



REQUEST FOR ACTION

Soldiers Field Golf Course Concession Agreement – Financial Overview (2022–2026) and Recommendation for 2027 Operations

MEETING DATE:

August 4, 2026

ORIGINATING DEPT:

Parks & Recreation

AGENDA SECTION:

New Business

PRESENTER:

Paul Widman

Action Requested:

Authorizing the Parks and Recreation team to initiate an informal request for proposals for concession services at the Soldiers Field Golf Course clubhouse and return to the Park Board with a recommended concession agreement for consideration.

Report Narrative:

The current concession agreement with Townies at the Soldiers Field Golf Course clubhouse was negotiated during a period when attracting a concession operator had proven challenging and City funding for capital improvements was limited. The concession area had been vacant, and the facility required significant repairs. Restoring food service was identified as a priority for golfers and other park users.

To facilitate needed improvements, the agreement established a below-market rental rate in exchange for Townies making a minimum \$35,500 capital investment in the concession area during the first two years of operation. The agreement also required the City to invest \$15,300 to bring the facility up to an acceptable operating standard.

During the first several months of the agreement, Townies documented completion of its required improvements, and the City invested approximately \$17,000 in new flooring and a sound system. The City provides utility services for the concession operation. Since 2022, Townies has restored food and beverage service to the clubhouse after a period when securing a concession operator had proven difficult.

The agreement expires on December 31, 2026. As part of the planning process for the expiration of the agreement, staff began evaluating options for concession operations beyond 2026. The intent was to reevaluate the financial structure of the agreement, establish current market value, and confirm that the concession operation continues to meet the needs of golfers and other Soldiers Field Park users. The golf supervisory team began communication with Townies management staff in February. Townies staff and the golf team reviewed a draft proposal. The discussions did not lead to mutually acceptable terms

for a 2027 agreement. Recent public discussion regarding the agreement has reinforced the value of conducting further review through a transparent and competitive process.

Review of Current Agreement

Financial Summary

The following summary provides a high-level overview of the financial relationship under the current agreement. It reflects the concessionaire's required financial commitments together with facility-related costs paid by the City during the agreement term.

Concession Agreement - Financial Summary (2022–2026)	Amount
Scheduled Rent	\$33,000
Less: City-approved Rent Relief (2024)	(\$1,950)
Net Rent Received by the City	\$31,050
Townies Required Capital Investment	\$35,500
Total Townies Investment (Rent + Capital)	\$66,550
Facility, Equipment, Maintenance & Repair Costs Paid by the City*	(\$19,380)
Estimated Net Townies Facility Investment	\$47,170
Average Monthly Facility Cost to Townies	\$786

*These costs are generally the responsibility of the concessionaire under the concession agreement. The department approved these expenditures in response to requests from the concessionaire.

As the agreement approaches expiration, department leaders believe it is appropriate to evaluate whether the current financial structure, operational responsibilities, and level of City investment continue to represent the best value for the City and park users. A competitive solicitation provides the most effective way to establish current market value, compare operating approaches, and identify the proposal that best aligns with the City's objectives.

The Parks and Recreation team will conduct an informal request for proposals designed to encourage broad participation while ensuring a fair and transparent evaluation process. Proposals will be solicited directly from qualified food and beverage operators and advertised through City communication channels and other appropriate outlets.

Objectives of an Informal Request for Proposals

Establish Current Market Value. The existing agreement was negotiated based on the conditions that existed in 2021. A competitive process will allow the City to evaluate current market conditions by comparing business plans, proposed investments, rental payments, utility responsibilities, operational approaches, and customer service commitments from multiple qualified operators.

Ensure Transparency. A competitive solicitation provides a transparent and well-documented process for evaluating proposals and selecting the operator that best meets the City's objectives. Recent public discussion regarding the agreement has reinforced the value of conducting this process openly.

Promote Fairness. An informal request for proposals provides all qualified concession operators,

including Townies, an equal opportunity to compete for the next agreement and demonstrates the City's commitment to an open and equitable procurement process.

Meet the Needs of Park Users. The concession operation serves the entire Soldiers Field Park, not solely the golf course. Golfers, visitors to the Aquatics Center, playground, basketball courts, trail users, tournament participants, and attendees at community events all benefit from convenient food and beverage service. The competitive process will allow the City to evaluate how each proposer intends to provide a high-quality customer experience while serving the diverse needs of park users throughout the year.

The objective of the request for proposals is not simply to identify the vendor offering the highest rental payment. It is intended to identify the proposal that provides the best overall value by balancing financial return, customer service, facility investment, operational experience, and public benefit.

Recommended Process

The Parks and Recreation Leadership Team will administer the process with the following priorities:

- Solicit proposals from qualified food and beverage operators. Townies is encouraged to participate.
- Evaluate proposals using criteria that balance operational experience, customer service, business plan, financial return, proposed facility investment, public communication, and the ability to support golf operations, park users, and special events.
- Conduct interviews, reference checks, and financial reviews, as appropriate.
- Negotiate a concession agreement with the highest-ranked proposer.
- Return to the Park Board with a recommended concession agreement for review and recommendation before the current agreement expires.

Alternative – Continue Negotiations with Townies

An alternative to initiating a request for proposals would be to continue negotiating exclusively with Townies for concession operations beginning in 2027. This approach could provide continuity of operations and avoid the time and effort associated with a competitive solicitation.

If this option is pursued, staff recommends reviewing the financial terms of the agreement, including moving toward a market-based rental rate. Shared utility costs, operator responsibilities, and customer service expectations, should also be reevaluated.

While this approach would build on the existing relationship, it would not provide the same level of market validation, transparency, or competitive opportunity that would be facilitated through a request for proposals.

Approval of this action will not result in the award of a concession agreement or terminate the current agreement with Townies. The current agreement remains in effect through December 31, 2026. Approval authorizes staff to conduct an informal request for proposals and return to the Park Board with a recommended concession agreement for consideration prior to the expiration of the current agreement.

Policy Considerations & DEI Impact:

What is the appropriate balance between rental payments, utility costs, operator investment, customer service, and public benefit when structuring future concession agreements at Soldiers Field Golf Course?

Prior Legislative Actions & Community Engagement:

October 19, 2021: Park Board - Approved concessions agreement with Townies.

February 6, 2024: Park Board - Approved three months rent relief, \$1,950 total.

Fiscal & Resource Impact:

Financial details are included in the report narrative.

Prepared By:

Paul Widman

Attachments:

[Concessionaire Agreement - Soldiers Field Golf Course - 2021](#)

[Request for Action -Townies Concessions Agreement - October 19, 2021](#)

[Request for Action - Rent Relief - February 6, 2024](#)

[Summary - Soldiers Field Kitchen Area Expenses - 2021-2024](#)

[Subledger Report - City Expenses Outlined in Concession Agreement](#)