

City of Brisbane Parks and Recreation Commission Agenda Report

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

From: Brenda Walker, City Intern
Noreen Leek, Recreation Manager

Subject: Youth Fee Waiver Program

Date: September 12th, 2018

Purpose

Establish a formalized fee waiver assistance policy to better meet the needs of low-income families and ensure that all Brisbane children have the opportunity to participate in Brisbane's recreation programs.

Recommendation

Review the draft policy and subsequent application before conducting a conversation regarding the preferred approach to fee waivers for the City.

Background

Since its inception, the fee waiver process for Brisbane Parks & Recreation has been based on an honor system without any formal criteria, policy, or structure. Currently, the Recreation Administrative Assistant is approving each application with the trust of the honor system. Additionally, the possibility of the City's program fees being waived is not advertised on any City platform. Despite the lack of advertisement, there are approximately 20 families annually receiving up to a 50% subsidy for program fees. Most of these families then have an average of 1-2 children. The financial impact this has had on the City is approximately \$20,000/year.¹

After targeting the flaws within the current system, the past couple of months have been dedicated to researching similar practices of other cities in San Mateo County and greater California. Findings indicate that budgets and practices range significantly among each city, and no one county has a uniform system. Additionally, the demographics of each city and its physical size factored into their approach to serving their low-income youth. For example, Milpitas (population of about 77,500²) for this fiscal year approved a maximum of \$250 per household to use a 50%/50% match on program fees, meaning that each household is responsible for 50% of program fees up to \$250 to be matched. Their program is named the Recreation Assistance Program (RAP) and annual budget is \$6,500. To qualify

¹ Information provided by Parks & Rec administration

²Data USA, "Milpitas," <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/milpitas-ca/>.

individuals for RAP, the City uses HUD (Housing and Urban Development) guidelines. For large cities like Milpitas, a percentage plan with a maximum dollar amount per household is a smart choice since it is fair and easily tracked. Additionally, relying on HUD guidelines as criteria minimizes the overall staff time required for verification.

A city like Half Moon Bay with a smaller population (of about 12,000 residents), is reliant on a scholarship fund named the Rollie Wright Scholarship Fund for fee assistance. This fund is to be used for Half Moon Bay residents of all ages who qualify by submitting either a tax return from previous tax year or a letter from a school/social service agency. Scholarships are then considered in increments of 25%, 50%, and 75%, with a \$300 maximum per family per season. This is contingent on funding and on a “first come first served basis.”³ This is a true scholarship program, which informs the budget for funding of the program but there are also potential negative connotations with the word “scholarship” that may deter people.

Based on our research, it seems that the best option is to continue offering a fee waiver program, based off of the Brisbane Elementary School District’s (BESD) lunch assistance program. Approximately 25% of BESD students utilize the lunch assistance program. As of 2016, those that have free or discounted lunch at Lipman account for 28.9% of the student body, 15.5% at Brisbane Elementary, and 40.4% at Panorama.⁴ Although there is a detailed application process through the district, each school noted that they handle qualifying students differently. By framing our criteria around the BESD lunch assistance program, we would establish some criteria without placing an additional burden on the family to secure documentation.

Discussion

As a city, we fall short in meeting the needs of low-income families with a desire to have their children participate in the City of Brisbane’s recreation programs. The potential of the City’s programs could be much greater if all resident children had equal opportunities to participate. Although it is difficult to estimate the demand for a fee waiver program in Brisbane, we’ve established the need for a more formalized system. After evaluating the ways in which other San Mateo County cities have structured their fee waiver processes, we’ve narrowed down a few options for the City of Brisbane to consider.

Option 1: The first option would establish an annual budget and accept applications until funds were exhausted. This would be similar to the example of Half Moon Bay but instead have a fixed budget from the City, rather than a fluctuating one based on external donations.

Option 2: The second option would impose a maximum subsidy amount per child or per family. Depending on how much the City is willing to spend on each family/child, this could potentially be a more costly approach. Considerations for this option include family size and varying program costs (one time class versus a year-round program).

Option 3: Finally, the third option is the most open, and wouldn’t impose a cap on the number of applications accepted or the dollar amount subsidized. This option would ensure that no applicant would be turned down.

³The City of Half Moon Bay California, “Recreation Division,” *The Rollie Wright Scholarship Fund*. <https://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/841/Rollie-Wright-Sponsorship-Assistance-Form-AUG2017-PDF?bidId=>

⁴ California Department of Education. *Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Lunch in San Mateo County Schools K-12*, <https://data.smcgov.org/Education/Percent-of-Students-Eligible-for-Free-and-Reduced-/azby-ux3>.

At this time, the Commission should review the various options for a fee waiver policy and weigh the pros and cons as well as the financial implications for each. The Commission may elect to discuss further at a future meeting but then must ultimately make a recommendation to City Council.

Fiscal Impact

The true financial impacts will be determined at a later time and will be dependent upon the decided approach and based on the number of applications received. The current “honor system” approach the city has used for those in need of youth program assistance has been estimated to account for approximately \$20,000 annually.⁵

Attachments

- A. Youth Fee Waiver Policy Draft
- B. Youth Fee Waiver Application Draft


Noreen Leek
Recreation Manager

⁵ Information provided by Parks & Rec administration

FEE WAIVER POLICY



PURPOSE:

This policy serves to provide fee waiver assistance to low-income families receiving Brisbane Elementary School District (BESD) lunch assistance, or who meet other qualifying criteria as determined by the Parks & Recreation Department. Fee waiver assistance for youth programs is provided to families that are actively utilizing BESD's lunch assistance.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure that all Brisbane children have the opportunity to participate in Brisbane's Parks & Recreation programs including; the Club Rec afterschool program, preschool program, basketball, flag football, baseball, seasonal City-run camps, and swim lessons.
2. Ensure that the program assists youth in need.
3. Encourage low-income family's participation in City programs.
4. Encourage and recognize the dedication of the City of Brisbane to serve all of its inhabitants.
5. Engender significant ties of friendship and mutual recognition and support within the Community.

QUALIFYING CRITERIA:

Applicant must be a Brisbane resident.

Applicant must be under 18 years of age.

Applicant must be currently receiving free lunch or lunch assistance through BESD.

Applicant must submit the fee waiver application to the Brisbane Parks & Recreation department.

PROCEDURE:

1. Interested individuals must complete and submit a fee waiver application after confirming that all qualifying criteria have been met.
2. Applicants must wait for departmental review and approval before being enrolled in the desired program(s). **Note:** *submission of an application does not indicate nor guarantee enrollment in the program.*
3. Once an application is approved (and provided that space is available in the desired program) the registration will be processed by the Parks & Recreation department. An enrollment receipt will be issued to the applicant.
4. Depending on the program, additional forms (such as an emergency card) may be required to complete the enrollment process.

FINANCIAL:

To be determined.



FEE WAIVER APPLICATION

The Brisbane Parks & Recreation Department encourages all Brisbane youth to participate in its recreation programs. In an effort to ensure that no child is denied enrollment due to financial limitations, the City of Brisbane offers a select number of fee waivers to qualified families. (Note: all information provided herein is confidential.)

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Participant's Name	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)	Gender	Activity Name	Day/Time	Fee
1.		M F			
2.		M F			
3.		M F			
4.		M F			
TOTAL AMOUNT					
AMOUNT BEING REQUESTED FOR FEE WAIVER CONSIDERATION					
Address					
City		State		Zip	

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Parent/Guardians Name	
Primary Phone	Secondary Phone
Email	
What additional information would you like for us to know? (Allergies, Medication, etc.)	
Does your child currently receive free lunch or lunch assistance through their school?	YES NO
Reason for applying for waiver:	

WAIVER, RELEASE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

I fully understand the nature of this City or City-sponsored program or activity in which I/my child will participate and understand that participation in such program or activity has risks that may lead to or cause personal injuries to myself/my child or damage to or loss of personal property. Notwithstanding these risks, on behalf of myself/my child, I assume all risks, waive, indemnify, hold harmless and release the City of Brisbane, its employees, agents and volunteers from all claims for personal injuries and damage to or loss of personal property. Furthermore, I authorize and permit the use of photography and/or media production of this program or activity in which I/my child may appear and do so without any expectation of compensation for such use.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE PURPOSES ONLY

<input type="checkbox"/> CREDIT CARD Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature X _____ Name on Card (print) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> CHECK 	<input type="checkbox"/> CASH 	TOTAL AMOUNT CHARGED TO CUSTOMER: \$ _____	TOTAL AMOUNT WAIVED BY POLICY: \$ _____
Approved By: _____	Date: _____	Processed By: _____	Date: _____	