



**Special Events Task Force
MAY 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Permitting and Development Center – First Floor, Room 1401

2: 00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Taskforce Members in Attendance: Jeff Smith, Mandi Thomas, Laurel White, Ingrid Weigand, Frances Thompson, Dan Carroll, Cindy Lo

Staff in Attendance: Sara Henry (ACE), Mike Jones (APD), Quentin Prior (AFD), Bill Manno (ACE), Brydan Summers (ACE), Brian Block (DSD), Frances Hargrove (ATD), Jason Maurer (PAR), Kevin Parker (EMS), Quentin Prior (AFD), Iby Setzer (ARR), Tara Long (DSD), Robert Alvarado (Code)

Task Force Members Joining Virtually: James Russell, Shelley Phillips

CALL TO ORDER: Co-Chair Smith called the task force to order at 2:02 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: No public communication

1. APPROVAL OF APRIL MINUTES: The task force unanimously approved the meeting minutes for April 2022.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Public Safety Staffing

The Task Force unanimously approved two recommendations to be sent to City Council related to public safety department staffing at special events. The adopted recommendation language is:

- 1) Authorize the Austin Police Department to enter agreements, such as what was authorized by City Council in [Item #56 on their February 17, 2022 Meeting– File#22-1375](#) annually, as needed, in perpetuity.
- 2) Encourage City Council to remove any barriers in the contract with the Austin Fire Department to enter into third-party agreements to help supplement their work.

B. City Staffing, Non-Public Safety

The Task Force discussed their desire for the City to hire more staff to ensure quick processing of special event permit applications and staffing on-site, as well as the desire to have an expedited permitting option. The Task Force discussed creating a recommendation to send to Council soon, as there are budget considerations and we are entering budget season. Co-chair Russell committed to drafting recommendation language for consideration in the June meeting.

C. Special Event Reporting

The Task force discussed the need for reporting, including all data fields identified in the Subcommittee on Reporting's proposed recommendation document. In particular, the need to provide reporting for Tier 3 and Tier 4 events and make that publicly available. Brydan Summers advised there are staff concerns around being able to respond to the inclusion of reporting in the Special Events Ordinance, and



that though this is a project staff intend to work on, though it is not a high priority. The Task Force discussed putting language in the ordinance that guides staff and includes some specific details, but allows for more time for implementation. The Task Force passed a unanimous motion to direct staff to return with language in the June meeting that addresses the following criteria:

1. Language should be to amend the Special Events Ordinance
2. This is only required for Tier 3 and Tier 4 events
3. Allow three years for staff to implement
4. Reporting must be publicly available
5. It must include information requested on the Subcommittee's Potential Recommendation document.

This item will be placed on the June agenda for further discussion and potential action.

C. Special Event Date Conflicts

The Task Force reviewed Section 4-20-36, in conjunction with the definition for 'Legacy Events' under 4-20-1 (8). Member Carroll suggested that the existing ordinance language in 4-20-32 (C) is vague, and that in reality certain Legacy Events will continue to be permitted on their traditional dates. Member Carroll asked if there is a form where City staff tracks requests for dates from Legacy Events on a five-year rolling basis. Frances Hargrove (ATD) replied there is not at this time, and that staff began this process before the pandemic, but it is not in place now. However, staff should be working on calendar available for this purpose.

Member Carroll summarized that he is fine with events being allowed to request dates five years out, and he is comfortable with City staff managing that calendar. The Task Force should provide guidance to staff on how to resolve conflicts that arise, and it should not be who first submits that gets the date, but the event trying to do the same event around the same time each year.

The Task Force passed a unanimous recommendation to amend Section 4-20-32 (C) to:

Except as otherwise provided, when multiple Tier 3 and Tier 4 events are requested for the same day and location, ACE will prioritize applications based on the number of years a special event has been conducted in the City. When two or more special events have been conducted for the same number of years, ~~applications will be reviewed on a first come, first serve basis.~~ the event that is requesting its traditional date will have first priority on that date.

C. Sound

Brian Block (DSD) reported that Code allows for amplified sound until 11pm on Thursdays, and since June of 2019 through May 12th, 2022, there were 18 permits, or 6% of all permitted events with amplified sound. None of those 18 events were permitted to have sound later than 10pm.

The Task Force discussed the appropriateness of Thursday being allowed to have different hours than other weekdays. It was confirmed that events in parks would not have amplified sounder after 10pm



regardless. Member Weigand motioned that Sunday should have the same allowable hours for amplified sound as Monday – Wednesday. Co-Chair Smith seconded the motion, the motion failed on a 2-7 vote with Co-Chair Smith and Member Weigand voting in the affirmative.

C. Update from Event Organizers Currently Planning Events

Member Lo said more clients are looking to have events but there are staffing concerns in the industry. Member White said they are seeing lots of applicants that are not familiar with the process, and the City is probably seeing that too.

C. Determine Media Policy for the SETF

The Task Force discussed how media inquiries should be responded to so that the work of the Task Force, and opinions of its members, are properly conveyed. The Task Force agreed its important to have a single point of contact, a backup, and to make City staff aware of media requests in case coordination is needed.

The Task Force unanimously agreed that James Russel will be the main point of contact and Ingrid Weigand would be the back up for all media inquiries.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Special Event Performance During Spring Festival Season

Members Lo and White discussed their experience with the permitting process during Spring Festival Season. The Task Force asked for input from the present community members that work for South by Southwest (SXSW). The response from SXSW was that the extension of the application deadline was very helpful to their applicants. They felt things operated very similarly to past years, which was positive. Member Lo asked which department provided approval for drone display permits. These are approved through APD, who are evaluating their review criteria for future years. Staff were asked about the quality of the applications and how it went from the City perspective. Frances Hargrove said it was pretty much the same as it has always been, but the biggest issues we face from a transportation perspective is building construction and planning around it. There were no specific concerns from a sound perspective, citizens are somewhat more permissive during Spring Festival Season. Police and EMS reported there were no major changes because of the Special Events Ordinance. Working with Code 4, who provided private sector assistance to APD, was overall seamless but anytime there is an outside agency there is potential for disorganization. Code 4 did help with staffing, as did DPS troopers because staffing was short in some areas. AFD reported that things went well, but they had some issues with applicants needing site plan changes.

This item will continue to stay on the agenda so additional ideas for improving the Special Events Ordinance can be considered.

B. Notification Requirements – Approval Under Section 14-8-28 E



Member Carroll brought forth an issue about how street closures require notifying the public. If your event is more than 10 years old it has been accepted by the community, you no longer need to seek approval; however, you must still notify them it's happening. Most notifications are done through a postcard that is approved by ATD. Events that are younger than 10 years, or have substantially changed the streets they are closing, must seek approval through a 'notification of a proposed closure'. This is a special form from the City, where the applicant provides additional information and its sent to nearby residents letting them know of the proposal and the approval process. If 20% or more of residents on a closure disapprove then the event cannot move forward or must go to the Urban Transportation Committee, which will provide a recommendation, and then a final decision is made by City Council. Also, neighborhood associations have veto power. The two issues for discussion are:

- 1) Is 10 years too long to be considered a new event? Notifications and reviews are expensive
- 2) For events that have taken place for over five years, you are giving the public a false sense of power in the process to protest. As it is unlikely that an event that has taken place that long, without other issues, would be denied by ACE or City Council if it is protested.

Member Carroll noted that in 2022 they mailed out around 9,000 letters, three pieces of paper to each address. They received 5 disapprovals total and 2 removed their disapproval after a phone discussion to address their concerns. This left a .03% disapproval which is far below the 20% that would be required to stop the event. There is a concern that neighborhood associations will no longer have their veto power between 5-10 years. Frances Hargrove said most of the large running events are over 10 years old and it is difficult to find a new 5k or 10k route through the City right now. Approval for a new route has not been done since the pandemic, but was done a few times before. She also mentioned that in 4-20-33 (C) organizers have 10 days to send in their notification after preliminary approval, but for Tier 3 and 4 events that could be over a year out from their event, making it a difficult turnaround time to adhere to.

A motion was made by Co-Chair Smith to amend Section 14-8-28 (E) to:

A special event that has been held for ~~10~~ 5 or more years and has not received a violation or changed its character, nature, location, or route shall be approved under Subsection (A).

Member Carroll seconded, the Task Force unanimously approved the motion.

Member Carroll suggested the Task Force should also try and fix the notification requirement brought up by City staff and motioned to amend 4-20-33 (C) to:

In addition to the notice required under Subsection (A), an event organizer shall provide notice to interested persons and neighborhood associations ~~within 10 calendar days after ACE issues a preliminary recommendation if a special event:~~ no later than 120 days prior to the event start date if a special event:

- (1) is a Tier 3 or 4 special event; and
- (2) requires a closure permit under Chapter 14-8 (Temporary Closure for Special Events and Block Parties).

Member Lo seconded, the Task Force unanimously approved the motion.



AUSTIN CENTER
FOR EVENTS

Special Events Task Force
Permitting and Development Center
6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive Austin, Texas 78752

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Temp road closures, including block parties
- Waste Planning and Emissions
- Sale of Goods
- Special Event Performance During Spring Festival Season

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m. on unanimous consent after earlier unanimous consent to extend the meeting an additional 10 minutes.

Future Meetings:

The next meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Permitting and Development Center, Room 1406.

For questions contact Brydan Summers at brydan.summers@austintexas.gov.