreation and Community Development " committee of Council when it forms, and with other City Councillors as well. They need to know that some elements of your Division's Permits approach are not appropriate.

From Parks supervisor Peter Leiss to Recreation manager Kelvin Seow, and Jutta Mason, Nov.25 2006

Just to clarify some points that made in this email.

What I said was that there was no general application made by Recreation or any other department for that matter for a Fire permit for 2006. This means that there was no approval sought or given by the Fire Marshall's office. I made no comment regarding the acceptance of any program.

I did in fact say that there is a requirement for an application for a campfire permit from Permits and that this process is the standard application process. (6 weeks \$53.50)

I have raised concerns with the permit process at Dufferin Grove as it does not meet the minimum requirements of liability. The potential of injury is heightened with the use of fire in the Park. With the permit given out at Dufferin Grove Parks is not protected from any action that may be taken by any individual as a result of injury.

The permits given out use letterhead that is out of date. They still use the Joe Halstead letterhead.

I am looking forward to having this issue resolved and would be happy to arrange a meeting with all of the parties to clarify the process.

From Jutta Mason to Parks supervisor Peter Leiss, Nov.25 2006

Point of view is everything!

From the point of view of the neighbourhood, our 11-year-old campfire program, approved repeatedly by the City Hall Fire Safety chief, does not exist, in fact has been illegal all year.

From the point of view of this neighbourhood, **in well over a thousand campfires/cooking-fires during those 11 years, the number of injuries has been 0.** The number of claims against the city has therefore been 0 as well.

From the point of view of Corporate Services, over the past thirty years, millions of dollars of claims have been paid out to settle injuries/ damage cause by City drivers, including Parks and Rec drivers, in transit between locations (as far as I can tell from the freedom of information material made available to me, regarding lawsuits/claims history, and from last year's City-lawsuit-payouts news stories).

Parks and rec management have not stopped their staff from driving vehicles between parks -- they just try to make sure the drivers are careful.

So do the rec staff make sure that fire safety is observed. And the City is protected against any campfire-program-related claims (which did not happen) by their program insurance. Similar protection to City vehicle insurance, I think? But a lot better actuarial risk.

So I believe that this is not a safety/liability issue, but a larger issue of inappropriate Permit policies, which needs to be addressed, by City staff, by Councillors, and through public discussion. Let's keep our eye on the main problem.....

From City Recreation manager Kelvin Seow to Jutta Mason, Nov.27 2006

I've spoken to Tino and I've asked him to request the permit under Recreation. Tino tells me this is a safely run program with continued support from Rec. staff and trained volunteers. We will continue to work with the Parks staff and Fire Dept. to ensure we follow all regulations.

From City Recreation manager Kelvin Seow to Jutta Mason, Nov.27 2006

Hi Jutta, I remember our staff working with Jeff Madeley in Risk and Insurance to help guide our position on Liability. His phone number is 416 392 6301. I'm on vacation as of Wednesday until Dec. 11th. When I get back I'm going to try and reach him to get further info. regarding our coverage.

From on-site staff Anna Galati to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Nov.28 2006

request for Dufferin Grove campfire staff to make a campfire at MacGregor park for the MacGregor park solstice celebration.

Date: Thursday December 21st,
time: 4:00pm - 8:30 (approximately, it's intended to be an after school event)

some particulars on the event: Toronto Arts Council artist-in-residence Kristen Fahrig has partnered up with West Toronto Collegiate, (working together with the principal and the art teacher) They offered her a room at the south end of the school building that opens out to the park. She will be offering an arts workshop/ class, to the students leading up to Winter Solstice.

Intended activities: exhibition of wearable art; story telling, campfire.

This is a grass roots community partnership with the TDSB, Partks and rec and facilitated by parks n rec, offering youth and family oriented programing.

From Jutta Mason to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, cc to Permits manager Mark Lawson, Nov.28 2006

This program is also supported by Councillor Adam Giambrone, who brought Mayor Miller to the last MacGregor campfire program (Oct.29).

Since this is a Parks and Rec program, we anticipate that there is no cost for fire permission

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to park on-site staff Anna Galati, Nov.28 2006

The permit has been secured.

From Jutta Mason to "neighbourhood teams" (community development) manager Lucy Stern, Dec.1 2006

Anna Bekerman, one of the staff at Dufferin Grove Park, wrote this description of a recent neighbourhood campfire she and two other rec staff helped with, at Susan Tibaldi Parkette. The parkette is above the subway line, behind notorious Duffy's Tavern near Lansdowne and Bloor. It's a drug dealing depot part of the time. Under the present Parks, Forestry and Rec permit policy, when neighbours rally and do a lot of extra work to 'take back a parkette' the City wants them to pay for doing that (\$53.50 for a fire permit). That policy needs changing, maybe with some input from "neighbourhood teams" to Permits, so they can amend their policy?

To illustrate, here's Anna's description:

Some new residents of the area, mostly families with young kids who come to Dufferin Grove a lot, asked our staff to help them set up a campfire event to "take back the parkette." So we did, bringing the fire stand, wood, toasting forks, water, etc., and helping throughout the evening.

The parkette neighbours brought everything else. The campfire was a big success, with about 40 people from the neighbourhood coming out. There were lots of families roasting marshmallows, munching on hot dogs and roast potatoes, and getting to know their neighbours. Lanterns that some neighbours had made hung along the fence, and kids sat on blankets on the grass. Passersby saw the campfire and joined in. Everybody was very happy with how the night turned out. That was a perfect example of the way campfires can be community builders. (Anna Bekerman, Dufferin Grove Park Staff)

Maybe we can talk about this example when you bring your students to Dufferin Rink next week? A good case study, maybe, of how to navigate Parks and Rec bureaucracy.

From community development manager Lucy Stern to Jutta Mason, Dec.1 2006

Yes, good for discussion.

From Jutta Mason to Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro, Dec.18 2006

I am very puzzled about the new permit forms for one-off shinny hockey. I think the permits used to say that if the permit holder had less than 12 players, and/or if s/he was not at the rink by ten minutes beforehand, the permit would be forfeited. The new forms only say that if there are more players than specified in the form, the permit may be forfeited.

Does that mean that according to the City policy, a person can rent ice time and have only 4- 6 skaters, no problem? (With all the others looking in from outside?)

Please find out for me -- thanks

From Recreation supervisor Tino DeCastro to Jutta Mason, Dec.19 2006

these are the new permit forms that are being used city wide for all sports permits.

there is no longer a 12 person minimum, as this was a departmental policy implemented years ago to only maximize usage. It was never an approved policy by council or is stipulated anywhere, so I wouldn't try to implement the 12 person min. I would follow what's on the form as it is a legal binding document.

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This page last updated: 30-May-2010

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