

2001: a midwest morris ale

Partial Registration Policy

The Issue:

A number of people have asked if they could have a price break on the Ale since they are only able to attend some of the time, either commuting home at night or attending for only one or two days. The issue of what I call "partial registrations" comes up every year, and there is no easy answer for it. There are both philosophical and practical considerations.

The Verdict:

The short answer is No. If someone will be at the Ale camp site itself, all or part of the time, they need to pay the Ale fee. If they will simply meet up with tours on route to dance (using their own transportation), they do not need to register. (Tour schedules will be available in advance.)

My Reasoning:

Philosophical considerations:

An Ale is a weekend-long event, a time for bonding with people whom you otherwise do not see during the year, sharing dances and creating an island of Morris culture for this brief period of time. It is created by the people who are there, and its uniqueness and enjoyment is a result of how fully people participate in it. I consider it to be more like a retreat than like a business convention composed of workshops; I do not consider it to be a drop-in event. (There are those who may not agree with me.)

While there will always be some people whose schedules do not permit them to attend the entire Ale (and they are welcome to attend as they can), partial attendance is something we do not want to encourage, since that is disruptive to the event and undermines the nature of the Ale. Giving a price-break for partial attendance would encourage commuting and create two classes of participants, which can cause resentment and discomfort on both sides. It also would adversely affect the budget.

Practical considerations:

The Ale fee is not 'x' dollars for lodging per night and 'x' dollars per meal; it is one fee that covers the entire event. Whether someone comes for one day or several, our costs do not change for that person. We cannot give the caterer separate counts for each meal, and we pay the same campsite fee whether someone sleeps there one night or three, or goes home to sleep. We have to rent enough busses for the total number of attendees whether they ride them both days or not.

This year's Ale is remarkably inexpensive already. If we had tried to make an official partial registration price, I think that enough people would have taken advantage of it that we would have had to raise the full price considerably to make the budget work, which would be unfair to those who are fully participating in the event. The Ale does not make a profit; any money over costs is forwarded to the team hosting the next Ale or returned to the attendees as a refund. We base the Ale budget on the number of expected attendees; only if there is an unusual number of attendees over the expectation (as was the case last year) would there be more money than we need to cover costs. That will not be the case this year.

Conclusions:

I have refused all requests for partial-registration price breaks (including from my own team); making an exception for one person or group would create very justified resentment among a number of people here.

If the issue is that some or all members cannot afford the Ale fee, that would be a separate thing to consider. That does not appear to be the issue for those who have asked, and the Ale as a whole has not offered subsidized fees in the past, but if this is a factor for an entire team we could consider it for the future. It is something that would have to be accounted for in the budget up front, since from a budgeting standpoint any kind of price-break on registration is a subsidy, because of the fixed costs.

I hope that my reasoning resonates with most of you. This is not an arbitrary decision or even mainly a matter of convenience, but rather a strongly felt principle on my part.

--The Empress