



Colchester Parks & Recreation Department Sponsorship Policy

Introduction

The following guidelines in this Sponsorship Policy have been specifically designed for the Colchester Parks & Recreation Department, while considering that these guidelines may be later adapted and implemented on a Town-wide basis. Some assumptions regarding this policy are:

- Partnerships for recreation and parks facilities and program development may be pursued based on the Colchester Sponsorship Policy, encouraging the development of partnerships for the benefit of the Town, its citizens, and potential partners. Sponsorships are one type of partnership, and one avenue of procurement for alternative funding resources. The Sponsorship Policy may evolve as the needs of new projects and other Town departments are incorporated into its usage.
- Broad guidelines are offered in this policy to delineate primarily which types of sponsors and approval levels are currently acceptable for the Colchester Parks & Recreation Department.
- The policy should ensure that the definition of potential sponsors may include non-commercial community organizations (for example: YMCAs and Universities), but does not include a forum for non-commercial speech or advertising.
- Sponsorships are clearly defined and are different from advertisements. Advertisements are one type of benefit that may be offered to a sponsor in exchange for cash or in-kind sponsorship.

I. Purpose

In an effort to utilize and maximize the community's resources, it is in the best interest of the Town's Parks & Recreation Department to create and enhance relationship-based sponsorships. This may be accomplished by providing local, regional, and national commercial businesses and nonprofit groups a method for becoming involved with the many opportunities provided by the Parks & Recreation Department. The Department delivers quality, life-enriching activities to the broadest base of the community. This translates into exceptional visibility for sponsors and supporters. It is the goal of the Department to create relationships and partnerships with sponsors for the financial benefit of the Department.

Approved by the Board of Selectmen, June 7, 2007

Sponsorships vs. Donations

It is important to note that there is a difference between a sponsorship and a donation. Basically, sponsorships are cash or in-kind products and services offered by sponsors with the clear expectation that an obligation is created. The recipient is obliged to return something of value to the sponsor. The value is typically public recognition and/or advertising highlighting the contribution of the sponsor and/or the sponsor's name, logo, message, products or services. The Sponsor usually has clear marketing objectives that they are trying to achieve, including, but not limited to, the ability to drive sales directly based on the sponsorship, and/or quite often, the right to be the exclusive sponsor in a specific category of sales. The arrangement is typically consummated by a letter of agreement or contractual arrangement that details the particulars of the exchange.

In contrast, a donation comes with no restrictions on how the money or in-kind resources are used, unless specified by the donor. This policy specifically addresses sponsorships, the process for the procurement of the resources, and the benefits provided in return for securing those resources.

II. Guidelines for Acceptable Sponsorships

Sponsors should be businesses, non-profit groups, or individuals that promote mutually beneficial relationships for the Parks & Recreation Department. All potentially sponsored properties (facilities, events or programs) should be reviewed in terms of creating working relationships with regards to benefits, community contributions, knowledge and political sensitivity.

III. Sponsorship Selection Criteria

A. Relationship of Sponsorship to Mission and Goals

The first major criterion is the appropriate relationship of a sponsorship to the Parks & Recreation Department's Mission and Goals. While objective analysis is ideal, the appropriateness of a relationship may sometimes be necessarily subjective.

COLCHESTER PARKS AND RECREATION VISION STATEMENT

“Well maintained parks, public spaces, and abundant nature areas provide opportunities for citizens to maintain active, healthy lifestyles, while appreciating our community's natural resources and preserving them for future generations. Community spirit is fostered by the town's diverse cultural fabric, facilitated and coordinated in superior, award winning recreational programs.”

COLCHESTER PARKS AND RECREATION MISSION STATEMENT

"To provide high quality parks, facilities and recreation services in a way that meets Colchester's diverse interests so that people may find identity and make meaningful connections to enhance their quality of life."

The following questions are the major guiding components of this policy and should be addressed prior to soliciting potential sponsors:

- Is the sponsorship reasonably related to the purpose of the facility or programs as exemplified by the Mission Statement and Goals of the Department?
- Will the sponsorship help generate more revenue and/or less cost per participant than the Town can provide without it?
- What are the real costs, including staff time, for procuring the amount of cash or in-kind resources that come with the generation of the sponsorship?

Sponsorships which shall NOT be considered are those which:

- Violate, or advocate the violation of, federal or state law or regulation or local ordinance;
- Create a conflict of interest for the Town or its staff; or
- Would not be deemed in the best interests of the Town.

B. Sponsorship Opportunity and Approval Levels

Each project or program that involves solicitation of Sponsors should, PRIOR to procurement, create a Sponsorship Opportunity (SO) specific to that project or program. This SO must be approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission.

A SO will include, at minimum:

- Event/program details and description
- Contact information
- Sponsor benefits
- Past sponsors
- Consideration

All SOs must be made available to the public, including posting on the official Parks & Recreation Sponsorship web page, with email notice going out to all registered addresses. Copies will also be available at the Parks & Recreation Office.

Should there be more interested sponsors than available sponsorships for a particular program/event, as delineated in the SO, sponsorships will be awarded on a first come, first served basis.

After verbal agreement has been reached with a potential sponsor, an agreement delineating the rights and responsibilities of each party must be drafted, and signed by each party.

Approved by the Board of Selectmen, June 7, 2007

Sponsorships must be approved by the Board of Selectmen, with contract signature by the First Selectman.

Contracted sponsors receive the “first right of refusal” to renew as a sponsor of the same program/event at the same tier for one additional year; however, the benefits and consideration of the sponsorship may be renegotiated as necessary. After a one-year renewal, the sponsorship must once again be made available to the public.

C. No Non-Commercial Forum is Permitted

This criterion deals with the commercial character of a sponsorship message. The Town intends to create a limited forum, focused on advertisements incidental to commercial sponsorships of Parks & Recreation facilities and programs. While non-commercial community organizations or individuals may wish to sponsor Department activities or facilities for various reasons, no non-commercial speech is permitted in the limited forum created by this policy.

Advertisements incidental to commercial sponsorship must primarily propose a commercial transaction, either directly, through the text, or indirectly, through the association of the sponsor's name with the commercial transaction of purchasing the commercial goods or services which the sponsor sells.

The reasons for this portion of the Policy include:

1. The desirability of avoiding non-commercial proselytizing of a “captive audience” of event spectators and participants;
2. The constitutional prohibition on any view-point related decisions about permitted advertising coupled with the danger that the Town and the Parks & Recreation Department would be associated with advertising anyway;
3. The desire of the Town to maximize income from sponsorship, weighed against the likelihood that commercial sponsors would be dissuaded from using the same forum commonly used by persons wishing to communicate non-commercial messages, some of which could be offensive to the public;
4. The desire of the Town to maintain a position of neutrality on political and religious issues; and,
5. In the case of religious advertising and political advertising, specific concerns about the danger of “excessive entanglement” with religion (and resultant constitutional violations) and the danger of election campaign law violations, respectively.

IV. Additional Guidelines for Implementation

A. Equitable Offerings

It is important that all sponsorships of equal levels across divisions within Parks & Recreation yield the same value of benefits for potential sponsors.

B. Sponsorship Contact Database

A designated staff person or representative of the Parks & Recreation Department will keep an updated list of all current sponsors, sponsored activities, and contacts related to sponsorship.

Purpose of Maintaining the Database:

- Limit duplicate solicitations of one sponsor
- Allow management to make decisions based on most appropriate solicitations and levels of benefits offered
- Keep a current list of all Department supporters and contacts
- Help provide leads for new sponsorships, if appropriate

If a potential sponsor is already listed, staff should not pursue a sponsorship without researching the sponsor's history with the most recently sponsored division. If more than one division wishes to pursue sponsorship by the same company/ the Management Team shall make a decision based on several variables, including but not limited to:

- History of sponsorship, relationships, and types of sponsorship needed
- Amount of funding available
- Best use of funding based on departmental priorities

C. Sponsorship Committee

A committee consisting of the supervisors of each program using sponsorships and other management team designees shall meet annually to review the database, exchange current contract samples, and recommend adjusting benefit levels and policy as needed. The Parks & Recreation Commission Administrative Subcommittee will review aforementioned recommendations and this policy as needed.

Part B.

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Sponsorship Tiers/Levels and Benefits

The following tiers are presented as a guideline for types of benefits that may be presented as opportunities for potential sponsors.

Each sponsorship will most likely need to be individually negotiated. One purpose for these guidelines is to create equity in exchanges across sponsorship arrangements. While for the sake of ease the examples given for levels are based on amount of sponsorship requested, the level of approval needed from Town staff is really based on the amount of benefits exchanged for the resources. The levels of approval are necessary because the costs and values for different levels of benefits may vary, depending on the sponsorship. It is important to note that these values may be very different. Sponsors typically will not offer to contribute resources that cost them more than the value of resources that they will gain and, typically, seek at least a 2-1 return on their investment. Likewise, the Town should not pursue sponsorships unless the total value the Town receives is greater than the Town's real costs.

A hierarchy of Sponsors for events, programs or facilities with more than one sponsor is listed below from the highest level to the lowest. Not all Levels will necessarily be used in each Sponsorship Plan. Note that the hierarchy is not dependent on specific levels or amounts of sponsorship. Specific levels and amounts should be designed for each property before sponsorships are procured within the approved Sponsorship Plan.

Hierarchy of Sponsorship Levels (highest to lowest)

- Event/Program Title or Primary Sponsor
- Presenting Sponsor (Event or Program)
- Program/Event Sponsor
- Media Sponsor
- Cosponsor

This hierarchy will help decide the amounts to ask various sponsors for, and determine what levels of benefits to provide. It is important to build flexibility and choice into each level so that sponsors can have the ability to choose options that will best fit their objectives. It is recommended that each project create a project-specific Sponsorship Opportunity for approval in advance of Sponsorship procurement, based on the benefits available and the values specific to the project.