

Comments from Jeff Bisson

I am writing in concern to the proposal that would take away city funding to the Rochester Main Street Program. Though I am a member of the board, I am not speaking in that role, but in the role of a concerned citizen who has volunteered in the downtown for 10+ years. At first glance the proposal that has been put forward seems to make sense. However I believe it is short sighted and misses the finer points of much of what Rochester Main Street does. Here are some key points I believe those who support this idea are missing.

1) Rochester Main Street as a non-profit has acted as a Fiscal Sponsor for other projects & groups that would of not been able to fund-raise or apply for grants otherwise. This activity has allowed other groups or projects to occur that likely would not have been able to do without them or would of at least slowed the process significantly. They have acted as a fiscal sponsor for Rochester Museum Of Fine Arts, Rochester Farmers Market, and for the mural for Make Rochester Great.

2) Projects like Factory Court & the repatination of The Parson Main Statue are projects that where very costly. Without the private fundraising & grants for these projects that Main Street was able to do as a non-profit these projects would of not been done, or would of been done at a much larger cost to the city.

3) As a "neutral" non-profit, who stays out of the political realm, we are able to bring together volunteers from a much wider base then a city official would be able to do. It is this ability to call on volunteers that have allowed Main Street to do so much over the last 10+ years.

4) The idea that 1 position added to the city's payroll could put on 1 large event per month without significant additional spending is naive. These events cost significant money to put on, and these costs are usually covered by private sponsorships that companies can write off as support to a non-profit (a benefit not available to the city) or by grants that require you be a non-profit to apply for. Also as a non-profit we have been able to put on events that would of likely faced much more severe negative feedback if they where put on by the city itself. Both Rochester Pride & Wicked Witches are examples of events that seem the city would of gotten major grief over if they had put on themselves. Though it is easy to say the city just wouldn't put on those events, the reality is events need volunteers and to get volunteers you need to offer the events people are passionate about. So again, if the city isn't able to get volunteers then the events will need to hire outside companies or hire people to work at them, either way adding to the cities cost.

As I know your all busy, I will not keep going on but feel these points cover the major issues with this proposal.

Thanks Jeff Bisson