

## CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

### MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 20, 2014  
**To:** Harbor Commission  
**From:** Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director  
**Subject:** **Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival**

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**RECOMMENDATION:** That Harbor Commission:

- A. Receive and review a report on the Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival; and
- B. Continue to maintain the Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival as a one-day special event.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival traces its history to an informal “Fishermen’s Festival” in the 1980’s and later to a “Harbor Festival” in the 1990’s. For various reasons, interest in the “old style” Harbor Festival waned over the years, organization degraded, and in 2000 the event ceased to exist.

In 2002, Waterfront staff began working with Harbor constituents, regulatory agencies (primarily Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services—“EHS”) along with City Fire and Police departments, to “reinvent” the Harbor Festival. The event date was switched from May to the October, taking advantage of milder weather, opening season for fisheries like lobster and ridgeback prawns, and broad availability of species like albacore and rock crab. Most important, a food component was added to the event. Food concessions (“Food Booths”) and a Fishermen’s Barbeque, which were not allowed during previous Festivals due to a perceived conflict with restaurant operators, were established with tenants’ buy-in and in compliance with EHS requirements.

The new configuration of the Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival (“Seafood Festival”) offers a variety of local, sustainable seafood, often donated and/or cooked by the fishermen who harvested it. The event has proven very popular, with 13,000-14,000 persons attending the one-day event, many from out of town.

At its November 2013 meeting, the Harbor Commission requested additional information on the event, including revenue & expenses, feedback from Harbor tenants, and an analysis of whether or not the event should be expanded to two days. The Carpinteria Avocado Festival and Goleta Lemon Festival are three-day events held during the same month, and occasionally the same weekend, as the Seafood Festival.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The Seafood Festival is the most labor-intensive public event the Department hosts, including the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks show, holiday Parade of Lights, Operation Clean Sweep, and Harbor Nautical Swap Meet / Hazmat collection day. Event coordination includes requesting use of the Santa Barbara City College La Playa parking lots during football season, requesting use of the Santa Barbara Yacht Club parking lot and closing most of the roadway and parking in the Harbor Commercial Area for two days to allow for event set up, break down and cleanup. Hundreds volunteer their time, including High School students, SBCC Culinary Arts students, commercial fishermen and Waterfront staff.

To compile this report, staff interviewed various Harbor Commercial area business owners to obtain their opinions on the Seafood Festival. Topics of discussion included:

- Does the Seafood Festival benefit your business on event day or disrupt it?
- Would you like to continue to hold the event?
- Do you believe the event is beneficial to the Harbor community and the community in general? and
- Would you like to see the event expanded to two consecutive days?

Staff consulted the following Harbor Commercial area businesses:

1. Blue Water Hunter
2. Breakwater Restaurant
3. Brophy & Sons
4. Chandlery
5. Chuck's Waterfront Grill
6. Fuel Dock
7. Harbor Market
8. Ocean Aire Electronics
9. Paddle Sports
10. Santa Barbara Fish Market
11. Santa Barbara Maritime Museum
12. Santa Barbara Sailing Center
13. Santa Barbara Yacht Club
14. SeaCoast Yacht Sales
15. Sushi Go Go
16. West Marine

Generally, the businesses responded that the Seafood Festival did not generate extra business on the day of the event or they simply closed, such as yacht brokers and Ocean Aire Electronics. Brophy Bros. Restaurant reported that the festival is a normal sales day for them, but that the sales through their new café "On The Alley" double on the day of the event. Breakwater Restaurant and Sushi Go Go reported that it is a normal sales day. The Santa Barbara Maritime Museum experienced increased

patronage during the Seafood Festival and Chuck's Waterfront Grill reported double sales compared to a typical Saturday in October.

All businesses believe the Seafood Festival benefits both the Harbor and the Santa Barbara community and that it should continue. One business owner that closes on the day of the event, even stated that if faced with the choice, he would rather keep the Seafood Festival and cancel the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks show.

All but two of the parties interviewed felt strongly that the festival should not be extended to two days, citing reasons such as;

- Do your best on a one day event rather than dilute it on two days;
- Possible interruption of fuel deliveries to the fuel dock;
- Impact on Yacht Club parking is not feasible; and
- Potential conflicts with SB City College parking (football season).

### Seafood Festival Expenses

Most Waterfront Department community events do not generate revenue, i.e. July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks, Parade of Lights, Operation Clean Sweep and the Harbor Nautical Swap Meet / Hazmat Collection Day. The Seafood Festival is basically a "break even event." Direct revenue from the 2013 festival was approximately \$17,187 with additional Parking revenue (compared to Saturdays before and after the festival) adding \$7,359 for a total of \$25,546. Expenses were \$20,506.

Seafood Festival Expenses 2013	
Jordano's	\$4,153.12
Albacore	\$4,350.00
Food service rentals	\$4,501.73
County EHS	\$1,940.00
MarBorg	\$1,766.60
Advertising	\$1,685.00
Miscellaneous	<u>\$2,109.55</u>
	<b>\$20,506.00</b>

### Other Considerations

- The Seafood Festival is made possible only through time donated by many volunteers: fishermen, students, and City staff. It is not feasible to muster these volunteers on two consecutive days.
- Contracting out festival-support services would be cost-prohibitive and very difficult to coordinate.

- A two-day event adds another level of regulation by Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services (“EHS”) in terms of fees, food storage requirements, etc. Events run by non-profits, such as the Wine Festival and others, are generally exempt from EHS fees and inspections. The City of Santa Barbara is not considered a non-profit organization by EHS and is subject to all fees and inspections.
- Rental fees for MarBorg and food service supply companies would double. Revenues probably would not cover that cost.
- There would be no lobster to sell. Timed for the first Saturday after the lobster season opener, the one-day festival exhausts the entire catch of participating fishermen. There would be no supply for the second day. **Note:** This should not be confused with the fishery’s sustainability. It’s merely a matter of available product. Lobster trappers would need several more days of fishing to supply a second festival day.
- There would be no crab to sell. All crab sold at the lobster festival is donated by 5-6 local fishermen who store their donations live in receivers for days, even weeks, preceding the event. This would be impossible to duplicate for a second festival day.

## CONCLUSION

Owing to reasons noted in this report, staff believes the Seafood Festival should continue as it is—a successful, one-day celebration of our harbor community and working waterfront. Extending it to two days would be infeasible and prohibitively costly to coordinate, and would present additional unavoidable impacts to tenants, harbor users and Waterfront staff.

Prepared by: Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director  
Mick Kronman, Harbor Operations Manager