



THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

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GIVE UP."*

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8 TIPS TO HELP YOUR PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL FIND SPONSORS FOR YOUR EVENTS OR PROJECTS



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When I first started showing up and taking an active role in the Pottawattomie Park Advisory Council, one thing always seemed to be a concern: money. We started our council with a Seed Grant from Friends of the Parks that gave us a few hundred dollars to begin with. In the beginning, our council put on one summer event and we would spend \$300-\$400 every time we did it. We recouped some of our spending by selling things at our annual picnic and movie in the park (pictured above), but we would make back less than we spent on the event each year. The problem of a dwindling treasury, a desire to do more and the major volunteer commitment required to do this work were not making a for a good combination.

We then tried a raffle and had some success in getting over 50 prizes donated and made a net gain with no leftovers to take home, but this was also hard work. We also did a plant sale (picture on page 2) and that was much easier than expected, and we did well. This summer we learned that we would have to buy the movie rights for our event and still had significant expenses to cover with our shrinking pool of funds, even though the Chicago Park District was bringing other resources to the table. We were looking at a net loss of funds from putting on our event of

approximately \$450, assuming we sold the usual amount of goodies.

Finally this year, instead of losing money we came out on top! How did we raise \$500 without selling water and freezer pops all day long? We got *sponsors*. The work on our end during the event was minimal and our team got to spend more time taking care of the visitors who came to the picnic. It may seem a little intimidating to ask for money, but sponsorship is a way to save the time, money and energy of your volunteers, and help put on a great event without more stress.

See these eight tips we learned this year when we sought out our first-ever sponsors:

1) Identify a specific component or project you want sponsors to help your PAC pay for. Asking for money "just because" is not going to work. You will get better responses to your request if you are asking for money to support a specific thing. For our picnic and movie in the park, we asked our sponsors to help pay for the movie and that they would be presenting the sponsors of the movie. You can also have the sponsors cover other aspects of the event, but be honest and only ask for money to cover things that your PAC is actually paying for directly but doo ask for as much as your potential sponsors could and would give.

2) Identify the organizations and business you want to ask for funds. I recommend that you (continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1) make a list twice as big as the actual need as there will be many reasons a business or organization cannot make a contribution. When identifying businesses, try not to ask competing businesses or organizations to sponsor the same event or project. For example, limit yourself to one restaurant, one grocery store, and one church or other religious organization so that there are no conflicts per event or project. Resist the temptation to ask all of the possible donors at the same time in an effort to have better chances of reaching your sponsorship goals because you might end up with damaged relationships if competing business or organizations are supporting the same event.

3) Assign someone to make “the ask” and to be the point of contact for the prospective business or organizational sponsor. When we approached three businesses and organizations, we only got responses from two. These were the two that our PAC member who made the ask was a regular customer of and had already dealt with the organization in the past.

4) Decide on the amount, and ask for only one specific dollar amount for a specific level of sponsorship per business or organization. For example we will have two levels of sponsors next year, presenting sponsors at \$250 each, and sponsors at \$50 each. Only ask for and present one sponsorship amount when you first approach the business or organization. One of the things that can be hard for a business or organization to do is to decide how much to give, if you have a set amount you simplify the decision and speed up the process.

5) Spell out in detail what each level of sponsorship will get as part of “the ask.” For our presenting sponsorship level, the business or organizations who were presenting

sponsors were entitled to space under our tent to give out literature or to sell products, a brief message before the start of the movie and their logo incorporated into flyers and other promotional materials. Spelling out these benefits, apart from the good the event they are sponsoring does for the community, might help your sponsors justify the donation as part of their organization’s outreach or the business marketing strategy. Always give honest estimates for the expected attendance.

6) Set a deadline for the sponsors to respond with their decision by— you do not want to be waiting for that call or email up to the day before. We started asking five weeks ahead of the event



and that was cutting it very close. I would recommend three to four months ahead of the event with a deadline for a response four weeks before the event, and two weeks to receive the check and other items from the sponsor once they signal their intent to proceed as a sponsor.

7) Spell out precisely what your sponsor is going to do and what your PAC is going to do in a letter of understanding. We included specific times for the checks to be mailed to our treasurer and then we provided a receipt with our not-for-profit tax exempt info. We spelled out when we would have a draft of the flyers with the sponsor’s logo that they have to provide and other event information for their

approval. It is important to get your sponsor’s approval so that you are using the correct name, spelling and that their logo is their current logo. We specifically asked our sponsors to email their logo with their names spelled out. We found out the logo from one of our sponsors was not correct as they were changing it for a special anniversary version of their logo. So always ask for them to send you the logo they want you to use, this is especially important for larger businesses and organizations as they may have a different department or charity arm than the main business. Make sure you are setting dates and or deadlines that both your PAC and your sponsors can meet in your letter of

understanding; every action or step that needs to be taken should have a completed by date in your letter of understanding.

8) Document the event and your sponsor’s presence at the event. Take photos of the crowds and of the sponsors’ people and their tables or tents, and post on social media, in emails or in newsletters if included as part of the conditions of their sponsorship.

Make a report and send it back to your sponsors along with any supplies, goods or equipment as soon as possible once the event or project is done.

If you follow these 8 tips and you are open to forming a relationship with businesses and organizations near your park, you should find yourself with much needed financial and material help, help that lets your PAC focus on serving the community instead of raising money. Do not be discouraged with rejections, but treat each business and organization as a potential partner for future events, because when someone says “no” it might actually be “no, not now.”

Find us at www.facebook.com/pottapac

THE
FOTP
TREE
SAYS...



...“never, never, never, never, never, never, NEVER GIVE UP.” Well, the FOTP Tree didn’t actually say this, but one of the Dog Friendly Areas (DFA) volunteers did. At the DFA Meet & Greet meeting at the Friends of the Parks office last month, established dog park groups were asked what advice they had for the dog park newbies on the block. This month’s advice comes from one of those folks, who followed up on her advice by noting that it took her group six years to finally get the dog park for the local community and park. No matter the park project you’re working on, this is great advice and a great reminder to keep pushing forward.

