

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

February 13, 2020
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Conference Room 1E-112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Freeburg – Parks
Andy Heider – Parks
Brad Bennett – Parks
Dean Harm – Fire
Dane Waisanen – Fire
Mike Shovlin – Police
Joe Nault – Police
Ben Wright – Transportation
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative East
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative Downtown
Laurie Scott – Downtown Resident Representative

OTHERS PRESENT: Imane Elmesbahi, Parks; Councilmember Barksdale

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by acting Chair Wright who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral – None

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Ogliore. The motion was seconded by Sgt. Shovlin and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the January 9, 2020, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Sgt. Shovlin. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ogliore.

Mr. Bennett noted that at that the January 9 meeting the Committee discussed the WWII and Holocaust Remembrance Day and Kids Festival events and determined that the events did not meet the criteria for Special Events Committee approval and moved them to the Parks scheduling office. He said within the past week he had received information from someone who claims to be tied to those two events indicating a projected attendance of over a thousand, which would meet the Committee's threshold. The problem is that the Committee's 90-day rule ran out on February 9. The quandary is whether or not the event should in fact be brought back before he Committee for review if in fact attendance will exceed the threshold.

Mr. Christiansen pointed out the Committee has acted on quick turnaround events in the past. He said the 90-day rule is more of a desire than a requirement.

Mr. Bennett added that the person who claims to be associated with the events said they are planning a walk that would start in the park and go out into the community before coming back to the park. That would certainly impact the community.

Mr. Wright suggested approving the minutes and adding a discussion of the events to the agenda under New Business.

The motion to approve the minutes as submitted carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Mr. Heider reported having met with the Cry Holi event organizers at Downtown Park. He said they indicated they had not yet met with the Subcommittee. The projection is that the March 7 event will have over 800 attendees. He added that he was slated to meet with the colors event at Crossroads later in the day, noting that that event would occur on March 14.

6. OLD BUSINESS

❖ Tabled Events

A. Northwest Ukrainian International Festival 2020

Mr. Heider stated there is was still no resolution in regard to the festival. He said negotiations are continuing.

Answering a question asked by Councilmember Barksdale, Mr. Heider explained that the Ukrainian festival is an ongoing event that has grown every year. Following the 2019 event there was pretty extensive damage to the park during the cleanup efforts. Parks sought reimbursement for damages from the event organizer, who has denied responsibility for the damages. The total damages came to \$7000 and Parks is seeking half of that from the organizer.

Mr. Wright said the event is one of the largest Ukrainian heritage events in the country. The Ukrainian embassy consul is involved in organizing the event, which makes it a high-profile event for the city.

Ms. Scott asked what the protocol is if the organizer denies causing the damage. Mr. Heider said Parks is working on a protocol for that. Going forward, the event organizer will be asked to sign a waiver of park conditions prior to the event, and they will be encouraged to snap photos prior to setup. Parks is unclear of what it has to stand on relative to the 2019 damages. Mr. Heider said he would not vote to approve the 2020 event until there is a resolution in hand.

Sgt. Shovlin said it was his understanding that no decision had yet been made about whether the 2020 festival would be held on one day or two. Mr. Wright said it is the initiative of the event organizers to take, adding that the Committee would definitely have the opportunity to offer input. Sgt. Shovlin said he has been receiving queries about police staffing the event. The application as submitted implies a two-day event along with setup and cleanup, which could occur the day after the event.

Mr. Christiansen asked if the Committee could decide the issue of how many days the festival will run prior to having the desired resolution in hand. He suggested the Committee could act to resolve all of the issues but still not vote to approve the event until the resolution is signed.

Mr. Wright suggested the best course would be to invite the event organizer back to meet with the Committee once the resolution is in hand. Mr. Heider said ideally that would be a good course. He stated, however, he did not believe the issue would be resolved in a timely manner. The negotiations have been going on since October 2019. It is likely there will be resistance to the offer of Parks to cover half the costs.

Sgt. Shovlin agreed that nothing should be approved until the city is paid for the damages. Otherwise the next thing could be they would decide not to pay for Fire or Police or any other bill and still expect to be allowed to hold the festival.

Mr. Christiansen suggested that if the event is not paying its bills, the Committee should act to limit the event to a single day for 2020, but not vote to approve the event until there is a resolution. Choices like that can be made without any tacit approval. Mr. Wright said unless the Committee feels forced to have the organizer make a decision one way or the other, he would not feel comfortable determining if the event will be one day or two days. He said the Committee certainly could decide the event cannot have two days, but added he would not be comfortable telling the organizer the event must have two days.

Sgt. Shovlin said the application is clear that the organizer wants two days. The question for the Committee is whether or not the total estimated attendance of 16,000 would be split between the two days. If the event is to go two days, the number of police officers required will be much larger. Mr. Bennett said that fact is something the organizer will need to consider before deciding to go with one day or two. He said moving forward each department will carefully scrutinize the conditions for any large event at any park and will associate different costs with those conditions, which is something many events have not had to deal with in the past.

Councilmember Barksdale asked if there in place an outline of what is to happen in case of damages or delinquent payments. Mr. Heider said there is no set park policy, though one is now being worked on. The agreement signed by event organizations does indicate the event is responsible for damages. Staff meet on site with event organizers about a month ahead of events to go over all of the conditions. Councilmember Barksdale asked if the city attorney is involved and Mr. Heider said she will be going forward.

Mr. Bennett said the context for the current disagreement with the Ukrainian festival is the condition of the park prior to the event compared to the conditions after the event. The organizer is claiming the damage occurred prior to their event. The claim of Parks is that staff see the park daily and know the damage did not occur prior to the event.

Sgt. Shovlin agreed with Mr. Christiansen that the Committee should make a decision about allowing the event for one day or two. He said he needed that information in order to plan the schedule for Police, even if the event is not ultimately approved to go forward at all.

Ms. Freeburg asked if the Ukrainian festival in 2019 was charged for Police and Fire. Sgt. Shovlin said they were. Ms. Freeburg said that would mean the organizers know there is a cost associated with those services and should also know that going to two days will increase those costs by a factor of two.

Sgt. Shovlin said the hope is that moving to two days would mean fewer attendees on any given day. He allowed that things may not in fact play out that way. During the 2019 event, the 16,000-plus attendees overcrowded the park and the parking areas, and neither Police nor Fire could easily respond to situations. He agreed that going to two days would in fact double the costs for Police and Fire. In fact, the cost for Police will increase even if the event is held on a single day because more officers will be assigned to the event.

Mr. Christiansen said the organizer may not fully understand that point. Before the Committee makes a decision, it should know the organizer is fully informed.

Mr. Wright said he was not hearing from the Committee any desire to force the event to be held on a single day. Accordingly, the organizer should either be invited to attend an upcoming meeting for a full discussion or receive an affirmation of how many days they want for the event.

Sgt. Shovlin said at the root of the Committee's decision to approve or not approve the event for 2020 is the issue of whether or not the damage funds must be paid as a condition of approval. He said his view was that if the funds are not paid, the event should not be approved for another year. He allowed, however, that because the event has a very high profile and is good for the city, the city may not want to disallow the event over \$3500.

Ms. Scott suggested going forward the event should be required to pay a damage deposit at the very least, and possibly pay the costs for Police and Fire ahead of the event.

Mr. Heider said there was another large event in the park prior to the 2019 Ukrainian festival and that is what the organizer claims caused the damages. The event, Flavors of India, was held the week prior.

Ms. Scott asked if Parks documented any damages from Flavors of India. Mr. Heider said nothing is in writing.

Councilmember Barksdale suggested Parks should seek to tighten its processes associated with special events. Mr. Bennett said the Committee would need to be a part of that overall picture, but allowed that Parks needs to tighten up some things. He added that steps are being taken in that direction.

Councilmember Barksdale asked if events are currently required to pay a damage deposit or some other retainer fee. Mr. Heider said that is currently no such requirement. Mr. Wright noted the Committee at its January meeting discussed the issue of having a damage deposit requirement. If the Committee were administer damage deposits, there would need to be approval of a new fee structure. He said he did not know if Parks could establish its own damage deposit.

Mr. Christiansen said he had been serving on the committee for almost 15 years and said he had not previously seen a situation in which an event organizer refused to pay.

Mr. Bennett recommended asking the event organizer to attend the next Committee meeting so the Committee as a whole can convey its decisions directly. The decision could be that the event must pay for the damages as a condition of being approved for 2020. The discussion would also allow for explaining clearly that the fees for Police will increase and why, and that all other conditional fees are the responsibility of the event to pay.

Sgt. Shovlin said from the discussion and the information shared he was formed the understanding that the festival organizer would not be paying the \$3500 for damages. The Committee could decide not to approve the 2020 event for that reason, but while the Committee may say no, the City Council may say yes give the high profile nature of the event and what it means to the city. He said if he were a betting man he would assume the festival will be going forward in 2020 whether they pay or not. The Committee needs to be planning accordingly.

Mr. Heider proposed tabling the discussion until the next Committee meeting, directing the event organizer to attend that meeting, and at the very least making a decision at that meeting about whether the event will be one day or two.

Councilmember Barksdale said he wanted to make sure the right stakeholders are engaged ahead of the next meeting so there will be a clearer picture of how to proceed.

Mr. Christiansen suggested the issue should be put to the higher authorities so the Committee can have more solid information to act on.

Mr. Bennett urged the Committee to discuss the festival's application of intent for 2020 to be better positioned in March regardless of what direction the Committee decides to take.

Sgt. Shovlin suggested a decision should be made as to whether or not the Committee would allow the event over two days if that is what the organizer wants to do. Reaching a conclusion on that point will entail a number of other factors relative to the park. He asked if there is an event the week before and/or the week after. Mr. Wright said Flavors of India would occur the following week; it was the week prior in 2019. Flavors of India is a two-day event. Sgt. Shovlin questioned if a two-day event followed a week later by a two-day event would be wise scheduling.

Mr. Ogliore agreed with Councilmember Barksdale that all affected stakeholders should be identified and given a voice.

Mr. Harm pointed out that in the event of rain, the park would turn into a mudhole following a two-day event. He asked how that would impact the event the following week from the standpoint of getting the park ready. Mr. Heider said the two events have been back-to-back for several years running, but they have not both been two-day events.

Mr. Christiansen asked if there is in fact a policy in place about having back-to-back two-day events. Mr. Heider said there is no such policy. Mr. Bennett said the frequency of large events is in fact being given consideration as part of the plan being worked on.

Mr. Bennett said his recollection was that the two-day request for the Ukrainian festival was tied to a recommendation from the Committee. Another option put on the table was for the event to find a larger venue, such as Downtown Park or Marymoor Park in Redmond. The event organizer is on record as saying their preference is to stay at the Crossroads Park.

Mr. Christiansen said absent a specific reason not to, he would be inclined to allow the festival to occur over two days. The would, of course, mean additional costs for the event.

Sgt. Shovlin pointed out it was unclear if the organizer in fact wants two days, and if he would be willing to relocate to Downtown Park. Mr. Heider pointed out that Downtown Park is in fact booked for one of the two days in question.

Mr. Bennett agreed the event organizer should be asked to attend the next Committee meeting, and added he should be given a heads up in terms of the specific questions that will be asked so he can be prepared to answer. Mr. Ogliore agreed and said the list of questions should include verification of a parking and shuttle plan, and a clear breakdown of the costs for Police and Fire.

Mr. Bennett noted that in meeting with the Committee in November, the event organizer indicated they utilized parking available at schools and churches. At the meeting the suggestion was made to obtain written permission from those schools and churches on their letterheads and submit those documents as part of the parking plan. It was also suggested by the Committee that the event's website should include information about where not to park, including a clear indication that Crossroads Mall is off limits and cars parked there will be towed.

Commissioner Barksdale asked if there is a policy or best practice in regard to the number of volunteers needed in ratio to the number of attendees. Ms. Waisanen said the rule of thumb is one crowd control manager for every 250 people. Depending on the activities, events and other circumstances, that figure can be upgraded to one crowd control manager for every 500 or even 1000 attendees.

Sgt. Shovlin commented that there were fewer police officers assigned to the event in 2019 than in prior years due to staffing issues in the police department. The department used to have more on-duty availability, which translated into lower costs for events. For 2020, Police will assign a bike unit to the event that would normally be assigned to other areas, and that will not represent an extra cost to the event. A single officer has traditionally been assigned to address parking issues, but after 2019 it became clear more officers are needed to do that work.

Commissioner Barksdale asked if the volunteers noted in the application are doing more than just helping out at the booths. Mr. Ogliore said the number shown in the application is more related to event production, not on crowd management.

A motion to table the event until the March meeting of the Committee was made by Mr. Wright. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ogliore and the motion carried unanimously.

There was consensus to invite the event organizer to attend the March meeting of the Committee. It was also agreed Ms. Liming from Crossroads Mall should also be urged to attend that meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Welcome Susan Freeburg, Community Services Supervisor

Mr. Bennett introduced Susan Freeburg as the new community services supervisor in the Parks scheduling office. He said Ms. Freeburg brings to the table a lot of experience from her work in Federal Way where she spent the last 12 years. She has a strong emphasis and experience with facility scheduling in parks and community centers and understands the nuances and the tricks of the trade relative to event planning.

❖ Application of Intent: 30 Years of Progress ADA Celebration 2020

Mr. Bennett said Blaine Anson(?) is the city's ADA administrator and the impetus behind the new event. The ADA will be celebrating its 30th year in 2020 and in recognition of that milestone the city is planning a community event for July 18 at Downtown Park. The event will

be similar to the inspiration playground grand opening event and will occupy the same southwest corner of the park. There will be some food and some entertainment activities along with a resource fair. All city departments will be invited to participate along with members of the community that support people living with disabilities. The event will run from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. No major impacts to the community are anticipated. Signs will be posted a week prior to the event to notify regular users. A parking plan is being developed and the number of ADA stalls will be temporarily increased within the southwest parking lot.

Sgt. Shovlin asked if the temporary handicapped parking stalls will include actual and correct handicapped parking signs, and if someone will be assigned to monitor the parking lot. Mr. Bennett said the ADA administrator will use the proper signage and will community with both Police and Transportation. Park rangers are typically brought in to assist with parking patrol for large events.

Mr. Wright noted from the application that attendance is projected to be 900 at the high end. People are expected to come and go during the event.

Ms. Scott asked if there had ever been a petting zoo in the park. Mr. Heider said there was one at Crossroads Park and there were no issues associated with it.

Sgt. Shovlin asked if the Police would need to be involved with the event. Mr. Bennett said he did not believe so.

A motion to approve the date and time for the ADA event, subject to setting conditions, was made by Mr. Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Ms. Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Post-Event Evaluations

A. Bellevue Magic Season – Downtown Ice Rink 2019

Mr. Ogliore said the event was successful overall, though there was a significant drop in attendance during the last couple of weeks. For 2020 consideration is being given to tweaking the event dates to have the grand opening be the Friday before Thanksgiving and also shifting the closure date up a week. The month of January was very wet and following a walkthrough with Parks a plan is being developed to reduce the impact. The location is perfect for the event and the Bellevue Downtown Association is grateful for the partnership with Parks.

Mr. Christiansen noted the Committee has in the past allowed shifting the start and end times by up to a week.

Mr. Heider said moving up the start date will mean adjusting the pond draining schedule, but that should not really be a problem.

Mr. Christiansen asked if any complaints about noise had been received for the 2019 event. Mr. Ogliore said there were some and Mr. Bennett kindly stepped in to help buffer them. Some tweaks were made that seemed to satisfy everyone. He said closing 30 minutes earlier each night is under consideration for 2020. Mr. Bennett said the park closes at 11:00 p.m. and the rink was also closing at 11:00 p.m. It was a tight fit given that the ice has to be treated with the Zamboni machine immediately after closing, and that work was being done after 11:00 p.m. Parks prefers to see the Zamboni on the ice before 11:00 p.m. so all can be shut down as close to that hour as

possible.

Mr. Ogliore added that he is in talks with engineering folks currently about possibly using a different structure in 2020 that might contribute to reducing the noise factor. Mr. Bennett suggested orientation of the structure within the allowed footprint could also reduce the noise levels, particularly if the orientation results in projecting noise out into the park rather than into the street.

B. Garden d'Lights 2019

Mr. Bennett reported the event went very well.

Sgt. Shovlin said he has heard some people visit Garden d'Lights, then Snowflake Lane and then go ice skating, all on the same day.

❖ WWII and Holocaust Remembrance Day and Kids Festival

Mr. Wright noted the issue as being a projected larger attendance than was discussed by the Committee when the decision was made not to require a special event permit.

Sgt. Shovlin said it appears attendance will be larger and there is the addition of a walk through the downtown area as part of the event. He asked if the walkers will be using the sidewalks and crossing with the walk signals or if they plan to walk in the streets. Mr. Bennett said he was in the process of trying to gather than information. He noted the event date is technically less than the 90-day window the Committee typically requires for review.

Mr. Wright said the Committee has the right not to approve events that have less than 90 days lead time. Mr. Christiansen noted in the past the Committee has effected approvals within the window via email voting.

Mr. Bennett allowed that while the application was submitted in a timely fashion, it outlined a set of parameters that apparently have changed. Mr. Wright proposed clarifying the issues and then scheduling a meeting of the Routing and Location subcommittee to discuss the walk route. A proposal with details all worked out should be available for the next Committee meeting.

❖ Comments/Follow-up

Commissioner Barksdale asked to have the meeting packets be made available electronically. Ms. Elmesbahi noted the packets are not generally available until the Wednesday before the meetings. She said the agendas are sent out the Friday before the meetings.

Commissioner Barksdale said he would like to see included in the packet materials an overview of all agenda items, including all relevant policies and possible issues, and the expected action.

Mr. Christiansen noted the fee schedule is updated annually, but said it has been several years since any major changes were made to the code itself.

Capt. Joe Nault took a moment to introduce himself, noting that he recently was put in charge of the traffic section of the police department. He thanked Sgt. Shovlin for the Herculean effort he puts in for the department in terms of addressing special events. The department is currently looking at the size and scope of the work Sgt. Shovlin does and is giving consideration to giving

some of the work to someone else. As the number of special events increase in frequency and scope in the city, the department is looking at different ways to handle them.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ March 12, 2020

8. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wright adjourned the meeting at 9:54 a.m.