

# Post-convention fetes cost \$10,000, FEC says

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A month after the Republican convention, a Dallas hospitality group spent \$10,000 in local donations for parties — the last of a string of entertainment and promotional expenses that totaled more than \$225,000, federal records show.

The Dallas Welcoming Committee held the parties in late September, about the time city officials were preparing a financial report that eventually disclosed that the political event would cost Dallas taxpayers about \$1.4 million.

The committee had a \$500,000

budget, made up of private contributions from the same fund that paid \$3.3 million in city bills stemming from the \$5.3 million convention.

The Welcoming Committee — essentially a public relations group set up to boost the city's image during the convention — had spent \$427,108 through Sept. 30, according to the latest city records. It received no taxpayer money.

David Fox, a local home builder who headed the committee, said Friday that he expects the group to come in under budget after paying

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remaining bills that are not part of the city and federal reports.

He could not estimate the figure but said any donations left over will be available for the city to use to offset convention expenses.

"When we get through, the amount of money we spend will be minuscule compared with the amount of good will from the convention," Fox said.

On Aug. 21 — during the convention — the Welcoming Committee spent \$12,231 on "VIP entertainment" at a Hall of State reception in Fair Park. About half of the party's cost went for food, according to a report the committee recently filed with the Federal Election Commission.

A month later, the report shows, the group spent \$10,157 for what it described as a city employee appreciation party Sept. 25 at Old City Park and a volunteer "wrap-up party" Sept. 26 at Aldredge House, 5500 Swiss Ave.

The bills included \$6,250 for food at the city worker gathering, \$1,675 for catering at the wrap-up party and \$132 for parking service for the partygoers at that event. The Dallas Brass Ensemble received \$1,500 for performing at both events, according to the records.

About 400 people attended the employee party, and there were about 100 at the volunteer gathering, a Welcoming Committee spokeswoman said.

Fox defended the costs, saying the parties were held to thank the employees and volunteers for the thousands and thousands of hours in goods and services given for the convention.

"If anything, I don't think we thanked them enough," he said. "If it hadn't been for these people, they (Dallas taxpayers) would have to pick up even more."

Fox also called the parties "debriefings" that helped committee workers in preparing a report on their work. The report, along with a more detailed accounting of the committee's spending, will be submitted to the city in December, he said.

Fox said the December report

will be more specific than the latest FEC records.

Those FEC records for the last year show committee expenditures included:

- \$156,907 for public relations services, including news releases, media entertainment, travel and a fact book.

- \$65,671 for salaries and contract labor.

- \$59,661 for pre-convention ex-

penses, including decorations, decals, press room hospitality, volunteer costs and volunteer parties.

- \$44,531 for operational costs, including telephone, office space, supplies, travel, automobile expenses and consultants.

The committee records, required after the FEC allowed the Dallas Convention Fund to accept tax-deductible contributions, list lump sums in the various categories —

not individual expenditures.

Welcoming Committee officials previously have declined to give specifics, saying the information was confidential. Last month, city officials spelled out how it used the entire \$3.3 million received from the convention fund on "indirect" expenses.

Assistant City Manager James Fountain said last month that the city plans to audit the Welcoming

Committee accounts under terms of the contract it signed with the committee last year. That contract allows the city to review the group's spending within a year after the GOP convention.

Under that contract, the committee was to "perform designated services that the city would otherwise have to perform." That included publishing a media guide and playing host to diplomats, reporters and

other visitors.

City taxpayers will be charged about \$1.4 million in what Mayor Starke Taylor termed "indirect costs," such as new equipment purchases and dignitary protection. He said city officials — who at times promised that no tax revenue would be needed for the convention — failed to make clear that these costs would be picked up by Dallas.