



ROCHESTER PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

POLICY ON USE OF OVERNIGHT CAMPING IN CITY PARKS

PURPOSE

To establish policy and procedures to respond to requests for over night camping in city parks as well as establish guidelines for issuance of permits for overnight camping.

HISTORY

Ordinance 45B.13. Park Hours

No person, except police officers and the employees and servants of the Board, shall be present in any park or parkway between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00a.m. each day, except that the Board may designate different hours for individual parks or parkways as deemed appropriate. Enforcement of park closing hours, when different from the general park closing hours indicated establishes normal park hours as 5:00 AM to 11:00 PM or as may be amended by Park Board action.

In the past few years the number of requests for extension of the park hours to accommodate overnight camping in parks has increased. The requests have come from local Boy Scout groups, cross country biking participants, athletic tournament participants, Mayo Civic Center vendors and patrons, individual Mayo Clinic visitors and various fund raising event organizers. We have not been consistent in our response to these requests.

POLICY ISSUES

The Board of Park Commissioners is being asked to formally adopt policy and guidelines for staff's use in responding to requests from the public for the extension of park hours to accommodate overnight camping in city parks.

For the most part, the camping that has been allowed in the past has not created a lot of problems. There is a moderate increase in trash / litter but most groups have been very good about leaving the sites clean and have generally been respectful of the facilities. This can probably be attributed to the supervision provided by the organizations and their interest in being able to continue the camping outings in the future. The requests for camping often include requests for additional picnic tables, electrical hook-ups and full service restrooms. The existing park restroom facilities have proven to be inadequate for larger groups. Shower facilities are available only at Soldier's Field and Silver Lake pools. So far, none of the camping events has had to deal with rain, soggy turf or storm events. None of our park sites are able to provide shelter should these weather related conditions occur. Security lighting or lack of such lighting at the camp sites has not been raised as a concern. None of the previously approved camping requests has generated any income for the Park Department. There are private campgrounds in the area that could provide camping sites.

Some of the groups that have camped in the park provide service to the department in the form of doing park maintenance, litter pick up, trail clearing etc. Several of the groups requesting over night camping are involved in fund raising or creating public awareness for a specific social issues...Habitat for Humanity housing, stocking local food shelves, providing for the homeless etc.

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

- A. Camping / over night parking requests to be generally denied by staff for:
 - 1. Individuals
 - 2. Groups or events not renting or having a direct connection with Park Department facilities
 - 3. Organizations who have failed to abide by park rules previously

- B. Camping requests / conditions generally imposed by staff subject to Park Board approval:
 - 1. Organization sponsored events that are renting and paying for Department facilities
 - 2. Organization must be able to provide insurance covering all participants naming the city as an additional insured.
 - 3. Organization to provide emergency shelter plan. Mayo Civic Center should not be considered as emergency shelter sites.
 - 4. Organization to pay for all additional park services requested: tables, portable restrooms, pool shower facilities, fencing, extra trash disposal etc
 - 5. Organization to provide refundable deposit to be refunded if site is left clean and no damaged to site
 - 6. Camping limited to community parks and not in neighborhood parks or golf courses
 - 7. Tent camping only-no RV's or trailers and no vehicles allowed on park turf at any time
 - 8. Camping hours 4:00 PM to 8:00 AM
 - 9. Each camping event limited to a single night