



**COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Date:** December 14, 2016

**Agenda Item #:** 3

**Agenda Item:** Briefing, discussion, and possible action regarding the Parkland Events Task Force final report.

**Vote 3-0** to support the Task Force's report and send it to Council for formal action on Vice Chair Garza's motion and Mayor Pro Tem Tovo's second. Council Member Zimmerman was absent.

**Sponsors/Department:** Parks and Recreation Department

**Presenters:** Jason Maurer, Sales and Events Manager, Parks and Recreation Department; David King and James Russell, Co-chairs of the Parkland Events Task Force.

**Summary of Discussion**

- Jason Maurer, Sales and Events Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, gave some background on the item. The Parkland Events Task Force (PETF) was created by Council resolution in March 2015. Led by Mr. King and Mr. Russell, the Task Force held 20 meetings from August 2015 to September 2016. All meetings were open to the public and included opportunities for public comment.
- The resolution requested that the Task Force inventory current events at city parks, review existing policy, analyze fees vs. cost for the park facilities, conduct an impact assessment, identify potential new venues to host events, develop recommendations to ensure fees are sufficient for park costs, consider policy changes for special event fees, and to consider whether there should be limits on the amount of events at parks.
- Public input was gathered via email, SpeakUp Austin forums, a text survey, a targeted business survey, a public website, and in-person comments during various PETF-sponsored meetings.
- The report includes 17 pages of line item recommendations in nine categories. The categories are applications and permits, planning and coordination, environment, fees, limits on events on parkland, alternative venues, impacts, fee waivers and co-sponsored events, items recommended for inclusion in the citywide special events ordinance, and other actions and work products.

- David King and James Russell, co-chairs, went into detail regarding the recommendations for each of the nine categories. For the applications and permits category, the Task Force proposed to establish criteria for approving events and use an event evaluation matrix to score each event. This matrix would include an evaluation of park use and timing, economy and tourism, community impact, quality of life impact, green initiatives, and transportation. The Task Force also recommended the adoption of an ordinance that would require a majority vote by Council to override staff approval/denial of event applications.
- For the planning and coordination category, the Task Force proposed to establish a standing committee to review and plan events at the Long Center, Palmer Events Center and Auditorium/Vic Mathias Shores.
- For the environment category, the Task Force recommended and enhancement to staffing and resources to enforce the protection of parkland trees, vegetation, and environmentally-sensitive areas; the creation of a citywide Green Event Planning Manual; and the creation of a mandatory education program for organizers and contractors prior to the issuance of a permit.
- For the limits on events on parkland category, the Task Force recommended that events at Auditorium Shores, Zilker, and Festival Beach parks to be reduced through attrition and incentives. Mayor Pro Tem Tovo asked whether the Task Force had considered term limits for events or other possible ways to make sure that events not currently on the schedule will have a chance to be held at high-use parks. Mr. Russell responded that this topic engendered a lot of discussion about predictability for event planners, so no firm consensus was established on this matter. He emphasized that the creation of alternative venues could help alleviate demand for high-use parks.
- For the alternative venues category, the Task Force recommended that the following parks be evaluated as potential new event venues: Bolm Road District Park, John Trevino Jr. Metropolitan Park, Onion Creek Metropolitan Park, and Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park. Mr. Russell emphasized that affected neighborhoods should have a formal role in the Master Planning process for events at nearby parks.
- For the event impacts category, the Task Force recommended the following impact reduction/mitigation measures: establish impact zones, special event permit parking, increased fines for parking and traffic violations, increased towing, increased traffic management center staffing, flagger teams, pedicab traffic flow zones, streamline set up and tear down, and enhanced sound requirements and monitoring.
- Mayor Pro Tem Tovo asked whether the city would need permission from the Chief of Police to hire flaggers at barricades. Mr. Russell clarified that the flaggers would not be serving as security, but would only be employed to keep traffic moving and answer questions. Bill Manno, Corporate Special Events Manager, responded that the issue of who can be at a barricade is not addressed in the ordinance in question—it only states that Peace Officers that direct traffic must be commissioned by the City of Austin or approved by the Chief of Police. There is state law that specifies that only Peace Officers can allow a vehicle to disregard a traffic control device. The Legal Department has looked into the

issue for APD, and they returned with an unfavorable recommendation. This issue would need to be looked into further.

- For the economic impact/fee study category, the Task Force recommends that the City should conduct a comprehensive financial analysis of the fees for events to ensure they are sufficient to cover all of the City's costs associated with events.
- Mayor Pro Tem Tovo asked when the Special Events Ordinance is expected to come forward. Bill Manno responded that the ordinance is 99% complete and that his staff is preparing an RCA for the April 13<sup>th</sup> Council agenda. He stated that it could be moved to February if necessary.

### **Speakers**

Ingrid Weigand  
Jeff Smith

### **Direction**

None.

### **Recommendation**

Vote 3-0 to support the Task Force's report and send it to Council for formal action.