



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: August 26, 2020
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Recreation Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Proposed Changes To Special Event Permitting Process

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a presentation and provide recommendations on the proposed changes to the permitting process for City-wide special events.

DISCUSSION:

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with an overview of the current permitting process for special events, and discuss proposed changes to standardize the permitting process citywide, improve the customer service experience for event organizers, and streamline internal processes to improve efficiencies across the City organization.

Each year, Santa Barbara hosts hundreds of commercial or non-profit sponsored public special events including: athletic; sporting; commercial; community and cultural events; parades; festivals and concerts; block parties; and first amendment events in City parks, beaches, and the public right of way. By their nature, special events require significant planning, review, and permitting from multiple City departments or other governmental agencies to insure proper use of City property and adequate planning for safe conduct of the activity and the general health and safety of the attendees and/or the general public.

The Parks and Recreation Department (Department) or Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD) determines whether a proposed event is defined as a special event if it includes or requires any the following:

- Use of City property (parks, beaches, City buildings, etc.)
- Road closures, use of public streets, transportation planning and/or extra parking
- Need for security and/or law enforcement
- Entry tickets or participant fees
- 75 or more attendees

Currently, the special event permitting process is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department for events that take place on or adjacent to City managed parks and beaches, and managed by the Santa Barbara Police Department for events that take place in the public right of way, such as streets, sidewalks, and neighborhoods. Knowledgeable City staff diligently work with event organizers to assist them throughout the process.

Due to the complex nature of most special events, including festivals, mass participation sports such as walks or runs, and spectator sports such as volleyball or soccer tournaments, event organizers can find the City process to be cumbersome and confusing. First time event organizers are often ill prepared for the myriad of terms and conditions, as well as health and safety regulations. Permitting special events can be complex, requiring extensive coordination, and numerous meetings with various City department liaisons and event organizers to review and process applications and to apply the appropriate rules, regulations and fees for each event. Further effort goes into collecting all required permits and compliance items associated with each event, including insurance certificates; temporary food, alcohol, and vending permits; right-of-way use permits; and trash, recycling and portable toilet contracts; all of which are necessary for the safety of all and the protection of the City.

Special Event Permitting Process Review and Revisions

In an effort to update and streamline the permitting process, the Department initiated the review and revisions to permit guidelines and rules. An inter-departmental team consisting of City Administrator's Office (Economic Development), City Attorney's Office, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Public Works (Downtown Parking and Transportation), and Police evaluated the current special event permitting process, and made the following recommendations:

Lead Department

To implement the recommendations, and provide consistency throughout the entire special event permitting process, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Special Events Coordinator will serve as the lead department and primary point of contact. The Special Events Coordinator will directly interface with event organizers, disseminate the on-line application through the various workflows for additional requirements, approvals, and comments, and issue the conditional and final special event permits.

Dedicated Special Event Webpage

A Citywide webpage dedicated to special events in the City of Santa Barbara SpecialEvents@SantaBarbaraCA.gov will replace the current pages hosted on the Parks and Recreation Department and Santa Barbara Police Department websites. This dedicated webpage will centralize information and provide simple and clear instructions to assist event organizers. Applicants will be able to submit an online permit application via the webpage, which will get logged into Accela, the City's applicant and work-order software system. Additionally, the website will serve as the primary interface with the public, and will include

citywide permit fees, contact information for other permitting agencies, such as Santa Barbara County Public Health Department or Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC), and contact information for vendors that provide special event equipment or services.

Online Application Submittal

The City currently uses Accela across several departments and divisions, including Community Development, Public Works, Fire, Creeks, and Environmental Services to enable the public to facilitate submittal and review of land development applications and the subsequent issuance of building permits and payment of fees by the applicant. Several cities, including the Cities of San Diego, Seattle, Fort Lauderdale, Indianapolis, and New York State are successfully using Accela to improve the special event permitting process and the interface with event organizers. The use of Accela to permit citywide special events will ensure consistency, efficiency, and accountability when processing applications, and event organizers will use the same application to initiate a permit for the following types of events:

New Event

A New Event submittal will trigger an e-mail inquiry to the Special Events Coordinator to check the ability to host the event based on the proposed dates, location and event complexity. This process will prevent the event organizer from spending unnecessary time completing the application process for a location where another event is already planned or could create a conflict with existing programs. Limitations regarding location availability could be due to an outdoor wedding or reception in an immediately adjacent area, use of Cabrillo Blvd. on Sunday when the Arts and Craft Show is operating, or other annual events and festivals which extend City resources that make permitting the event overly complex, or in some cases not feasible.

Returning Event

The process for a Returning Event enables the event organizer to view their previous permit(s) and make any adjustments in Accela for their current event prior to submitting. This process eliminates the need for the event organizer to fill out a fillable on-line application, print, sign, scan and send to the Special Events Coordinator to initiate the process. Examples of large scale returning events include the Santa Barbara County Triathlon, The Race Of Gentleman (TROG), and the Greek or French Festivals.

City Sponsored Event

A City sponsored event is one that is included in the Arts and Economic Vitality Program and involves interdepartmental work efforts to enhance economic vitality, strengthen commercial corridors, and promote tourism, arts and cultural activities. As a City-sponsored event, there may be a variety of financial and in-kind resources that are provided to the event organizer. Examples include Earth Day, Solstice, Independence Day, Fiesta, and the Christmas Parade.

First Amendment Event

A First Amendment Event is an event for the purpose of expression protected by the First Amendment. Although these events are exempt from some of the requirements in the special event permitting process, having the event organizer submit an application alerts City staff to the date, times, size, and scale, which then determines the required City resources to ensure the safety for the public and event participants.

The application process will be dynamic and either request additional information prior to proceeding, or notify the applicant that they may be required to secure additional permits based on the size and scale of their event.

Online Application and Permit Payment Processing

An added benefit of using Accela for special event permitting is it will enable different City departments to issue specialty permits, such as Parking Restriction Waivers from Public Works, Tent Permits from the Fire Department, or One-Day Vendor Licenses from the Finance Department, and then have them all paid for and issued when the final permit is issued. This eliminates the need for an event organizer to contact or visit different departments to procure these specialty permits.

MUNICIPAL CODE CHANGES:

As part of improving the special events permitting process, the Department will be coming back to the Parks and Recreation Commission with several Municipal Code recommendations and amendments that will clarify processes and avoid event organizer interpretation prior to taking them to Ordinance Committee and City Council for adoption.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Special event permitting fees collected through Accela will be reconciled and allocated to departments on a monthly basis. Existing City staff will be able to implement the majority of these recommendations. The development and implementation of the Special Event Permitting Process in Accela will cost approximately \$10,000. Additional Accela licenses (approximately \$3,000 per license) will be needed for departments who are not currently part of the land development process. The development and additional license costs will be allocated to participating departments based upon their involvement in the special events permitting process.

ATTACHMENT: Draft Special Event Guidelines

SUBMITTED BY: Rich Hanna, Recreation Manager

APPROVED BY: Jill Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director