

From: **"Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>**
To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**
Date: 7/9/2023 6:33:07 PM
Subject: Council Memo – Update on Council Motion 'Making It Easier to Host Outdoor Festivals and Events in Vancouver' – RTS 15308
Attachments: Council Memo - Update on Council Motion 'Making It Easier to Host Outdoor Festivals and Events in Vancouver' - RTS 15308.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Margaret Wittgens. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- This memo provides a further update on work underway to address the July 20, 2022 Council motion 'Making it Easier to Host Outdoor Festivals and Events in Vancouver'.
- Outdoor special events are an essential part of city life, and the City continually strives to enable them through permits, grants, and supportive policies.
- Over 150 event organizers were consulted in spring, spurring improvement projects that staff are actively working on. This work includes engagement with VPD on policing costs for special events as well as the establishment of a Special Event Advisory Task Force.
- Various other city initiatives and overlapping motions are underway that will support delivery of special events in Vancouver.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Margaret Wittgens at 604-673-8227 or margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

July 7, 2023

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Interim Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Andrea Law, General Manager, Development, Buildings & Licensing
Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services
Steve Jackson, Acting General Manager, Parks and Recreation

FROM: Margaret Wittgens
Deputy General Manager, Strategy and Planning, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Update on Council Motion 'Making It Easier to Host Outdoor Festivals and Events in Vancouver'

RTS #: 15308

This memo provides a further update on the work underway to address the July 20, 2022 Council motion 'Making it Easier to Host Outdoor Festivals and Events in Vancouver'.

Background

Special events are essential to supporting the city's diverse populations and quality of life. Free outdoor community celebrations, festivals and parades are opportunities for social activity, cultural experience, creative expression and engagement in public life, as well as contributors to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the city.

At the City of Vancouver, three departments issue permits for special events: Engineering Services (events on city property like streets, sidewalks, and public plazas), the Park Board (events within Parks), and Development, Building and Licensing (event licenses on private property). Arts, Culture and Community Services are also involved with events by providing grants and staff support for event programming. All four departments have established a staff working group that has identified ways to make hosting events easier for organizers, informed by external engagement. Several improvements are underway, and staff will report back to Council as this work progresses.

External Engagement and Improvements Underway

This spring staff engaged with external event stakeholders via a survey and focus groups reaching over 150 event organizers. The initial engagement results illustrate that there are three common themes of concern:

1. The permitting process is complex;
2. Costs are a barrier; and,
3. Enhanced communication is required.

Based on this engagement, staff have identified several ways to better support the event industry. Some of the initiatives identified and currently underway include:

- *Introduction of a low complexity permitting program.* This is a simplified permit for small events on City property that reduces the complexity of the application and provides qualifying events with insurance coverage.
- *Reducing silos to improve service.* Work is underway across the departments involved in enabling special events to create greater alignment and integration of customer facing processes such as applications, timelines, guidelines and technology.
- *Post pandemic liaison support.* The city provided the services of an event professional to aid those organizing events on City property with various aspects of their permit and event work, following the event 'hiatus' caused by the pandemic.
- *Reduction in application timelines for recurring events.* If an event is returning in the same or similar form as a previous iteration, the timelines for application submissions have been reduced.
- *Collaboration with the Vancouver Police Department to reduce costs.* City staff have engaged VPD to investigate opportunities for cost saving measures for event organisers.

Further detail on these themes and improvements underway are outlined in Appendix A.

Building on the engagement to date, staff are also forming a Special Event Advisory Task Force made up of key external event stakeholders. The taskforce will be in place by Q3 2023 and will enhance communication between staff and event organizers and inform ongoing improvements to special event permitting processes and related policies.

Other Event Initiatives

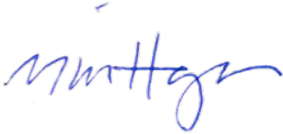
In addition to these improvements, several other initiatives are underway related to special events such as:

- A pilot to develop a framework for experiential marketing and private events;
- Capital investment to provide electrification for special event and other public realm uses; and,
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) early priority actions regarding special events.

More detail on these elements can be found in Appendix B.

The success of events and festivals are an important part of liveability and vibrancy in the community. Work is underway and will be ongoing throughout 2023 to make hosting these events and festivals easier in Vancouver. Staff will report back to Council in Q4 2023 or Q1 2024 with further updates on this work.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'mwittgens'.

Margaret Wittgens, MCIP, RPP
Deputy General Manager, Strategy and Planning, Engineering Services
604.673.8227 | margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca

Appendix A: Initial External Engagement Results and Improvements Underway

To identify the challenges that event organizers face in Vancouver, staff conducted consultation with external event stakeholders in the form of a survey and 6 focus groups. Through this consultation process, staff have identified the following key issues and potential solutions.

1. Key Issue: The Permitting Process is Complex

Respondents most shared that the event permitting process can be cumbersome and confusing, including challenges navigating the differences between the three permitting jurisdictions (Engineering, Park Board, and Development, Building and Licensing).

Improvements Underway

Low Complexity Event Permits

In response to feedback about the complexity of the event permit process, staff are making significant changes to simplify the process for low complexity outdoor events on city property that do not have elements requiring significant coordination or planning. Improvements include:

- A low barrier event application form
- Event permit issued within 2 weeks (10 business days)
- Little to no fees
- Insurance coverage provided by the City

These changes are expected to reduce the permitting and application requirements significantly for over 400 outdoor events. The first phase of this work will begin in Q2 2023 and will focus on the smallest low complexity events. Future phases will explore expansion to eligible outdoor locations such as Parks and private property.

Reducing Silos to Improve Service

External consultation has shown that having three jurisdictions of event permitting (ENG, Park Board, and DBL) can be challenging to navigate. Staff are working to streamline and improve the event application experience. Short term, staff are working on improving consistencies between applications, timelines, and public safety requirements. In future phases, consideration will be given towards greater unification of technology and overall consistencies and integration in permitting.

Post-pandemic Liaison Support

Following several years of event hiatus caused by the pandemic, staff heard feedback from community organizers about challenges in returning to events. Staff supplied added support in the form of access to an event planning professional to aid organizers with events on City property in the preparation of key event planning components. Staff are exploring the potential to provide ongoing support of this nature to non-professional event organizers.

Reduction in Processing Time for Recurring Events

Application timelines are in place to provide clarity to organizers and ensure time for stakeholder consultation, event safety planning and public communications. Engineering Services will

reduce permitting timelines for recurring events on City property as follows:

- High complexity: from 9 months to 6 months
- Medium complexity: from 5 months to 3 months
- Low complexity: from 8 weeks to 2 weeks

Review of the Special Event Policy

The Special Event Policy was approved by Council in Q4 2019 and established in Q1 2020 and outlines the terms and conditions for application of the FestShare program. Based on feedback received, Engineering Services is reviewing the policy and will bring forward potential amendments to the special event policy for Council consideration in Q1/Q2 2024.

2. Key Issue: Costs are a Barrier

Many respondents cited high or rising costs and expenses related to hosting events as a barrier, especially policing costs. The unpredictability of VPD costs, and the inconsistencies between invoices year over year for recurring events were cited as specific concerns.

Additional concerns were raised regarding regulatory costs. Specific references were made to building permits, engineering drawings and traffic management plans. City and Provincial legislation require many of these documents, and some organizers indicated they are cost prohibitive.

Through the City's FestShare program, there is subsidization of operational costs for eligible events on City property. This coverage does not currently extend to Park Board or private properties -- respondents suggested the coverage be increased and eligibility be expanded to include more spaces.

Improvements Underway

Vancouver Police Department (VPD) collaboration

City leadership has engaged with the VPD on rising cost issues experienced by event organizers, a longstanding issue that has remained a persistent topic over several years.

City and VPD leadership met in February 2023 to discuss drivers of increased police costs. City discussions with VPD suggest that there is no obvious solution to reduce costs and the pressures will continue to grow as events return and expand. Discussions continue with VPD to explore cost reduction opportunities, including the potential use of private security and third-party traffic control companies.

Tools and Templates

Work has been underway to create programming guides to make it easier for organizers to use public space. Plaza guides have been created for both *ᓃxʷᓗᓃᓃ Xwtl'e7énk* Square and 800 Robson (the most popular event destinations), and more location guides are forthcoming. Staff have also developed a host of traffic management plan (TMP) templates for street closures in popular event locations. These templates provide a starting point for event organizers to build upon and reduce resource requirements. Going forward, staff aim to provide comprehensive

event location templates that include all the basic event planning elements needed, including:

- Basic site map template
- TMP template
- Production schedule template
- Neighbourhood notification template

3. Key Issue: Enhanced Communication is Required

A common theme heard by staff during engagement was the desire for more frequent and timely communications throughout the permitting process. While some respondents shared positive comments about communication, others found communication lacking throughout the process. Respondents also indicated that more knowledge (processes, the various permitting groups and their requirements, past and recurring events, and a general understanding of events and their needs) is required so that staff can better support event organizers through the process.

Improvements Underway

Internal Alignment Opportunities

Staff are exploring ways to increase consistencies across departments. Opportunities include:

- Consolidated applications for Engineering, Park Board and DBL event permits and licenses
- Aligned timelines, procedures, and public safety requirements
- Consistent communication among all permitting jurisdictions

Appendix B: Other Event Initiatives

Experiential Marketing and Private Events (EMPE)

In response to the commercial event industry's desire to use city property, Engineering Services created the EMPE pilot program in 2019. An experiential marketing event is one in which brand engagement with consumers takes place in the public realm through creative or memorable event experiences. Private events enable organizers to restrict public space for private use.

All EMPE events are charged fees for the use of city property, thereby creating opportunities for potential long term revenue generation. The pilot is testing a framework for enabling experiential marketing and private events, balancing the various uses of the public realm. It was paused due to the pandemic and resumed in 2022/23. Staff plan to report back to Council on EMPE in late 2023 or early 2024.

Public Realm Electrification Program (PREP)

The provision of power at event sites can be logistically challenging and environmentally unfriendly. PREP is delivering a network of power connections for multiple uses in the public realm, with a focus on business uses such as for filming, special events, food trucks, shared electric micro mobility (including public bikeshare) and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. PREP advances the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) by facilitating the transition to renewable clean sources of energy, while also supporting the local economy. To date, more than 80 connections have been built to serve all these uses mentioned above. This includes three purpose-built power kiosks for events that are now live. More will roll out over the course of this capital plan.

UNDRIP Special Events early action

Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations have identified key UNDRIP early actions around special events, and lead departments within the City are now working to clarify the scope of work and engagement to invite the Nations to participate. It is anticipated that an engagement request to the Nations will be sent by Q3 2023.

The actions are described below:

Early Action 5

Develop process and requirements for:

- (1) event organizers to engage and partner with MST in permitted events/festivals;
- (2) City staff to engage and partner with MST in City-organized events; and
- (3) City staff to support and facilitate MST hosting their own events/festivals (e.g., in parks and other areas of significance)

Related City Work on Special Events

Beyond the work related to this motion, several other motions and event initiatives are also

currently in progress and staff continue to coordinate as needed:

Related Motions & Event Initiatives	Report Back Date
Amping up the Arts Event License Policy to Support Arts & Culture in Vancouver	Q3 2023
A Regulatory Framework to Enable Innovative Urban Activation Projects	Q2 2023
Hospitality Vancouver/Night Economy survey (External Response)	Q2/3 2023
Noise Control By-law Review – Phase One	Q4 2023
Granville Street Planning Program	Q3 2024