



MEMORANDUM

P.O. Box 4100 ♦ FRISCO, COLORADO 80443

TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: DIANE McBRIDE, RECREATION DIRECTOR/ASSISTANT TM
VANESSA AGEE, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
RE: STRATEGIC EVENTS DISCUSSION
DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Summary and Background: During a discussion of the budget in 2020, Council noted that the pandemic forced the cancelation of many events. Council asked staff to return in 2021 with information regarding Frisco’s events in order to facilitate a discussion around the Town’s event strategy. Council wished to seize this moment to thoughtfully consider which events would best fit their vision for Frisco and meet Council’s goals going forward.

During visioning discussions facilitated by Insights Collective on January 26, 2021 and February 11, 2021, Town Council considered Frisco’s future and consistently cited the desire to preserve the authentic neighborhood feel of Frisco, while offering events and outdoor opportunities, which serve locals well and embody the Town’s values around outdoor pursuits, youth, inclusion, and arts and culture.

The attached event inventory is intended to provide Council with a quick snapshot of events, including their background when known and what the primary focus or “why” of each event has been. Staff will present information about Frisco events during the work session, and will seek Council feedback regarding current and future event strategies.

Analysis: Frisco’s events have historically been categorized as civic/community events, character/culture (previously named “animation”) events, and/or signature/legacy events. Please note that often times, events can fit into more than one category.

1. **Civic/community events** serve primarily to enhance the quality of life in Frisco. Such events include the Easter Egg Hunt, Spontaneous Combustion, Historic Lunchtime Lectures, Mountain Goat Kids’ Trailing Running Series, and Town Clean Up Day.
2. **Character/culture events** are focused on a smaller audience, showcase the Town’s assets, and provide more intimate experiences such as Concerts in the Park, Mardi Gras for Paws, and the Bacon Burner 6k.

3. **Signature/legacy events** often have a long history in the community and are how many visitors and locals may have first been introduced to Frisco. These events typically have a significant economic development component and impact on local lodging, restaurant, and retail businesses. Examples include Gold Rush Nordic Races, Colorado BBQ Challenge, 4th of July, Run the Rockies races, Fall Fest, and Wassail Days.

The attached event inventory reveals 41 Frisco events occurring in 2019, with 16 civic/community events, 18 character/culture events, and seven (7) signature/legacy events. Please note that if an event has multiple dates or disciplines associated with it, it is only recorded as one event. For instance, the Mountain Goat Kids' Training Running Series consists of four (4) races between June and July, but is only counted as one event. Of the 41 events that occurred in 2019, 11 were coordinated by a third party, 10 were specifically youth focused events, and/or 21 were athletic events.

These event categories reflect a question that staff asks consistently when strategizing about events: "why are we having an event and do those reasons offer a positive return on investment (ROI) for the community?"

Why: Events are held for a variety of reasons and are evaluated on an annual basis. Events may be held to enhance the quality of life for residents, to showcase the Town's assets, to provide intimate experiences, and/or specifically for a significant economic component to positively impact local lodging, restaurant and retail businesses. This question of "why" has led staff to cancel or turn away events that do not match the Town's values or Town Council's goals. For example, Wassail Days once included a fun run that closed five blocks of Main Street. While it brought decent media coverage and was a quirky addition to the Wassail Days calendar, the four-hour Main Street closure was detrimental to local businesses, and it did not support a thriving economy so the event was canceled. Subsequently, staff refocused on the events that made Wassail Days special to residents and meaningful to businesses and put more resources towards improving the lighting event, which largely draws residents, and towards the "12 Sips of Wassail" in-business sampling and commemorative mug giveaway, which brings customers into businesses to support shopping and dining local over the holidays.

ROI: The analysis of ROI is broader and much more complex than how many people came, how much they spent, or how much media coverage there was, as these can be irrelevant metrics and/or an oversimplification that misses the more complex and intangible impacts of an event. When Town staff considers or evaluates an event, they consider a variety of factors including the impact on residents and local businesses, meaningful and authentic experiences, the economic impact on local businesses, and depending on the event, money raised for local non-profits.

Most of the Town's events benefit non-profits, as Town Council has long had a goal to support residents through non-profits and to provide non-profits with platforms and opportunities to fundraise. From the Turkey Day 5k, which raised \$3,680 in 2019 for Frisco Elementary STEM Program to the BBQ Challenge which raised \$73,805 for non-profits in 2019, the Town of Frisco has leveraged events to significantly benefit non-profits, often paying non-profits to provide event services, rather than paying a for profit business to provide these services.

Going forward, staff believes it would be beneficial to do impact surveys at events to truly understand the economic and experience value of events so the analysis of ROI could include more data. An example of such a report for the 2018 BBQ Challenge has been attached.

Events are evaluated annually by staff and included in the budget process. If an event no longer meets the goals of the Town Council, lacks in participation, is no longer financially viable, etc., the event is either canceled or replaced. Third party events are also evaluated in this manner. A third party event is organized by a business or non-profit other than the Town of Frisco. The business or non-profit submits event permit applications to Town staff for review and evaluation. Town staff review such requests on a monthly basis with representation from each department, as appropriate, and make decisions based on the same thought process used to review Town events.

Events are also managed using many strategies, including limiting registration, raising prices, and/or reducing marketing. These management strategies are designed to enhance the experience of the event for participants. Recreation events typically have registration caps due to their use of public lands, and these caps serve as a way to preserve experience, as well as manage the impact on land and trails. Attendance at an event like the BBQ Challenge has been managed over the years by reducing the marketing budget for the event, as the event experience would not be enhanced with increased attendance. These strategies allow an existing successful event to be managed, rather than canceled.

Financial Impact: Events are part of the regular budget, and 2019 net revenue and loss for each event are provided in the Event Inventory attachment.

Alignment with Strategic Plan: Frisco's events support vibrant culture, arts, and recreation; a thriving economy; a sustainable environment; and/or an inclusive community.

Environmental Sustainability: Frisco's events and third party events are required to show how they will reduce and divert waste, and impact on open space and trails are consistently discussed when planning events and considering third party events.

Staff Recommendation: Staff has provided this event overview and inventory, along with staff's current understanding of Town Council's direction regarding why events should happen, in order to inform Town Council's discussion of Frisco's event strategies.

Questions for Town Council:

1- The three event categories were designed to meet Council's goals. Does Council believe these event categories are meeting needs of local businesses and the community or should these categories be retooled?

2- Are there changes to the event schedule, including new event opportunities, that Council believes would better meet Council's and the community's goals?

This year will continue to be a year of change, as internationally, nationally, and in the State of Colorado, there is universally understood reality that large-scale events will not be able to be held until 2022. Even at Level Green - Protect Our Neighbors on the Colorado COVID dial (three levels away from Summit's current Level Orange), outdoor events may only be conducted at 50% capacity, not to exceed 500 people per designated activity or area. In light of these restrictions, staff recommends canceling the 2021 Colorado BBQ Challenge, July 4th celebrations, and Fall Fest at this time and would like Council to weigh in on this recommendation.

Approved By:

Nancy Kerry, Town Manager
Bonnie Moinet, Finance Director

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Frisco Event Inventory

Attachment 2: BBQ Challenge 2018 Event Impact Survey