

From: Trustee Michael R. Milani

Subject: Agenda Initiative

Topic: Special Event - Annual Barbecue Competition

Impact: Use of staff and Village resources, financial impact over \$500

**Summary:** I have been conducting research into what would be involved to host an annual barbecue competition in Orland Park. It could be a great way to kick off our spring and summer events and bring yet another cost-neutral, or cash-positive event to our residents right out of the gate.

“Barbecue is synonymous with a good time. Warm weather, cooking outside, hanging out with family and friends—these elements lend to our love for the many interpretations of this ubiquitous dish. But for some, barbecue is a way of life.” Lisa Cherry – Illinois Country Living, July 2019.

Competitive barbecue competitions are widespread throughout the Midwest. Many nearby municipalities hold these events, including Herscher, Frankfort, Palos Park, Park Ridge, Westmont, and Blue Island. These events draw a large crowd, have a large following, and happen rain or shine.

**Background:** There are many types of competitions, including 4-meat (Brisket, Ribs, Chicken, Pork) which is usually a 2-day event, 3-meat (usually Pork, Chicken and Ribs), and rib cook-off competitions. There is also the decision of holding a KCBS (Kansas City Barbecue Society) sanctioned event (which costs money), or an unsanctioned event (I would recommend unsanctioned as it does not limit your competitor base). There is also the choice of hosting backyard events, or professional events. There are pros and cons for each of these depending on the goal.

If the goal is to draw several teams (40-50) to compete in events, and competitors are the primary source of revenue (charging more for entry fees), then a 3 or 4 meat competition would be best. The host would not supply meat as the competitors would bring their own. Rib competitions are a little different in which usually competitors cook several (10-15) slabs of ribs (ribs are usually provided by the host) and tickets are sold to guests to sample the competitors' ribs and choose a people's choice winner. This allows the target audience to be a combination of the teams (entry fee revenue), and the guests (ticket, food, liquor revenues). There are many other details that we can discuss as well, but I wanted to provide a brief summary in this initiative.

A rib and chicken competition would be best suited for Orland Park. It could be paired with a free concert day, or possibly another event where there is already a draw of people. This would make Centennial Park West (one of the parking lots) a perfect place to host the competition. A rib competition starts around 7am and is completed by 6pm so the competition can have its awards ceremony, and everyone can go watch a show afterwards. We could also partner with

Rock Bottom and Coopers Hawk, and they could sell their beer and wine by the cup. We would be sponsoring local businesses and provide choices of beverage for the guests.

I have spoken with Rick Boehm from Palos Park and Sue Lynchey from Frankfort in regard to their events. Both are willing to share information and provide input into helping us create a successful event. They have already helped me tremendously. Each event is run differently, and lessons can be learned from both. I can also reach out to Dan Martin in Herscher and Kyle Lund in Manteno about their events if we decide that a 3-meat, 1 day competition would be best.

Frankfort has the event in the same parking lot that they have their weekend markets. They do not provide water or electricity. The entry fee is \$100, and the competitors are supplied 15 slabs of ribs to be cooked. 15 slabs are a LOT of ribs to cook, especially for amateur cooks and limits your team participation because most people do not have the equipment to cook that many at once. Tickets are sold to the guests (I think they were \$1 each) and guests turn them in to the participants in exchange for ribs. The guests submit their entry for people's choice awards. There are also professional judges who perform an actual judging of the ribs as well. Trophies are awarded to 1-3<sup>rd</sup> place, and to the People's choice champion.

In 2019, Frankfort had 16 teams compete, and the space that is used probably limits them to about 20. Each team will consist of a chief cook and as many assistants as the chief cook deems necessary. Teams must be comprised of amateurs - no professional or members of a professional team allowed (no restaurants). Contestants will provide all cooking devices to be used. Each competitor is required to have a 3-bin cleaning area and comply with health regulations (gloves, sanitization, etc.). There is no alcohol served at the event, and also no entertainment. Setup time starts at 7am, and cleanup is usually around 2-3pm. The primary goal of this event is to raise money for the Jaycees and Lions club.

Palos Park is run in a similar fashion. They host their event between their Village Hall and the fire department on the "Green". Entry fee is \$75 (price goes up to \$85 10 days closer to the deadline) and they supply 10 slabs of ribs. If the competitors also want to submit chicken for judging, it's an additional \$10 and the competitor needs to supply their own chicken. A similar format is provided for people's choice, the purchase of coins or tickets at \$1 each, and also a panel of judges.

The event is limited to 28 teams due to space restrictions. Trophies will be awarded for First, Second, and Third place, as judged, for both ribs and chicken. A People's Choice trophy will also be awarded for ribs only. A Grand Master Trophy will be awarded to the team having the highest combined judged score in both ribs and chicken. Each team will consist of a chief cook and as many assistants as the chief cook deems necessary. Teams must be comprised of amateurs - no professional or members of a professional team allowed (no restaurants). Contestants will provide all cooking devices to be used. Each competitor is required to have a 3-bin cleaning area and comply with health regulations (gloves, sanitization, etc.). They provide water, but no electricity. I mention this because certain smokers may require electricity, and

some require water. However, supplying electricity with a generator is expensive and cuts into the revenues of the event drastically. Setup time is 7:30am and the awards presentation is approximately 6:30pm. It is a longer event than Frankfort, but due to the other events going on at the same time, and the flow of people that attend.

Palos Park also has their event at the same time as their Autumn in the Park festival. This provides a steady stream of participants in buying the tickets, liquor is available, food is available, and they also have entertainment as well as a vendor event. I believe that these are key to getting people through this event at a maximum capacity.

**Financial Impact:** In 2019, Palos had 25 teams that participated in their event. Let's estimate that 12 (the minimum) participated in the chicken competition as well. At that participation level, the entry fees raise approximately \$1995. Each team is provided with 10 slabs of ribs with the expectation that approximately 100 ribs will be served by each team. At \$1 per coin/ticket, that drives approximately \$2500 in revenue. The cost of the ribs can be estimated at \$6 per slab (25 contestants x \$60 per contestant = \$1500) since we would have to buy in bulk and would probably be able to negotiate a discount. You cannot go cheap on the meat. You want to buy quality ribs, or the contestants will not come back. Smithfield Baby Back ribs are a quality product. Another option is finding a purveyor that might want to sponsor the event and donate or deep discount the meat. There are also grants available from Smithfield and other suppliers, but these are hard to achieve. Also, once you win the grant, you will more than likely not win it again.

Additional revenues could be brought in from liquor sales. The estimated impact above does not factor in staff, tent rentals, or any other utility. I hope that we can discuss those items further.

Marketing of the event would also be key. Social Media is big in the barbecue world. Also, people share event information at other events. I can easily get our information into 4 other event manager's hands, and we could return the favor and share their event information at our event.

I have attached two examples of the contestant packets for the Frankfort and the Palos Park event for review as well. They provide great detail into the running of the event. Again, Rick and Sue have offered their input, and Rick is more than happy to help out in any way he can (including judging).

I look forward to any questions you may have and am looking forward to further discussion. I would also be happy to help with any planning, organization, or even help running the event.

References:

Organize a BBQ Competition: <https://grillagrills.com/organize-a-bbq-cookoff-competition/>  
How to Organize a BBQ Competition Part 1 - <http://lawdawgbbq.blogspot.com/2010/11/how-to-organize-bbq-competition-part-1.html>  
KCBS Sanctioning Information: [https://kcbs.us/sanctioning\\_information.php](https://kcbs.us/sanctioning_information.php)  
Palos - BBQ Judging Application 2021.pdf - Attachment  
Palos - Amateur BBQ Cook-off Rules 2021.pdf - Attachment  
Frankfort - Contestant Packet.pdf – Attachment