

How to finance an indoor shuffleboard club

Written by By Joe Schaller
Friday, 31 July 2015 04:49



Author proposes shutting down a fire department

Upon retirement many Gallupians head to far away communities to spend their golden years participating in numerous activities. For many of us who remain the activities provided by our golf course, bowling alleys and local bars as well as the senior citizen centers for free lunch is not exactly our cup of tea. I have a pretty good idea of the type of recreation center activities which would attract my wife and I into paying membership fees and I reckon there are many others in Gallup like us.

In determining the appropriate venue for a publicly funded community recreation facility it may be best to first determine what is *not* in the best interests of citizens. A lot of money can be spent on something which benefits a small demographic at the expense of the majority such as an activity which requires athleticism over finesse thus favoring young men. A single purpose one-dimensional facility is something to avoid. Here are some things to consider.

***Recreation diversity: Because there is no “average” recreationist, it is important to plan for and maintain a spectrum of diverse recreation opportunities.

***Recreation activities should favor finesse and coordination over athleticism.

***Seniors, women and handicapped should not only have an equal opportunity to participate but to compete on a level playing field as well. Although not a senior center an adult facility is preferable. Public schools and other public facilities offer plenty of activities for youth.

***Multiple activities allows for multiple leagues and tournaments as well as multi-sport ‘athlon’ events.

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***Activities shouldn't duplicate or compete with those already available at senior centers, private sector gyms/programs or other indoor community facilities.

***Political correctness has led to disastrous financial consequences when applied to the economic viability of a 'business'. I personally witnessed that at Runnels Pool as a customer there for 30 years. Everyone should be treated equally when it comes to admission fees.

***Minimize our government footprint. Simplicity of activities keeps the cost down. We all know about the excessive costs of our taxpayer funded golf course.

***Ideally a for-profit management would provide the best quality product, service and price. \$5.00 a visit or a \$40.00 monthly membership fee is quite reasonable for the wide choice of activities which I propose.

***A social center: If possible all activities should be under one roof in one room. A recreation center is a social center as well. People like to watch others and they also like to be watched.

***As a social center a juice and coffee sports bar centrally located would add to the atmosphere along with plenty of seating areas for easy viewing.

***Deck shuffleboard and bocce ball are the primary activities meeting my criteria. These are commonly found both indoor and outdoor in senior retirement communities.

***Complimentary indoor activities include table shuffleboard, horseshoes, cornhole and darts. Table tennis and billiards could be added according to space and demand.

***Financing. There's no shortage of waste in government. Below is one area where Gallup is exceptionally wasteful.

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FIRE DEPARTMENT FACTS

The National Fire Protection Association is a private non-profit trade association creating standards and codes for local governments.

**According to the NFPA over the past 35 years the number of fires in the U.S. responded to by municipal fire departments has fallen from 3.3 million to 1.2 million, a drop of 64 percent. Firefighter injuries have fallen from seven to just two per 1,000 calls in a span of 26 years.

**The NFPA also reports that on average firefighters make 10 times more calls to accompany ambulances than fire related calls. Many cities no longer send out fire trucks but instead an SUV with one certified medic firefighter.

**The NFPA shows the average number of volunteer firefighters for a city the size of Gallup is thirty. 78 percent have at least some volunteers. Gallup has no volunteer firefighters.

**Thirty-five percent of the U.S. population is protected by mostly volunteer fire departments.

**Seventy-six percent of cities our size have one or two fire stations. Forty-five percent have just one station. Gallup has FOUR active fire stations.

**NFPA numbers reveal 25 to 35 career firefighters on average for a city our size utilizing no volunteers - Gallup has 49.

**The Navajo Nation, USFS, BLM and BIA all have fire protection services. There are also numerous volunteer fire departments in the county. Only 13 percent of McKinley County is privately owned land.

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**In our western U.S. region a city our size averages well under three million dollars annual fire department budget. After the 2009 union contract debacle which ripped off Gallup taxpayers for \$millions the city chose to further increase the fire department annual budget in 2014 to 4.3 million dollars despite the continued decline of fires nationally.

**CONCLUSION; Gallup can easily afford to shut at least one fire station, cut staff by 25 percent, slash a good one million dollars from the annual fire department budget and use that money to construct a community shuffleboard club – and do it while still maintaining the public safety. Obstacles include crony labor unions, public servants with a sense of entitlement, and the elected officials, media and bureaucrats beholden to them.