



A New Parks and Recreation Department and the transition to City-run events.

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Back in late 2005, the Adel Park Board and City Manager began the push to justify the need for a full-time Parks and Recreation Director. The community continued to grow, and the need for the position was evident. Prior to my arrival in October of 2007; most of the youth and adult leagues were run by Youth Associations, Boards, or Adel community members organizing recreational activities. Maybe your department will take over a certain sport or event in the future? Is there an event that you have always wanted to run? I will try to explain the process to be successful in working with these entities in this edition of the IPRA Article Exchange.

1. *Meet and Greet!*

You must get out to those groups and explain what you do. Attend their board meetings to see how they operate, and learn as much as possible. Don't approach them with the mentality that they are no longer needed. Don't be surprised if you are given the 'cold shoulder' by some board or event members. A lot of these entities have been started by community members who have a vested interest in the particular activity, and they sometimes have a hard time making that transition to turn the program over to your department. You must explain that your Parks and Recreation Department is here to support their efforts, and are willing to help out in any way.

2. *What can you do for us?*

I ran into this question a lot. You must sell it to them that you can make their life a lot easier by helping ways such as: handling event marketing and registration, event scheduling, event questions and concerns, equipment rentals and purchases. Let them know that they can still be involved in all phases of the event with less time commitment and headaches!

3. *Who keeps all the profit? Who gets the event or program money?*

Depending on the cooperation of the group, you may have to start small; others may have no problem with your department keeping the revenue. Start by offering your services, and splitting the profit with them. For example, provide your services and keep half the money with the understanding that a portion of their money be used for improvements to your city facilities which they may have been using.

4. *Meetings, Meetings, Meetings.*

Like anyone needs more meetings, but communication is key for the transition. Make sure that you are scheduling meetings with the entities to provide them with your progress, and to get advice from them to keep the event or program similar to how they have run it. If you are successful in the transition, the more likely they are to 'cut the cord', and let you have the event or program in its entirety the next year.

5. *Event or Program Final Report and Follow-up.*

Make sure that your participants and Association Boards are given a program evaluation to gather their input on how things were handled. Listen to their suggestions, and adapt accordingly for next year.

The transition of a non-existing department to a brand new department has been good. Different groups who have handled certain events or programs have accepted and adapted to the change, others have not. I feel that success with some partnerships will be an example to the others who have not been so cooperative. I am confident that other partnerships will be made as I spend more time in my new position. I hope that this guide makes it easier for a Parks and Recreation Department to approach an entity that handles something the department is interested in taking over.

Please feel free to contact me regarding this information.
See all of you soon at the Spring Conference in Council Bluffs!

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