


**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA STATEMENT**

Item No. 16
For Meeting of 5.5.2016

ITEM TITLES: Consider request by Herb Eckhouse of LaQuercia for the City to co-sponsor as an economic development business retention event, their front yard party during the American Cheese Festival on July 26, 2016.

CONTACT PERSONS: Wade R. Wagoner, AICP LEED GA, Planning and Economic Development Director

SUMMARY EXPLANATION The City of Norwalk staff received a request from Herb Eckhouse of LaQuercia to ask if the City would support his request to use School District school buses for a lawn party he is having at his site in conjunction with the American Cheese Festival on July 26, 2016.

The school district needs the City to cosponsor the event to establish a "public purpose" for the use of the buses.

Attached you will find interaction from Mr. Eckhouse, and from Kate Baldwin representing the school district.

Staff asks that the Council consider a simple motion on the request.

Potential Benefits A part of any good economic development strategy is a strong business retention plan. The American Cheese Festival is a once in a generation event that allows us to showcase Norwalk.

Other Considerations: The potentially precedent setting action places the council in the position of evaluating private business' request for school buses on a case by case basis and determining if each request rises to a business retention level criteria. The city has not developed any parameters to assist in making that determination.

Final Decision: If the City favorably recommends, the final decision rests with the school board.

___Resolution ___ Ordinance ___ Contract ___ Other (Specify) X ___

Funding Source: Approve Request by simple motion



APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL _____

Planning & Economic Development Director City Attorney

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Consider potentially precedent setting action and approve or deny by simple motion.

Written by Herb Eckhouse – La Quercia

La Quercia Front Yard Party in Norwalk—July 26, 2016

Why: The American Cheese Society (ACS), the leader in promoting and supporting the flourishing American cheese industry, will hold their annual conference in Des Moines. This is a gathering of the most impassioned food enthusiasts in the country, most of whom buy and resell La Quercia cured meats, made in Norwalk. This is a unique, once in a generation opportunity to bring them to see how we make the meats that they enthusiastically present to their customers in every state in the Country.

What: We want to provide as many conference participants as possible the opportunity to tour our Norwalk facility, so we are hosting a Front Yard Party—transporting guests from Des Moines to Norwalk, offering them pizza made on site, sweet corn, fresh Iowa tomatoes, beer and soft drinks and offering a tour of our facility. Seeing our building and our operation is the greatest way for us to create customer loyalty and to advance the success of our Norwalk based business.

Who: This event will be cohosted by La Quercia, based in Norwalk, and Hy-Vee. We invited the City of Norwalk to join as a host.

When: The event will be from 6-9 PM, July 26, 2016. Though the Conference starts July 28, hundreds of attendees will arrive July 25-26 to judge the cheese competition and/or study and take exams for Cheese Professional accreditations. The ACS will help us inform attendees of this event.

Request: We believe that we could greatly enhance the hometown, Iowa feel of this event, and support the image of the Norwalk community by having all guests picked up in Des Moines by busses from the Norwalk Community School District. This will give immediate visibility to Norwalk and create an informal, welcoming feel for all guests from the City. Therefore we request that, to promote and enhance the image of the City of Norwalk, the school district provide school busses (compensated for relevant expenses) to transport guests from Des Moines to Norwalk the evening of July 26, 2016 from 5-10 PM.

Written by Kate Baldwin:

Wade,

RE: Herb Eckhouse, La Quercia request for the School to provide transportation services

I know you had difficulty hearing all of the conversation during our conference call this am. I decided to follow up with you, so you understand the limitations of the District to offer school buses for non-school, non- student related purposes and options that we have available to meet Herb Eckhouse's request.

As I understand, Herb is wanting to hire the School to provide buses to transport convention guests from the Iowa Events Center to La Quiera for a private open house sponsored by La Quercia. These guests would be members of a national association, called the American Cheese Society. La Quercia has a vested interest in promoting their business by hosting the association's membership to an open house. Only convention members will be invited to attend the La Quercia event in Norwalk. Herb is estimating that about 400 guests out of the 2400 convention attendees would elect to come out to visit the La Quercia plant. He will be hosting the event from 6:00 pm to 9 pm in lawn-style party tent, serving pizza, beer, sweet corn.

We do not have a policy that openly forbids the School District from providing transportation, but the Iowa DE is clear that any use of local tax-supported school buses must meet a public purpose. On face value, I am struggling to find any public

purpose for the School to provide transportation to this event for the following reasons:

1. It is not, nor could be a school sponsored event
2. It does not involve transporting any students, specially Norwalk students
3. It is not a local community event/festival, involving Norwalk citizens
4. It is a private, business type event.
5. It is not open to the general public

Now with that being said, the criteria above is not that much different than when the School District provided shuttle transportation for the Greater Des Moines Home Show in 2013. In addition to most of the criteria above, people actually paid to attend the Home Show. However, the School District was able to define "public purpose" to provide transportation for the Home Show because the City agreed to sponsor the Home Show as local economic development. The City determined the event promoted the City, School and community of Norwalk, and agreed to reimburse the School for all actual costs incurred. Herb has agreed to pay for the transportation costs. That is not an issue. But in order for the School to consider this transportation request, the City of Norwalk will need to sponsor/endorse the event as a local economic development event. It was a partnership effort between the School District and the City. When I consider the public limitations of using school buses, that will be the only way the School District will be able to meet Herb's request.

I know that Herb was disappointed and maybe a little frustrated that I couldn't agree on the spot to provide transportation. I

talked with Denny and we want to cooperate with local Chamber/businesses while maintaining integrity to the accountability of public purpose. The only way I see it this happening is really through a City sponsorship.

I wanted to get this information down in an email to you so the City could consider the District's position along with how the City might respond. I am welcome to visit more with you, Tom Phillips or other City officials about how the District can cooperate if the City is willing to support this event.

Take care,

Kate

From: Kate Baldwin [<mailto:kbaldwin@norwalk.k12.ia.us>]

Sent: Wednesday, April 27, 2016 3:28 PM

To: Wade Wagoner

Cc: Herb Eckhouse; Mayor; Rick Kaul; Denny Wulf

Subject: Re: Agenda item on May 5

Hi Herb, Wade and Tom,

I think we are making great progress to approve La Quercia's request for the School to provide bus transportation for the July 26th National Cheese Society local event. I have shared the details of this promotional event with Rick Kaul, our school board president. I also shared the City's proposed commitment to sponsor the event. Rick Kaul will recommend, with Denny and me, that the School provide the transportation as a partnership activity with the City. We all know how valuable our local businesses are to the School and the City. Through a cooperative effort with the City we were able to make this happen within our scope of legal responsibilities.

I am planning to attend the May 5th City Council meeting to express the School's support of the event. If approved by the Council, I will add this item for final approval by the School Board at next meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for May 23rd.

Good luck planning your event.

Kate