

# **Special Events Task Force**

## **Final Report**

Government Performance and Finance Committee

November 7, 2007

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This report contains the work and recommendations of the Special Events Task Force, created by the Community and Economic Development Department to solicit community and stakeholder input to improve special event services in the City of Tacoma. Within this report you'll find the following information:

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## **About the Special Events Task Force**

In March of 2007, The City of Tacoma offered a proposal to transfer event permitting processes to Metro Parks Tacoma, along with the creation of a special events office to offer event support. Several community members appeared at two public meetings during this time regarding the proposal and voiced concerns and opposition. As a result, an additional community meeting was held on April 12, 2007, to create clarity about the proposal and further address the community feedback.

During that April session, several of the community members advocated for the formation of a Special Events Task Force to gather a much better community perspective on how special events services should be shaped in Tacoma. The task force was brought together by the Community and Economic Development Department, and those who participated in the overall process include members of a broad base of events in Tacoma:

- Gary Whisler, Central Neighborhood Council
- Alan Silverman, Festivals, Inc.
- Charles White, Cross District Association
- Jennifer Johnson, Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Su Dowie, Foss Waterway Development Authority
- Clare Petrich, Maritime Fest and Tall Ships
- Joanne Buselmeier, Chamber of Commerce
- Patricia Lecy-Davis, Downtown Merchants and the Glass Roots Festival
- Steph Farber, First Night

This group met five times since July 26, and the recommendations that have come from these gatherings have been vetted with the task force's constituents, including event producers, volunteers and supporters, neighborhood councils and business districts. These recommendations have also been shared with those who attended the first two public meetings regarding the original proposal.

# Special Events Task Force Recommendations

## Core Recommendations

- Create a staff position within the City of Tacoma that will coordinate special events services and initiate partnerships or interlocal agreements with (or include staff from) organizations like Tacoma Police, Fire, Public Works, Metro Parks Tacoma, the Foss Waterway Development Authority and so on to streamline event permitting needs.
- These special events services should also include a one-stop-shop to support events.
- Ensure that a person who provides special events services is qualified, has a love of the event culture, and wants to work to make them happen.
- Update the City's Municipal Code in a way that better serves the needs of special events in Tacoma and simplifies the event permitting process, but neither hampers the events, nor impacts public safety.
- Create a recital clause in the City's Municipal Code that will help future Council Members remain committed to the growth and development of special events.
- Create a new sliding fee schedule for special events that does not discourage special events from taking place.
- Consider purchasing municipal software with user-friendly software to streamline event permitting services and post on the City's Web site.

## **Recital Clause**

Whereas

- The City of Tacoma is rich with and supports special events that celebrate culture and community.
- The City of Tacoma recognizes the vibrancy, diversity, livability and economic vitality that special events in Tacoma bring to our city.
- The City of Tacoma encourages an increase in the number and quality of special events in Tacoma.

## **Special Events Services Mission, Vision, Functions and Responsibilities**

**Vision:** Special Events Services foster and celebrate the vibrancy, livability and economic sustainability that special events provide in the Tacoma region.

**Mission:** Special Events Services in Tacoma shall facilitate the growth and development of an event-friendly environment for new and existing community-wide special events. These services celebrate the culture and heritage of the City of Tacoma, and make special events and expressive activities an important part of tourism and community life.

### **Functions and Responsibilities:**

- Manage the event permitting process for the City of Tacoma and act as City “permitting official” for all events in the City of Tacoma and assure compliance with TMC 11.15, Special Events Permitting Code.
- Coordinate Special Events Committee (SEC) to review permit applications and coordinate city staff approval and city services support related to special events including street occupancy, pole and banner permits, public safety, etc.
- Provide administrative support to the Special Event Committee.
- Work with City departments and the special event community to develop a “one stop” permitting process.
- Develop a comprehensive application form that will provide all of the information needed for event producers and the city.
- Develop a website that will include an on-line application.
- Develop a special events manual with detailed information on all aspects of event permit requirements, resources, and information on producing special events.
- Advocate for events, working with City and County departments to make it possible to permit as many events as possible, while assuring the applicable codes are followed and public safety is assured.
- Provide event nurturing advice to newer event producers through coaching or an annual workshop.
- Explore the option of creating volunteer pools.
- Benchmark best special events practices with other municipalities.

- Work with Metro Parks Tacoma and other jurisdictions to create and coordinate a system for reserving City and Park event venues.
- Develop ongoing liaison with the Metropolitan Park District to ensure effective coordination and collaboration on event permitting.
- Seek opportunities to leverage the City of Tacoma's regional and national assets to attract new and existing special events.
- Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce, Metropolitan Park District, Public Assembly Facilities and other agencies to maintain a master events calendar that can be used by the public and the special events community in selecting and analyzing dates for events.
- Meet and confer with event producers and prospective event producers to provide assistance in determining operational requirements and fulfilling City regulations.
- Function as a liaison between the City and special event producers.
- Explore the option of creating event evaluation criteria and methodology for during and after the function.
- Provide oversight for agreements with vendors receiving City funds to assure compliance with terms of agreements and permits.
- Develop criteria for City of Tacoma event funding.
- Receive, review, and investigate citizen complaints relative to special events, prepare recommendations for the correction of deficiencies as required; respond in coordination with other City departments and facilities to complainants both orally and in written communications.
- Monitor event activity for compliance with terms of event permit.
- Periodically review and recommend updates, as needed, the City Code as it relates to special events.
- Engage the business community to embrace, support and partner with special events.

## Fee Schedule

Total attendance, including participants and audience	Rate for event duration of one to four days
50 to 250	\$25
250 to 1,000	\$50
1,001 to 5,000	\$150
5,001 to 10,000	\$250
10,001 to 20,000	\$500
20,001 or more	\$1,000

Special event permit applications that are not received 60 days in advance of the first day of the event will pay an additional late fee set at 50 percent of the permit fee.

A plan to educate the events community about the late fee should be coordinated one year before its actual implementation.

Special events services must be in place for the late fee to be a part of the overall fee schedule.

## **Municipal software**

Various software solutions for event permitting were explored. Two software applications reviewed were Municipal Software Corporation's CityView Application Builder and PermitSoft Inc.'s PermitCity. More information can be found in Appendix A.

# Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Initial Task Force assessment)

## Strengths/Opportunities

### Quality of Life

- Community surveys show positive response to events
- Tacoma community wants and needs community celebrations. Events serve as public relations tools for the City
- Events and festivals are economic drivers
- Community celebrations enhance the quality of life for Tacoma residents
- Festivals build and celebrate a community helping to make a stronger and more livable place to be

### Ease of Utilization

- City staff and officials want our public events and festivals to flourish
- I'm excited about streamlining the process and receiving permits earlier
- Would be great to have a process that is accessible, paperless and virtual
- They could create a checklist of services
- Having a checklist of "what needs to take place," for each kind of event, and then be able see city/parks costs for each item so planners can build better events
- Perhaps the potential special events office could be a clearing house for everything that needs to happen with permitting and events
- Elect-in, elect-out for the services offered – pay for the use
- The creation of an events office is a priority!
- Provide consistent and fair messaging to event producers and applicants
- Parks, working as a clearing house for events in the community, could do that job utilizing the expertise parks has and the city lacks
- Need for a standardized event calendar for City of Tacoma (online that can be a one stop location for visitors to view events as well as event sponsors to apply for permits, get questions answered, find map of events and venues and listed utilities, parking, etc.)
- Have multiple permit processes/applications e.g., City, Metro Parks and Foss – need to be streamlined

### Supportive Services

- Marketing person on staff would provide technical assistance as a service
- Volunteer coordination could come from the office of special events
- There should be a comprehensive insurance policy for all events
- Ability to leverage resources

- It's important that organizers realize all entities involved in producing special events
- Nurturing local and regional events
- Expertise that would benefit events and festivals large and small

## **Weaknesses/Threats**

### Quality of Life

- Transportations and parking – need to develop a standard plan that would pertain to each event, venue based on anticipated attendance levels to not negatively impact surrounding community
- If Tacoma becomes too expensive, the creative class will move out

### Ease of Utilization

- Have to go to too many places to get permits
- Absolutely no consistency in what costs were charged and what services were offered
- Different answers from different departments
- Struggle to make right connections – bewildering maze in trying to work with the City of Tacoma
- There is no mechanism in the city or expertise in the city staff to make a supportive system work
- Inconsistent event screening and approval process
- If you have too many hoops to jump through, it stifles initiative
- Nothing to assure that the City gets its money's worth from its investments in events, or processes for accountability
- Multiple entities addressing similar issues
- Not knowing all the kinds of permits, fees and requirements to have an event
- Perceptions that Metro Parks hasn't been neighborhood friendly
- Business districts have had issues dealing with Metro Parks
- Suitable utilities are not available at all events locations

### Supportive Services

- A marketing committee doesn't make sense because the events are all individual brands and it should be left to the free market
- Need an insurance umbrella for events in the city
- Entitlement from promoters/event managers (the "we've always done it that way..." syndrome)
- Taxes won't cover the costs of the departments

## **Policy Questions**

### **Noise**

The City often receives noise complaints from the community regarding events, and our municipal code doesn't adequately address this issue.

Example: An event occurs in a business district that's surrounded by a residential area where musicians are performing at any volume throughout the day and night.

How would you propose that we enforce event noise within our municipal code?

Also, if time restrictions were enacted relating to event noise, should events that include religious rites, holiday tradition or national importance receive a relaxed time limit? If so, please provide examples of such events (Like New Years Eve and the Fourth of July).

### **Block Parties**

Block parties occur frequently in the City of Tacoma, but they're not adequately defined in the City's municipal code. How would you define a block party?

Block parties usually require blocking a street with barricades, which is of concern to the City because we need to ensure that emergency vehicles can pass through the area. Would it be reasonable to include in the City's municipal code that a block party should include the blockage of only one, non-arterial block with no intersections affected?

If a commercial business wants to hold a company party as a block party, should the neighborhood residents be notified ahead of time, and should the neighborhood take precedence over the company for use of the block for their own event?

### **Cross-Jurisdictional Concerns**

How could event organizers best be taken care of when it comes to cross-jurisdictional permits?

Example: Event producers that need to go through both City and Metro Parks permit processes, and they're unaware that they also need a Health Department permit.

### **Waterway Events**

Events that include waterways or shorelines are not currently considered a part of the City's municipal code. How should the City address waterway events as a part of its municipal code?

### **Enforcement**

What kinds of event violations should the Tacoma Police Department (or others) enforce and how?

The City often receives noise complaints from run and walk events that occur before 7 a.m. Should the city define run and walk events in the municipal code? Should the police department be able to enforce noise issues related to them? If so, how?

Currently the City Clerk is the only authority who can revoke an event permit after it's been approved. Should authority be extended to police, fire department or other officials as designated by the City Manager?

# Meeting Recaps

## July 26, 2007

The City of Tacoma's Community and Economic Development Department recently convened a first meeting among those who were recommended to serve on a Special Events Task Force.

This task force includes the following individuals:

- Gary Whisler, Central Neighborhood Council
- Michael Shields, Sound to Narrows and other events
- Alan Silverman, Festivals, Inc.
- John Trueman, Cross District Association
- Charles White, alternate for the Cross District Association
- Ruthie Reinert, Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Su Dowie, Foss Waterway Development Authority
- Clare Petrich, Maritime Fest
- Julie Coggins, alternate for Maritime Fest
- Joanne Buselmeier, Chamber of Commerce
- Patricia Lecy-Davis, Downtown Merchants and the Glass Roots Festival
- Steph Farber, First Night

City of Tacoma support staff for the task force includes the following individuals:

- Martha Anderson, Community and Economic Development Department
- Kala Dralle, Community and Economic Development Department
- Roxanne Murphy, Community Relations
- Scott Nagel, Consultant
- Judae Bostian, Consultant

The creation of the task force was specifically requested by several community members as a way to represent and engage the event community while the City looks at its policies relating to special events in Tacoma, and the potential of creating a special events office in Tacoma.

In this first gathering on July 26, 2007, task force members discussed their role thus far, which includes:

- Representing the broad event planning community.
- Including as much of Tacoma as possible in bringing information and feedback in from the event planning community.
- Establishing timelines for the collection of feedback.
- Assessing [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats](#) regarding event permitting in Tacoma and circulating a compilation of the task force's assessment to the community for feedback.

Martha Anderson, Community and Economic Development discussed background information on event permitting in Tacoma, including:

The fact that the City's former Culture and Tourism Division that provided a modest level of event support had been eliminated during budget cuts.

- Research the City conducted which compared other cities' models for events.
- The City Manager's request to consider collaboration with Metro Parks on the creation of a special events office.
- The City's current role with events, including the regulatory code, compliance, permit processing and approvals with multiple City departments, rights-of-way use, traffic and other services like police and fire.

The committee then focused on City of Tacoma fees for special events and the City Council's request to examine how to better offset the City's administrative costs related to event permitting.

Several models were discussed, including flat fees, fees based on attendance, non-profit/for profit, event complexity, and percent of admission costs.

The task force concluding that the following scale by attendance would be most reasonable for event planners and help offset the City's administrative costs:

Total attendance, including participants and audience	Rate for event duration of one to four days
50 to 250	\$25
250 to 1,000	\$50
1,001 to 5,000	\$150
5,001 to 10,000	\$250
10,001 or more	\$500

This fee schedule could also include a biennial cost-of-living adjustment.

Discussion of what a potential specials events office could be responsible for, which would help event planners, included developing a menu of costs for all event services (along with permitting fees) and a one-stop-shop for permits relating to City of Tacoma and Metro Parks properties.

The potential creation of a special events office and its responsibilities will be a direct point of discussion that was planned for feedback in future meetings.

The meeting concluded with task force participants agreeing to solicit feedback from their constituents on the [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats](#) and the proposed fee structure.

The task force will also be reviewing specific City of Tacoma Special Events code relating to events that needs to be updated with the event planning community's input.

The next meeting will take place on Aug. 23 so that input related the proposed fee structure will be ready in time for presentation to the City of Tacoma's Government, Performance and Finance Committee currently scheduled for Sept. 12.

For more information, or to provide feedback, please contact Roxanne Murphy at [roxanne.murphy@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:roxanne.murphy@cityoftacoma.org) or (253) 591-2054.

### **August 23, 2007**

On Aug. 23, the Special Events Task Force met for their second gathering to review input the committee members have gathered from their constituents relating to a proposed fee structure and the [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats](#) document.

The feedback that was provided included the following:

- Consider fee free zones for key locations that the City is trying to ignite.
- Create a one-stop shop for events and permitting in Tacoma.
- Add and define water-based events to the City municipal code.
- Overcome multi-jurisdictional complications that come with acquiring event permits.
- Offer an event consultation process.
- Create a master list of events to market them and prevent overlaps.

The task force then went on to review and begin to understand several policy considerations relating to event ordinances in the City, or a lack thereof. The issues presented included noise complaints from events, how to define and handle block party events, overcoming cross-jurisdictional permitting concerns, permitting waterfront events, and overall event enforcement.

Following the session, the committee was sent a list of [policy questions](#), examples of the issues, and any existing ordinances associated with the issues so the task force could make recommendations on how to address the concerns, and send the questions to their constituents for feedback.

During the Sept. 27 Special Events Task Force meeting, the group will review the recommendations on these policy questions, and, time permitting, proceed with advocating for a vision and the work that they'd like to see a potential special events office in Tacoma conduct.

The committee expressed that they'd like the proposed fee structure to be viewed by the City's Government Performance and Finance Committee as preliminary and not final. The task force would first like to advocate for the vision and the scope of work for a potential special events office and then revisit the fee structure to see if it still fits after the visioning.

## **September 27, 2007**

On Sept. 27, the Special Events Task Force convened to discuss and reach consensus on how to revise the City's municipal code relating to special events in Tacoma.

Assistant City Attorney Steve Gross and City staff gathered advice and opinions on municipal code changes relating to noise, block parties, cross-jurisdictional concerns, waterway events and enforcement.

Several recommendations arose from this session, and below are the major highlights:

- The task force would like the City to pursue inter-local agreements with entities like Metro Parks and the Foss Waterway Development Authority to give the City the authority on permitting events in coordination with these organizations. The goal of this move is to streamline the event permitting process so event producers won't have to go to multiple organizations within the city for approval of their functions.
- The task force strongly advocated for special events services in Tacoma and began detailing what they'd like to see out of these types of services in our city.
- The task force also requested that the City Council approve a statement that recognizes the value of special events in Tacoma. They feel this would help future Council Members remain committed to the growth and development of special events. This will be written and included as a recital clause in the final ordinance for the City Council to consider.

One task force member also advocated for the use of municipal software that the City could choose to invest in to automate the permitting process. This will be included among the final recommendations of the task force.

Another task force member presented information from other jurisdictions like New York City on how they manage municipal codes relating to noise. This information was handed to Steve Gross to consider as he drafts changes to Tacoma's code.

In the Oct. 25 gathering of the task force, City staff will present a draft of the revised municipal code changes to double check that they reflect the wishes of the group.

During the Oct. 11 session, task force members will review drafts of a vision, mission and functions and responsibilities of special events services in Tacoma.

## **October 11, 2007**

The Special Events Task Force gathered on Oct. 11 and reviewed a draft of a mission, vision and functions and responsibilities for special events services in Tacoma.

This draft, presented by City staff, was created based on the advocacy that the task force has provided over the course of their meetings.

The task force responded favorably to the document overall, and provided edits and feedback to it.

Those pieces of input were implemented and the document will go out to the task force's constituents for feedback. The document will also be sent to those who have expressed an interest in event permitting since this first issue arose.

In the Oct. 25 gathering, the Special Events Task Force will review the feedback that they've received on the mission, vision, functions and responsibilities.

They'll also review a draft of a final report, presented by City staff, detailing all of the recommendations from the task force.

Lastly, they'll once again review a proposed fee schedule for special events to make sure it syncs with the vision and mission that they're created.

Via e-mail correspondence, the Special Events Task Force will have an opportunity to review a draft of the municipal code changes relating to special events, which the group provided their recommendations on.

The Special Events Task Force final report will likely be presented to the Government Performance and Finance Committee on Nov. 7 at 4:30 p.m., in Tacoma Municipal Building Room 248.

The municipal code changes will come before this same committee, and then onto the full City Council at a later date yet to be determined.

### **October 25, 2007**

The task force came together one last time to review feedback that they had received regarding special events services mission, vision, functions and responsibilities.

Su Dowie reported that several of her constituents favored the overall approach, and greeted the plan with applause.

The task force also reviewed input that was provided to the City by one community member who echoed the positive feedback regarding the overall special events services approach.

One task force member wanted to ensure that the special events community is able to express their views on the proposal in their own way. As such, the task force will receive correspondence from the City to pass onto constituents regarding attending the upcoming Government Performance and Finance Committee as a visual showing of support, and how the events community can contact City Council Members to express their personal views.

The task force went on to review a draft of their final report that will likely be presented to the Government Performance and Finance Committee on Nov. 7.

The task force members deliberated and provided feedback on sections including the core recommendations, recital clause, mission, vision, functions and responsibilities, and especially the fee schedule. Following the discussion, consensus on all of the above was reached.

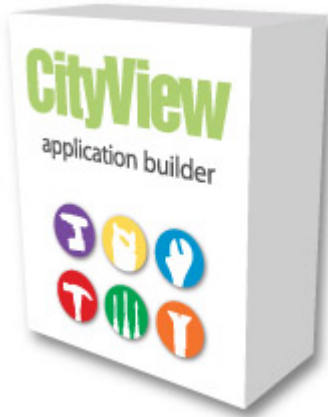
Their input on the draft of the final report will be implemented and sent to the task force at large for final approval by Oct. 31. From Oct. 31 until Nov. 6, the task force will bring the final report to their constituents for feedback.

Once the community feedback has been incorporated by City staff, the final report will be ready for presenting to the Government Performance and Finance Committee.

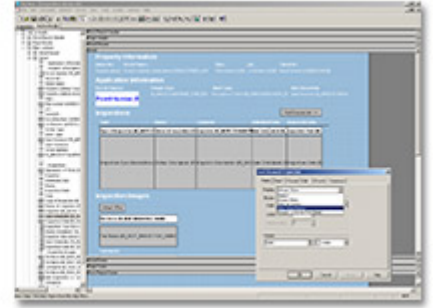
City staff also reported that Assistant City Attorney Steve Gross might be able to deliver a draft of changes to the City's Municipal Code relating to special events in time for the task force to review and include in their final report. If this does not take place, the task force will recommend their code changes separately to the Government Performance and Finance Committee at a later date yet to be determined.

## APPENDIX A

One task member recommended that the City of Tacoma purchase municipal software to better meet and streamline event permitting needs. Below are two examples of companies that offer such services. (Information presented is from the companies' web sites.)



# CityView application builder



CityView Application Builder is a toolkit that allows you to develop applications to perfectly match your organizational needs. You can also use CityView Application Builder to make changes to the CityView applications that you have, including any of the CityView PreBuilds, as your business process needs evolve.

When you use CityView Application Builder you use development tools designed specifically to create applications for local government. You are never expected to program in software source code. This means that you can use your own expertise and staff to create applications, rather than hiring expensive external programmers to write software for you. This also means that you will never be locked into a pre-set module of software that no longer fits your needs.

With a set of tools like CityView Application Builder, you can **do more than you ever expected**. In fact, we used CityView Application Builder to create our CityView PreBuilds. When you invest in CityView Application Builder, you invest in complete **control and flexibility**, for life.

Clients across North America have used CityView Application Builder to create their own unique applications. Other clients have contracted us to build custom applications for them using CityView Application Builder.

### **Some of the many applications created with CityView Application Builder:**

- Columbia Heights, MN - Special Assessments, HR, Work Orders
- City of Ontario, CA - Newsracks, Alarm Tracking
- Grove City, OH - Disaster Management, Vendor Permits, Vehicle Tracking
- Kane County, IL - Animal Licensing

- Regional Municipality of Niagara, ON - Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Fraser Valley Regional District, BC - Illegal Dumping
- City of Langford, BC - Asset Maintenance Tracking

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