

On 14 September 2011 from Anna Bekerman

Hi fellow bake oven folks,

I'm trying to build a complete contact list of people connected with bake ovens in the city -- please let me know if I've missed anyone. In case anyone hasn't heard, the new proposed bake oven policy is going to committee Thursday morning Sept 15 at 9:30am (see links below).

Some comments on the policy that Jutta Mason has made:

Problems:

1. The requirement for external insurance in addition to the existing city volunteer insurance will mean that almost no neighbourhood cooks will learn to use the ovens.
2. Permit fees mean the same. Neighbourhood cooks are being asked to pay for donating their labour to enliven their park.
3. The proposed policy is silent on active collaboration between interested cooks and PFR staff. There ought to be an explicit statement about the desirability of promoting such active collaboration. That could be a reasonable workaround to the #1 and #2 problems, if collaboration results in donated labour by cooks being covered with PFR staff sponsorship.
4. The proposed amendment to the Municipal Code Section B (4) needs rewriting to allow nearby attendance to the oven, instead of requiring someone to be right there. The logic is parallel to reflecting pools e.g. at City Hall, which have no provision for constant supervision although it's easier to die from drowning than from burning. The Municipal Code should specify reasonable care of an enclosed (bake-oven) fire instead of constant attendance. Exception: locations where park users may seek to set themselves on fire (e.g. parks right beside psychiatric hospitals). If this amendment is not rewritten, ovens in frequent use (currently only the Dufferin Grove ovens) will have to stop most of their existing activities, including using the ovens for park fundraising.
5. The reference to the City's donations policy is interesting: the proposed bake-oven policy says that donors (in this case the people raising and delivering funds to build an oven) are going to have to pay for using the oven. The issue is similar to the community fundraising for Sorauren Park field house -- many hours of fundraising resulted in the same fundraising people having to pay the City to use the field house to meet. That approach needs work, since it's unlikely to encourage community donations.
6. The staff report calls for 100% cost recovery for any community bake oven program. Community ovens are one possible ingredient in creating "community centres without walls (CCWW)." If the CCWW option is of interest to Council, it's good to remember that the City's community centres with walls do not get near 100% cost recovery. If the two CRC's now under construction cost \$20 million and

\$27 million to build, the City's formula of operating cost being 10% of capital cost means they won't recover their costs any time soon. It might be better not to handicap community ovens with that demand from the outset. At the same time, if blocks #1,2,4, and 5 are removed, some ovens may end up getting near 100% recovery fairly soon.

A couple of points I'd like to add (really just some specific examples of Jutta's comments above) :

-An example of the kind of collaborative approach PFR staff should take: If a site looks promising but is missing a water connection (or other useful feature), the policy should encourage city staff to look into what would be entailed with getting one. That is to say, city staff should take a supportive role when it comes to analyzing a site's suitability, rather than simply consulting a checklist as the current proposed policy suggests.

-The requirement that seasonal permit-holders be not-for-profit organizations or registered charities limits smaller and/or less formal community groups from having sustained access to an oven.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PE7.4>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-40472.pdf>

September 16 Jutta wrote:

That was quite a strange meeting, and the deferral (which we asked for) was a close vote. We intend to offer individual presentations to each councillor on the Parks Committee. There are specific wordings in the policy that need to be changed, and we (on this list) need to talk about them. Please read over the proposed policy and send in your suggestions. We're preparing the presentation for next week.

The chair of the Parks Committee, Norm Kelly, was very unhappy that something as routine as a bake oven policy would be deferred. He said, "let's face it, there is no difference between a bake oven and a soccer field. You want to use them, you pay a user fee. Let's just get on with it."

There is a difference, Councillor. And bake ovens can get revenue for the city, but not like that. For one thing, the user fee policy does not apply to everyone-welcome programs. For another, under the proposed policy very few ovens would get any neighbourhood use. Better to not build any more.

Sept.29 is good, as long as the get-together can be at Dufferin Grove, because it's our market day. On that day we can report on our first councillor visits, too. If you can't make it, we can come out and film you. Please send your availability.

Jutta