

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE**

**AGENDA
April 4, 2016
6:30 P.M.
City Council Chambers**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ESTABLISH A QUORUM**
- 3. REVIEW – CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- 5. ADJOURNMENT**

CITY OF DARIEN

Memorandum

TO: Mayor Weaver and the City Council
FROM: Bryon Vana, City Administrator
DATE: March 30, 2016
RE: Citizen of the Year (COY) Program Review

Mayor Weaver requested a special Committee of the Whole meeting to review the Citizen of the Year program.

Attached is a memo from Bonnie Kucera, Current COY Chairman, discussing some of the challenges/concerns the COY Committee has faced.

Also, provided below is the COY ordinance as additional information.

Chapter 6 **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE**

2-6-1: CREATION:

2-6-2: BUDGET:

2-6-3: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

2-6-4: CRITERIA:

2-6-5: COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS:

2-6-6: DISBANDING:

2-6-1: CREATION:

There is hereby created a citizen of the year committee. The committee shall consist of no less than five (5) and no more than nine (9) individuals. The committee shall be appointed annually by the mayor on or before the last regular meeting of September, subject to advice and consent of the city council. The mayor shall designate a member of the city council to serve as liaison with the committee. In addition, the city administrator shall designate a staff person to provide support and assistance to the committee. (Ord. 0-07-01, 2-20-2001)

2-6-2: BUDGET:

The city council shall advise the committee by the last Monday in October of the funds available in the city budget for use by the committee. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)

2-6-3: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The committee's duties and responsibilities are as follows: (Ord. 0-07-01, 2-20-2001)

(A) The committee shall select a Darien citizen of the year in accordance with the criteria set forth in section [2-6-4](#) of this chapter. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)

(B) The committee shall, on or before the first council meeting in November, provide the council with a schedule of dates and activities for the coming year's citizen of the year celebration.

(C) Prior to disbanding after the selection of a citizen of the year, the committee shall establish the date for the following year's citizen of the year celebration and reserve appropriate banquet facility and entertainment by obtaining contracts for each, subject to council approval. (Ord. 0-07-01, 2-20-2001)

2-6-4: CRITERIA:

The committee shall follow the following criteria in recommending the citizen of the year:

(A) The citizen of the year shall have made some outstanding voluntary contribution to the city. Criteria to be considered shall include: 1) diversity of activities; 2) length of service; 3) degree of involvement in the community; and 4) impact to the city.

(B) The committee shall not discriminate as to age, sex, color, creed, or national origin in making their selection of the citizen of the year.

(C) The citizen of the year must be a resident of Darien.

(D) No one shall be selected for the citizen of the year honor more than once.

(E) The citizen of the year shall not presently hold a paid or elected position within the city government. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)

(F) Candidates for citizen of the year shall be submitted in writing via a nomination letter or form sent to the committee for their consideration. Once a letter or form has been submitted, the candidate's name shall always be a valid nomination. Resubmittal of candidate letters or forms is encouraged to keep information current and accurate. (Ord. 0-20-94, 4-18-1994)

(G) All nomination letters and supporting material received each year shall be maintained by the committee and turned over to the city clerk's office following the selection of the citizen of the year. The city clerk shall maintain an historical file of this information. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)

2-6-5: COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS:

The committee shall provide complimentary tickets for the annual citizen of the year's dinner dance, to the following: (Ord. 0-07-01, 2-20-2001)

(A) The selected citizen of the year and his or her immediate family residing in the citizen of the year's household.

(B) All prior citizens of the year shall be provided one complimentary ticket.

(C) All committee members shall receive one complimentary ticket.

(D) A member of the clergy selected by the citizen of the year shall be provided one complimentary ticket.

(E) The mayor shall be provided two (2) complimentary tickets. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)

2-6-6: DISBANDING: 

Following the completion of their duties and responsibilities as set forth hereinabove, the committee shall disband. (Ord. 0-50-92, 9-8-1992)



TO: Mr. Byron Vana

CC: Mayor Kathleen Weaver; Alderman Tina Beilke (COY Liaison)

FROM: Bonnie Kucera, Current COY Chairman

Subject: Revitalization of the Citizen of the Year Event

As a follow-up to your request regarding some of the challenges/concerns the Citizen of the Year committee has faced, I offer the following for the City Council's work session on April 4th.

The current ordinance gives good direction to the committee for guidance for choosing a candidate and guidelines to follow for candidate consideration. There has been confusion on whether a past submitted nomination can be used year after year and by ordinance, it cannot unless a yearly nomination is submitted. This allows for the committee to be kept up to date on the nominee's continued activity and also that the nominee remains a resident of Darien. To change this portion of the ordinance would add burden to the committee on deciding if the information received perhaps 5 years old or more, is current and correct. We currently have on file numerous past applications dating back to the late 1970's. If the committee had to go back to the past nominations, it would literally be impossible to know if the information contained in those applications was current. The criteria for choosing a nominee is spot on.

Here are some the challenges and criticisms' that the committee has faced:

- Nominations are coming in less and less each year. We have received feedback from residents the Citizen of the Year idea is old and tired. Some of our choices have been labeled as favoritism to clubs and organizations. The dinner is being attending by less than 200 people in the past 3 years even when the dinner is complimentary to all past Citizen of the Year

honorees and the city's volunteers and their spouses. In retrospect, our honoree usually invites about 100 people of which about 75 to 80 attend. The balance is then filled in by past COYs, volunteers and loyal attendees from taxing-body entities, clubs and organizations. We have been able to keep the event local and maintain a very low cost to the attendee. (\$30.00 for a worthy meal and open bar is beyond reasonable.) The "hook" to pull them in seems to have diminished.

- Residents who perhaps would consider submitting a nomination have stated that the process is too time consuming to complete. Yes, it may take an hour or two for a thoughtful nomination to be completed but if the submitter believes the candidate is worthy, time should not matter. Folks today are flying in different directions and "free-time" is at an essence. But then again, they do have 2 months to submit it!
- Residents do not understand that a nomination application must be received by the committee for a person to be considered. The committee does not pick and choose candidates, they only chose from what has been submitted. The committee has been outwardly criticized with the choices it has made.
- More than once, twice and upward..., honorees have turned down the nomination and the committee has had to back and go through the process again from the applications that were received for that year. The committee has therefore started to make 1st and 2nd choices where possible when initially reviewing the applications. And when nominations are at a minimum, this can be tenuous. The committee does not feel it should be compromised to just pick someone – this is an honor that should be earned and worthy.
- After a nominee has been contacted and accepted, the committee at times has determined that some of the information received was incorrect or not accurate. This usually is determined by reviewing the information received with the nominee prior to writing the acceptance narrative for the city council presentation. It is sad because if there are numerous applications,

decisions are being made on information not accurate. Information stated is taken for truth by the committee.

Here are some suggestions that could be considered:

- Advertising of the nomination process has been done through Direct Connect, Neighbors Magazine and Channel 6. Perhaps a letter with a nomination form including the electronic link to the website with a hard copy of the criteria could be sent out to every Darien taxing body (such as library, park, school districts) along to all clubs, organizations, etc encouraging their consideration of submitting a nominee. It may also spark an interest in attending when the invitation to the event is sent. The committee would undertake this additional responsibility. Additional reminders at every council meeting between November and December would also add to the noticeability.
- Long-range thought: The composition of the award could be re-considered to have taxing bodies nominate a Darien citizen who work or volunteer for their taxing bodies. As an example, there could be a Park District Citizen of the Year, Library Citizen of the Year, SD 61, 63, and 66 Citizen of the Years, etc. along with an overall Darien Citizen of the Year. This would truly make the event a full city recognition. It would also though be taxing on the committee to oversee these additional responsibilities. The committee basically has about 6 weeks from the acceptance of the nomination to the event to complete all facets. This would need to be carefully thought out.
- Although, it is time consuming to fully complete the nomination form, the committee cannot consider nominations which it has received that are “one-liners” such as “he has done a lot for Darien. Please consider him” “He started cancer-smashers – do it!” “She doesn’t live in Darien but has done a lot. Make an exception to the rules.” In a truly caring written nomination form even newspaper articles are attached which makes validation of the nomination easier to consider. Changing the nomination form is not recommended.

The interest is dipping and somehow to keep the event in a spotlight, revitalization needs to take place. The city needs to somehow emphasize the importance of this honor and showcase it. Perhaps before deciding to expand the event, additional awareness letters could be sent and see how it pans out. Knowing this is a long tradition in Darien and Darien is I believe the last of the communities to hold such a celebration, it would be sad to see it disappear in such a despairing way.