

ENTERPRISE FUND – FY09 and FY10 USER FEES PROPOSAL

Staff is forwarding recommended Enterprise Fund user fees schedules listing all fees for approval by facility (Attachment 2) and surveys of similar public and private facilities in the area (Attachment 3) for the Planning Board's review and consideration. Staff also reviewed the facilities FY05–FY08 Actuals, both revenue and expenditures, as well as attendance figures in making our recommendations (Attachment 4). We believe the proposed FY09 and FY10 fees are consistent with the four elements of the Department's user fee policy (Attachment 5).

Following is the staff justification behind the recommended fee adjustments.

Ice Rinks

Background

The Department of Parks operates two ice rinks, one each at Cabin John and Wheaton Regional Parks. Both facilities offer general and special sessions, skate rentals, snack bars, pro shops, group and private lessons, and ice rentals for hockey and parties.

Cabin John Ice Rink has 3 ice sheets - one Olympic size, one NHL size, and one half sheet studio size. The small studio rink is used mostly for party rentals and lesson programs. The facility was completely renovated and reopened in 1999. The Wheaton Ice Complex has 2 buildings, each with one NHL size ice sheet. The Wheaton Ice Arena, built in 2000, has an indoor sheet. The Wheaton Outdoor Ice Rink has an ice sheet from mid-October to mid-March each year for hockey and other rentals and a dry surface used in the summer months primarily to house the successful Week in the Park camp.

Historically, ice rinks are provided by the public sector as recreational activities that are generally not profitable enough for the private sector. Since the facilities reopened in FY00, the ice rinks collectively have covered the operating expenses but have been unable to fully cover debt service payments.

In FY08, Cabin John, in the affluent Bethesda/Potomac area of the county, was again a very successful facility by almost any measure. It generated approximately \$2.5 million in revenues and netted an operating profit of \$173,000. Wheaton, in a demographically diverse area of the county, is still recovering patrons from the burglaries 21 months ago, and did not fair as well. This facility generated over \$1.1 million in revenues but showed an operating loss at the end of the year. The overall debt service payment for both rinks was \$942,000, and even with a debt service subsidy of \$533K, the ice rinks had an overall loss in FY08 of over \$500K.

Another measure of success is the number of patrons served by these facilities each year. In FY08, attendance at Cabin John reached 287,000 patrons, which averaged to almost 800 patrons per day. Wheaton's attendance was 122,000 patrons, which averaged to 340 patrons per day. The ice rinks offer group lessons for patrons ranging in age from 3 to senior citizen. There were 1,645 group lessons held at the rinks in FY08 with 8,761 students participating in the 6 week courses.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the ice rinks in FY08 were:

- ◆ Installed new dasher boards and glass on Cabin John's NHL rink (\$135,000)
- ◆ Figure skaters, ice dances, and speed skaters from our rinks placed in the top spots in Nationals.
- ◆ Cabin John Ice Rink awarded bid to host the South Atlantic Regional Figure Skating Championships to be held October 9-13, 2009 (pre-event to the 2010 Olympics).
- ◆ Cabin John continued to provide the largest Learn to Skate group lesson program in the country.
- ◆ Cabin John held 28 general skating sessions each week, which is more than any other ice rink in the area.
- ◆ Utility costs at the ice rinks in FY08 were \$945,000 or 26% of all revenues.
- ◆ Staff met with an energy consultant and began implementing recommendations to offset rising utility costs.

- ◆ Installed wireless internet access (WIFI) at both rinks for patrons use.
- ◆ Cabin John Ice Rink partnered with the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) to sell to patrons over 400 discounted tickets to amusements parks located throughout the region. This provided a service to the patrons as well as supported MRPA.
- ◆ Installed overhead lighting in lobby area to create a lighter and more welcoming atmosphere.
- ◆ Worked with Bi-County staff to create an Assistant Manager position at both rinks to provide greater oversight for pro shop and snack bar operations as well as succession planning for ice rink staff.
- ◆ Implemented a visiting coach policy allowing non-contractual instructors to teach at the ice rink facilities on a limited basis for upcoming competitions or special lessons such as for choreographers.
- ◆ Upgraded and expanded the snack bar and pro shop offerings.

The following are noteworthy events that have occurred or will occur in FY09 at the ice rinks:

- ◆ Partner with Project Youth ArtReach to create a mural painting for Wheaton Ice Arena. Project Youth ArtReach works with groups of youthful offenders in a probation program to create an art project within the community.
- ◆ Implemented a new fundraising opportunity for schools to skate during the lightly attended weekday public sessions on days when the schools are off for half days or all day, thereby increasing attendance in addition to partnering with schools to build community relations.
- ◆ Replaced the dasher boards at the Wheaton Outdoor Rink with the dasher boards removed from Cabin John Ice Rink.
- ◆ Hired Facility Manager IIIs for both rinks. The new Wheaton manager has over 27 years experience with the Commission including managing Tucker Road Ice Rink. The new manager at Cabin John comes from the private sector, has managed several rinks, and brings a business mindset to the facility.
- ◆ Streamlined the process for frequent freestyle patrons to receive a discount for paying in advance for multi pass punch card.
- ◆ Hire Manager II positions at both rinks as well as a Skating Director for Wheaton.
- ◆ Renovate Wheaton's dance studio.
- ◆ Add fitness rooms to both facilities.
- ◆ Renovate Wheaton Outdoor "store front" to make it more user friendly and aesthetically pleasing.
- ◆ Install a lighted stair to the parking lot at Wheaton Ice Arena
- ◆ Install ATMs to provide for customer service as well as to create a small profit.
- ◆ Install a gravity well at Cabin John to raise money for charitable purposes, in particular to offset some of the costs to provide a fee reduction for income eligible patrons. A gravity well is a curved funnel in which patrons can observe a coin inserted at the top roll around in a circle until it falls through the bottom of the funnel.
- ◆ Sponsor a farmer's market at the Wheaton Outdoor Ice Rink as a means of programming and marketing this facility during the summer season.

Staff will continue to evaluate means to contain expenditures and has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases are projected to increase revenue at the ice rinks by \$130,000.

Ice Rink Fee Recommendations

Wheaton and Cabin John Ice Rinks – The general admission fees at area rinks have stayed the same in the past few years. In order to remain competitive, staff recommends holding steady on the general admission fees.

As new programs are piloted, staff sets fees that are in line with our fee policy. When the pilot sessions become part of our regular offerings, the fee is presented as a new fee to the Planning Board for approval. This is the case with the Private Lesson Session and Stick n' Puck fees. Both these sessions are specialty, limited skater sessions, where a higher fee is warranted. Staff recommends setting these fees at \$12 per session to match the other specialty session fees. These fees are already in place and are proposed to officially take effect November 2008.

Each year brings increases in both the demand for hockey and the fees charged for leased ice at the competitor's rinks. Staff recommends increasing our leased ice fees in FY10 by \$40 per hour (from \$285 to \$325 per hour) for Cabin John's full size sheets and for Wheaton's indoor rink, and by \$10 per hour (from \$175 to \$185) for Cabin John's smaller studio rink. Staff does not recommend increasing the leased ice fee for the Wheaton Outdoor Rink to try and attract hockey teams to play on this surface.

In concert with the increase in the leased ice fees, staff recommends a 50¢ increase in the per person admission fee for attendees from 101 to 450 for party rental users. The first 100 attendees are included in the party rental rate, which is extrapolated from the hourly rental rate. This admission fee has not been increased since 2003.

In January 2008, the Maryland State sales tax rate increased to 6% and our skate rental fee is subject to sales tax. Currently, our \$3.00 skate rental with tax added is \$3.18. This 3¢ increase created numerous complaints from our customers as well as a need into increase our penny cash bank. Staff recommends increasing the skate rental fee to \$3.06 so the fee with sales tax will be \$3.25. This increase is proposed to take effect January 2009.

Indoor Tennis

Background

The two indoor tennis facilities operated by the Department of Parks are located in Cabin John and Wheaton Regional Parks. Both tennis centers provide six courts, one of which is generally available for spot-time play by the hour. The majority of the time on the remaining courts is allocated by lottery for seasonal reservations only. A number of courts on selected days and times are set aside for the popular group lesson program.

FY08 was a year of renovation for both indoor tennis facilities. The Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center (PBA Center) in Cabin John Regional Park was closed from mid August until early December, and the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility was closed the entire year. The improvements to the PBA Center were well received by the public. Although the revenues and attendance at the PBA Center decreased approximately 25% from FY07, staff expects those numbers to bounce back in FY09.

As an indication of the popularity of the PBA Center, the seasonal reservations are awarded through an annual lottery process. In FY07, the last full year of operations for the PBA Center, 85% of the available seasonal court hours were awarded to patrons to play on the same day/time during the 32-week season. Over 200 seasonal applicants were turned down for their desired time.

Although the PBA Center was closed until December 2007, the facility still held 302 six-week group lessons serving 2,004 patrons. Another 500 patrons were served through the outdoor tennis lesson program.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the indoor tennis facilities in FY08 were:

- ◆ Partnered with the Montgomery County Tennis Association (MCTA) to rename Cabin John Indoor Tennis in honor of Pauline Betz Addie, tennis champion and icon whose partnership built and managed the facility for 21 years.
- ◆ Installed energy efficient lighting at PBA Center (\$124,000; 75% paid by Program Open Space (POS) funding)
- ◆ Installed new reflective ceiling and insulation at PBA Center (\$158,000; 75% paid by POS funding)
- ◆ Continued working on the complete renovation of Wheaton's exterior fabric and installation of new lights and air conditioning. Expected to reopen in December 2008. With the facility closed for the entire fiscal year, the Enterprise Fund lost the projected profit of \$193,000 for this facility.
- ◆ Installed wireless internet access (WIFI) at the PBA Center for patrons use. WIFI will be installed at Wheaton when it reopens.

- ◆ Installed new carpeting and tile at PBA Center and purchased new lobby furniture.
- ◆ Offered tennis lessons on select outdoor courts around the county to reach out to patrons beyond the facility boundaries.
- ◆ Introduced USTA's QuickStart tennis lessons both indoor and outdoor. This program is specifically designed to engage youth ages 4-10 in a fun tennis learning experience.

The following are noteworthy events that have occurred or will occur in FY09 at the indoor tennis facilities:

- ◆ Removal and replacement of the asphalt court surface at the PBA Center (\$85,000; 75% paid by POS funding). This court surface was the original court surface installed in 1971.
- ◆ Continue to partner with MCTA to reach out to their members and provide tennis opportunities to more people.
- ◆ Offer expanded programming including innovative classes and camps, and tennis ladder and tournament play. These efforts will focused primarily on Wheaton but will include PBA Center when feasible.

Staff will continue to evaluate means to contain expenditures and has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases are projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$200,000 at the indoor tennis facilities.

Indoor Tennis Fee Recommendations

Both Tennis Facilities— To offset increased operating costs as well as to keep the rates competitive, staff recommends increases at both facilities this year. At the PBA Center, staff recommends a \$5/hour across the board increase in seasonal rates with the exception of the fringe times of 6am and 11pm every day as well as the 10pm rates on the weekends. As justification, the utilization rate at the PBA Center for the fringe hour of 11pm in the evening drops to 40% while just 2 hours earlier at 9pm, the utilization rate is 99%. Even though Wheaton has been closed for 16 months, staff recommends a \$2/hour across the board increase in seasonal rates to offset the projected increases in utilities due to air conditioning. Though the hourly fees may appear to be a bit high in comparison to some other competitors, the most private facilities assess yearly dues/membership fees in addition to the court costs.

Regarding group lessons, we have heard from our customers that having 10 students in a class is too many. To provide a better learning experience, we are reducing the number to 8 students per class. In addition, staff recommends charging the same fee for lessons, whether for beginners or advanced. As such, staff recommends raising the lesson fees to \$25 per hour lesson, a \$3 to \$5 increase at the PBA Center, and to \$22 per hour lesson, a \$2 to \$4 increase, at Wheaton.

Event Centers

Background

The Department of Parks operates three rental facilities which are accounted for in the Enterprise Fund.

- Rockwood Manor - A manor house in Potomac with overnight accommodations suitable for conferences, meetings, weddings, and receptions. Dormitories on the premises offer overnight accommodations particularly well-suited for scouts and other youth groups.
- Lodge at Little Seneca Creek - An attractive lodge suitable for small meetings, weddings, and receptions.
- Woodlawn Manor - An historic home suitable for weddings and receptions held on the lawn.

Although collectively the three rental facilities have never been able to produce revenue in excess of operating expenditures, they serve an important need in the county. These facilities are used by the public as locations for social functions, meetings, classes, and more. The Commission also uses these facilities throughout the year for business meetings, training sessions, etc. Each facility is unique and has varying strengths and limitations related to location, size and configuration, and amenities. The Department is also preserving a part of Montgomery County history in the buildings at Rockwood and Woodlawn with minimal impact on the Park Fund operating budget.

However, the Enterprise Fund cannot continue to sustain the operating losses at these facilities. The ultimate decision on the best use of these facilities remains to be seen. Staff believes the event centers would benefit from a modified Enterprise Fund policy where the facilities could still be operated with business principles but capital improvements as well as operating losses would be borne by the tax payers.

Staff continues to identify potential markets for these facilities, to evaluate the most cost effective means of reaching those markets, and to determine which operational and physical improvements are necessary to attract new clientele and ensure repeat business.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the event centers in FY08 were:

- ◆ Increased programming at the facilities such as a princess gala, holiday cooking classes, and bridal shows to reach out and bring patrons to the facilities who may not have known about them.
- ◆ Installed wireless internet access (WIFI) and updated our business center at Rockwood for our patrons use.
- ◆ Redecorated the front lobby area of Rockwood Manor.
- ◆ Worked with Horticultural Resources staff on landscape design for Rockwood to decrease the need for annuals while preserving the beauty of the scenery.

The following are noteworthy events that have occurred or will occur in FY09 at the event centers:

- ◆ Advertising in BizBash magazine and website to reach untapped business meeting clientele.
- ◆ Host an art show to showcase local talent as well as to expose new customers to our facilities.
- ◆ Redecorate Brooke Hall in Rockwood Manor.
- ◆ Work with Horticultural Resources staff to plan period trees at Woodlawn Manor.

The following fees recommendations are on facility use and demand, and in an effort to remain competitive with the market. For all rental facilities, a rental day is typically defined as any consecutive 7 to 8 hour period. If approved, these fee increases are projected to increase revenue at the event centers in FY10 by \$32,000.

Event Center Fee Recommendations

Rockwood Manor – Staff at the event centers still do not meet price resistance for use of Rockwood and continue to hear that it is a good value. Staff recommends increasing several of the fees based on usage patterns. Recommendations include a \$25/day increase for meeting room rentals, a \$100 - \$150/day increase for social packages #1 and #2, and a \$225 - \$275 increase for the 2-3 day retreat packages. Staff also recommends new fees for social package #3 of higher fees for Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays commensurate with the higher fees charged for these days in social packages #1 and #2. These fees will be effective January 1, 2009.

For the overnight accommodations at the French House, staff recommends increasing the base fee to \$75 per night effective January 1, 2009. No other changes are recommended at this time.

Seneca Lodge – The rustic look of Seneca Lodge and the party room atmosphere make this facility attractive for many social functions. Staff is recommending a \$50/day increase for meeting rentals and a \$75 - \$100/day increase in the social packages to be effective January 1, 2009.

Woodlawn Manor – Historic Woodlawn Manor is a charming house in a beautiful setting. However, without the amenities to accommodate large gatherings, Woodlawn struggles against the competition, including our own Brookside Gardens. In order to accommodate a large gathering, patrons must incur the additional expense of a tent to hold their functions. The majority of Woodlawn's business is from weddings, a one-time event. Staff is exploring the feasibility of installing a permanent tent pad and purchasing a tent to rent to patrons to be more attractive to patrons needs. Staff recommends a modest \$25 - \$50/day increase for social functions at Woodlawn effective January 1, 2009.

Park Facilities

Background

Park Facility operations in the Enterprise Fund include the boating operations at Lake Needwood and Black Hill, Little Bennett Campsites, regional park picnic pavilions, miniature trains at Wheaton and Cabin John, the Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel in Wheaton Regional Park, the splash playground and miniature golf operations at South Germantown, and the enterprise programs at Brookside Gardens.

Park Facilities Fee Recommendations

Boating Operations - The boating operations at Little Seneca Lake in Black Hill Regional Park and Lake Needwood in Rock Creek Regional Park are popular summer activities. Each boating operation offers hourly and daily boat rentals, pontoon boat rides, seasonal mooring stakes to lock up personal water craft, and annual and daily watercraft launching permits. Many summer camps use these facilities to enhance their campers experience.

The 505 acre Little Seneca Lake is very popular with fishermen, nature watchers, and recreational boaters. The attendance at the boating operation reached 13,600 in FY08. This does not include all private boat owners with annual permits. The FY08 revenues at Black Hill were \$116,800. Much of the revenue at this operation comes from the rental of the mooring stakes and the sales of the daily and seasonal launching permits.

Rock Creek Regional Park is an extremely popular picnicking location in the summer months. The 75 acre Lake Needwood, located in the park, is also a popular destination. This facility was closed in the summer of 2006 due to a major flood, which affected FY07 revenues and attendance. In FY08, attendance at the boating operation was 19,300. While the attendance is 42% higher than at Black Hill, the revenue in FY08 was \$44,300, which is 38% of the revenue generated by Black Hill. With a smaller lake, patrons do not tend to take the rental boats out for lengthy excursions as they do to explore or fish in Little Seneca Lake. The pontoon ride is half the price as Black Hill for a much shorter ride.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the boating operations in FY08 were:

- ◆ Awarded Waterways Improvement Grant from the Department of Natural Resources for the replacement of the floating docks at Black Hill boats. The total cost of the project was \$184,000, with the grant funding \$179,000 and the remaining \$5,000 coming from the Enterprise Fund.
- ◆ Installation of security cameras and equipment at the Black Hill boating operation. (\$18,000).
- ◆ Purchased new kayaks to replace aging equipment.
- ◆ Offered a Scavenger Hunt program at Needwood Boats to attract customers and to afford them the opportunity to visit different areas of the park.

Staff has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases at the boating operations are projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$8,500.

Boating Operation Fee Recommendations

Staff recommends a 55¢ per hour increase from \$7.00 to \$7.55 for the row boat, canoe, and kayak rental fees at both lakes. Staff also recommends a \$1.94 increase in the daily rate for these rental boats. As stated above for ice skate rentals, in January 2008, the Maryland State sales tax rate increased to 6% and our boat rentals are subject to sales tax. Currently, the \$7.00 hourly rental fee with tax added is \$7.42. The recommended fee of \$7.55 with sales tax included would be \$8.00. Likewise, the recommended daily fee of \$25.44 with sales tax included would be \$27.50.

Patrons with their own boats may launch them in either of our lakes after purchasing a launching permit on either a daily or annual basis. The annual permits are very popular at Black Hill, which also leases 100 mooring stakes on an annual basis so boat owners may leave their craft at the lake for the summer. Patrons line up early for this privilege and the vast majority of these stakes are leased on the first day. A few years ago, Rock Creek Regional Park staff installed 10 mooring sites at Lake Needwood. While not as in demand as the Black Hill mooring sites, they are a nice amenity for patrons at Lake Needwood. Staff recommends increasing the annual mooring fee at Black Hill from \$75 to \$80.

No other fee increases are recommended for the boating operations.

Little Bennett Campground – As the only full service campground in Montgomery County, Little Bennett campground is known as a good, inexpensive place to camp. Little Bennett Campground ranks high with customers for service and cleanliness. It is open from March through November and offers 91 improved sites, comfort stations with showers, game and laundry rooms, and a limited number of special programs. A primitive group camping area is also available.

Built in the early 1980s, Little Bennett Campground is a nice facility but is becoming outdated. It does not have some popular amenities, such as a pool or lake, to attract vacationers, and is not capable of accommodating the large RVs that currently frequent the nation's highways. Significant improvements are needed to increase the size of selected sites and upgrade the electric, water, and septic service for the large RVs. However, staff understands that a pool would likely not achieve a good return on investment, a lake is not environmentally feasible, and site upgrades may not be financially realistic during these economically strained times.

Attendance at Little Bennett Campground was 19,800 in FY08, which is the lowest attendance in the last 15 years. This summer, staff began special programming and marketing efforts to increase attendance and enhance patron's experiences. Revenues in FY08 were 20% higher than in FY07, largely due to the implementation of ParkPASS, which defers accounting for revenues collected until the date of the actual reservation as opposed to accounting for the revenue the date the reservation was made. The revenues in FY08 are comparable to the revenues collected in FY06 and FY05.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the campground in FY08 are:

- ◆ Increased programming such as a week long summer camping camp and a fall weekend mom and daughter outing to introduce camping skills to young patrons and encourage a love and respect for our natural resources.
- ◆ Distributed a coupon to campground patrons good for 50% off the admission fee to the South Germantown splash playground to enjoy a water amenity and to cross promote the facilities.

Staff has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases at the campground are projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$5,000.

Little Bennett Campground Fee Recommendations

To offset the increase cost of utilities, staff recommends a \$2/night increase for electric campsite. This fee increase will have a slightly larger impact on out-of-state patrons since the sites with electricity (RV campers) were booked about 53% of the time by out-of-state campers versus the sites without electricity which were booked only 21% of the time by out-of-state residents. The higher fees for electrified sites are due to significant recent and projected future increases in electricity prices.

Based on comparable fees at other facilities and to encourage attendance, no other fee increases are recommended for the campground.

Picnic Pavilions – Beginning in FY96, the revenues collected from the rental of picnic pavilions in regional and recreational parks were accounted for in the Enterprise Fund. The purpose was to use the funds to repair or replace the existing shelters or to build new ones.

The large picnic pavilions at Black Hill seat up to 100 people and may be reserved for \$200 for an all day permit. Electricity is available at one of the shelters for an additional fee of \$30. On weekends during prime months of May through September, the shelters are reserved an average of 88% of the time available. In May and June, the shelters are reserved 96% and 100% of the time respectively. The fee for a similar size pavilion offered at Cosca Regional Park in Prince George's County is \$225 for bi-county residents and \$325 for non-residents. Closer to Black Hill, Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg charges \$245/\$350 for Gaithersburg residents/non-residents for 5 hours and Seneca Creek State Park charges \$150 plus \$2 per person for Maryland residents for large shelters with electricity.

Staff has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, this fee increase for the large picnic pavilions is projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$6,000.

Picnic Pavilion Fee Recommendations

Wanting to remain competitive yet reasonably affordable, staff recommends increasing the fee for the large pavilion at Black Hill to \$225. No fee increases are recommended for the small pavilions, as the current fees are competitive with similar facilities.

Miniature Train and Carousel – The miniature trains are enchanting amenities at both Cabin John and Wheaton Regional Parks. The trains are replicas of the 1863 C.P. Huntington, a steam locomotive purchased by the Southern Pacific Railroad and named in honor of Collis P. Huntington, President of the Southern Pacific Company. The trains take a leisurely tour of the parks' forests and meadows. In addition, both locations have a party room available for rent.

The beautiful Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel in Wheaton Regional Park was built by the Herschell Spillman Company of Tonawanda, New York in 1915. It features 33 jumping horses, three zebras and two chariots. One of a few hundred surviving carousels of that era, this carousel operated on the Mall in Washington, DC until 1981 when it was acquired by the Department of Parks as a stipulation of Hallie Wells' will which also deeded a large tract of land in Clarksburg to the Department of Parks. The carousel is slated to be moved to this tract of land, now known as the Ovid Hazen Wells Park, when that park has sufficient amenities, infrastructure, and a population base to make the move financially feasible. Facility planning for this park is in the CIP for 2013. The patrons of Wheaton Regional Park have come to love the carousel. When it is moved to Wells Park, a suitable replacement carousel should be purchased for Wheaton.

These rides are very popular children and family oriented amenities. To utilize these facilities in the less busy times, the naturalist staff from Locust Grove holds programs at the Cabin John train station during the weekdays. Also, we have attracted many patrons to use the facilities in the "off season" month of October to ride the haunted train and carousel rides.

At both facilities, comparing FY08 to FY07, revenue was up 26-27% and attendance was up 11-14%. Part of this increase comes from the Wheaton train being closed for 4-6 weeks for engine repairs in FY07 and very favorable weather conditions in FY08.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the train and carousel operations in FY08 were:

- ◆ Purchased a new engine (locomotive) for Wheaton. The former engine was 12 years old and required many repairs. (\$143,600)
- ◆ Performed extensive track work at Wheaton to reduce the number of derailments. Additional work is planned for FY09.
- ◆ Replaced fans and lights at the Cabin John party room

The following are noteworthy events that have occurred or will occur in FY09 at the event centers:

- ◆ Expand the party room at Wheaton to be able to accommodate larger parties. Current space is limited to 10 guests.
- ◆ Work with contractor to remove and/or abate asbestos in Cabin John party room.

Train and Carousel Fee Recommendations

Staff has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases at the train and carousel operations are projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$50,200.

The fees for the miniature trains and carousel have not increased since 2003. Staff recommends a 25¢ increase per ride for these facilities. For a discount book of 10 tickets, staff recommends a 10% discount off the individual admission.

Miniature Golf and Splash Playground – The miniature golf portion of the operation consists of two 18-hole courses. The courses were designed to be challenging and have often proved to be too difficult for pre-teen patrons. This facility has not found a niche and struggles to attract patrons. Staff is looking into modifications to change one of the courses into a more child friendly course.

The splash playground, designed for the toddler and pre-teen age group, is extremely popular. It has become a trendy place to hold birthday parties and other group events. To meet the demand for parties, in FY06, a tent was installed outside the fence for rental use.

Revenue at this facility was \$207,000 in FY08 which was slightly higher (1%) than in FY07. In contrast, attendance, 49,200 in FY08, was slightly lower (-8%) than FY07. This was the first year since the facility opened that the revenues did not cover the operating expenses. The \$5,000 loss is coincidentally the same amount as the increase in administration fees and chargebacks assessed to this facility for management oversight, bi-county support, etc.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at the miniature golf and splash playground in FY08 were:

- ◆ Renovated a splash playground spray animal. (\$26,000)
- ◆ Installed a second tent to meet the rising demand for party rentals.
- ◆ Partnered with the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) to sell to patrons almost 300 discounted tickets to amusement parks located throughout the region. This provided a service to the patrons as well as supported MRPA.

Miniature Golf and Splash Playground Fee Recommendation

The fees at this family oriented facility were increase this past April. Staff does not recommend any increases at this time.

Brookside Gardens

Revenue producing activities at Brookside Gardens are accounted for in the Enterprise Fund so that the revenue generated can be returned to the facility to cover the direct costs of providing the services as well as to help offset the costs associated with maintaining the buildings and grounds. The fees presented for approval are for facility rentals, Butterfly Show admission, Holiday Light Show admission, tours, and children's group classes.

In addition to the fees listed for review by the Planning Board, fees are charged to recover the direct costs of other special activities such as special events, bus tours, classes and lectures. Since the costs of these activities vary widely, pre-approval on an annual basis is not practical. Fees are determined on a case-by-case basis as current cost data becomes available.

This Enterprise model used at Brookside Gardens has proven to be an effective, successful means of identifying and maximizing revenue sources and opportunities while lessening the burden on the tax supported Park Fund to provide a largely free, award winning public garden for the county residents.

Comparing revenues and expenditures, FY08 and FY07 are virtually the same. However, attendance is down 15% to 96,700. As would be expected from a lower attendance, revenue from fees and rentals is also lower, and is offset by an increase in merchandise sales.

Some of the noteworthy events that occurred at Brookside Gardens in FY08 are:

- ◆ Celebrated 40th Anniversary of Brookside Gardens.
- ◆ Provided additional customer service by accepting credit cards for payment.

Staff has the following recommendations to increase revenue. If approved, these fee increases at Brookside Gardens are projected to increase revenue in FY10 by \$58,600.

Brookside Gardens Fee Recommendations

Rental revenue was down \$6,000 from FY07 to FY08. This can be attributable to as few as three fewer rentals during the year. Rentals at the Gardens are saturated with the exception of the fringe days and times. Staff recommends rental fee increases of 6% to 17% for selected garden areas based on demand and comparable fees at other rental facilities.

Some refundable deposits at Brookside Gardens are currently \$500 while others are \$1000. Staff recommends bringing all refundable deposits to \$1000 except for the classrooms.

For the Butterfly Show, staff recommends increasing the adult admission fee from \$5 to \$6 which is the amount of the fee for the Smithsonian's new butterfly show. Staff does not recommend a fee increase for children's admission to the Butterfly show.

The fee for the Holiday Light Show was increased earlier this year in anticipation of the upcoming season. Staff has no further recommendations at this time.