

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2021
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Freeburg – Parks
Andy Heider – Parks
Mark Anderson – Fire
Dane Waisanen – Fire
Mike Shovlin – Police
Dave Sanabria – Police
Ben Wright – Transportation
Rick Logwood – Transportation
Zhu Weijun – Transportation
Claude Iosso – City Manager’s Office
Glenn Bartolome – Metro Transit
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative East
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative Downtown
Chris Dunham – Business Representative West
Laurie Scott – Downtown Resident Representative

OTHERS PRESENT: Brad Bennett, Imane Elmesbahi, Cindy Shelton, Parks;
Councilmember Barksdale; Evan LaSure, EastHub;
Manette Stamm, Arts Commission

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Chair Freeburg who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Wright. The motion was seconded by Mr. Christiansen and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the May 13, 2021, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Anderson. The motion was seconded by Mr. Waisanen and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing Subcommittee Report – None

6. OLD BUSINESS

❖ Northwest Ukrainian International

Chair Freeburg reported that the Ukrainian festival had officially cancelled for the year.

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Bellevue Family 4th

Cindy Shelton with Parks reported that after listening to the Governor's new updates and receiving new correspondence from the Governor, the Parks director concluded that no restrictions will keep the event from occurring. The event organizers are in a go pattern, though the director will still need to vet the event with the leadership team ahead of a final decision by June 11. No public announcement has yet been made.

Mr. Ogliore said kudos are due to Ms. Shelton and her team for what has been a huge juggling act. The Governor's office has no restrictions in place for large events and Bellevue's fireworks show will not be the only one around the area. The fireworks have been ordered and a permit will soon be submitted to the Fire Marshall's office. Kemper Development Company is on board and will be offering parking. There will not, however, be any bounce toys for the kids, no food zone, no VIP area, no sponsor booths, just a 16-minute fireworks show. The anticipation is that the community will be excited to have the event back. He allowed that the organizing team will be leaning heavily on police, fire and transportation.

Mr. Christiansen asked if the intent is to have the fireworks show actually be on July 4. Mr. Ogliore confirmed that date.

Mr. Heider asked what expectations the organizers have for parks staff relative to setup with the new layout and event control. Ms. Shelton said the layout is largely unchanged from past year. There will still be pedestrian panels in the center of the park where they have always been to keep open an emergency corridor. Barricades will be put up on NE 4th Street to help control that exit to the parking garages. The information booth will be moved from the center of the park to what used to be the food court to open up more area for people. Signage will be posted with a number to call in the event of a lost child or for other assistance.

Mr. Heider noted that in past years parks staff had the duty of transporting entertainment to the stage. He said with the scaled down version of the event it might be possible to get by with fewer staff during the event. Ms. Shelton said now that the event has been greenlighted she would be able to calculate a staff count.

Capt. Sanabria relayed the concerns communicated to him by Joe Nault, beginning with what opening up will look like on June 30 and what the expectations will be for the police. He said the indications from the Governor's office are that there will be no restrictions, but none of that has been widely published yet. It could be that people will be asked to keep a six-foot distance between them, and that all unvaccinated people will be asked to wear masks. It would be a very difficult task to manage 60,000 people who have spent a year and a half being told to social distance and wear masks. Crowd management could be a very real challenge for the police in such a situation, especially with Seattle's event a no go. Even though the event is slimmed down and appears on the surface to be less complicated, it could very well be far more complicated for the police given that there will be fewer distractions for the attendees. Usually it takes six months

to plan for the 4th of July event but the current focus is on trying to put together the event in just a couple of weeks. He allowed that if city leadership determines that the event is going to happen, the police will do their best to facilitate it. Ms. Shelton said the organizing team has had those same concerns and has been working to address them. She allowed that it is ironic to be going from total lock down to fully open. There will be recommendations for people to wear masks if they are unvaccinated, but it will not be enforced.

Capt. Sanabria said while that sounds good in theory, in practice people have gotten into physical altercations over demands to know someone's vaccination status, over who is and is not wearing a mask, and over social distancing. It is easy to say the masks will not be enforced, but the police will still have to respond to disturbances. There is no structure in place to prevent them from happening in spite of the fact that people are being invited to come out and celebrate. Ms. Shelton said those concerns are valid and will be passed along to the leadership team to inform their final decision.

Mr. Anderson echoed the concerns voiced by Capt. Sanabria. He said he has talked with Mr. Nault and that he has shared his concerns with Chief Mylett and with Chief Hagen. Both chiefs have in turn shared their concerns with the parks director, but everyone is still moving forward. He said fire will not be able to enforce any mask mandate and will respond along with the police to any altercations. Fire will obviously also be providing fire suppression services.

Mr. Ogliore said the event organizers have been waiting on pins and needles for weeks on word from the Governor's office. He said had word come down that six feet of social distancing would be required along with sections for vaccinated and unvaccinated persons, the plan was to not hold the event at all. The no restrictions/no mask mandates direction was the green light for the event. He said he fully understands the concerns but said that is where the messaging comes in. Anyone with any concerns will be encouraged to not attend the event.

Capt. Sanabria said it was his understanding that the recommendation for those who are not vaccinated will still be to wear a mask, and the recommendation for all is still to social distance. He said people will hear that and believe that it is a mandate, and that likely will lead to calls for officers or parks staff to respond and referee situations. If leadership says the event is a go, police and fire will generate a workable plan and staff up to the level needed, which may in fact be more officers than have been needed in the past for the event, leading to higher costs.

Sgt. Shovlin agreed with the concerns raised and with the need for clear and specific messaging. The messaging should in fact state clearly that people will not be separated by six feet and will not be wearing masks, and should also be clear that those who believe social distancing and mask wearing should be required should not come to the event. He agreed police will need more staff than normal, particularly if people just show up for the fireworks show, meaning 60,000 people will all show up at the same time. More police will be needed in the park to deal with problems of people yelling at others to keep their distance or put on their masks. The officers will be running around the entire park all day and all night doing nothing but separating people.

Mr. Heider suggested that perhaps there should be no messaging at all. Ms. Shelton said the guidelines indicate no need for six-foot spacing, so that is off the table. There will be some restrictions in which masks will be required, but that will be very limited. There needs to be clarity about what signage should be in the park, and the currently posted signs about social distancing will need to be taken down. The reality is, however, that regardless of the guidelines people are going to believe what they want to believe, and that will be the challenge. Messaging is needed to let the people know the park will be open without restrictions and that people will be

entering at their own risk.

Sgt. Shovlin stressed that the police will not be enforcing anything to do with masking. Police will not have the manpower or the time to do so. Clear messaging needs to go out making it clear that people will not be social distancing and that no one is going to be telling them to do it.

Mr. Zhu agreed with the comments of both police and fire. He suggested that even without a requirement to social distance, some people will still seek to do it. That will mean the crowd will be spread out. It will be necessary to make sure the crowd does not spill out into areas on which cars are traveling. Detour routes will be set up and managed by the signal group to facilitate getting the crowd out of the area after the show.

Capt. Sanabria suggested the routing subcommittee should meet to talk about potentially closing Bellevue Way and NE 2nd Street, pushing traffic out to NE 6th Street. Mr. Wright agreed and allowed that there could be issues with people choosing to stand in Bellevue Way during the show.

Mr. Heider noted that construction in the northeast corner of the park is largely complete. The park is open and there will be new viewing areas near NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way. However, a portion of the park remains fenced off which could cause some congestion as people exit the park.

Mr. Wright suggested having the routing subcommittee meet sooner rather than later and set conditions by June 22.

Ms. Shelton pointed out that the event will include amplified sound.

Mr. Bartolome commented that the last time the Bellevue Family 4th event was held transit services were ramped up at the transit center. He said they would do the same thing again for the event, particularly in light of the fact that Bellevue will be the only fireworks show around. He added that a few years ago the city wanted extra buses cited along Bellevue Way just in case they were needed to move people out, and said he would be willing to do that again.

Chair Freeburg sought from the Committee a motion to approve the date, time and location for the Bellevue Family 4th event in Downtown Park.

Capt. Sanabria questioned whether the action should be taken before leadership gives the final okay. Ms. Shelton agreed that no final decision had yet been made by leadership, but leadership is wanting to know if the Committee is ready or not in case they give the go ahead.

Mr. Wright asked if there is a procedure in place for the Committee to review approve an event outside of the regularly scheduled Committee meetings. Chair Freeburg said there is no explicit opportunity for the Committee to approve events other than in a meeting.

Capt. Sanabria pointed out that the Committee has in the past approved events via email and outside of a meeting. He said he did not feel comfortable speaking for the police department having not spoken with the chief or assistant chief. Leadership should hear the concerns of the Committee and if they choose to move forward, then the event will be a go.

Mr. Christiansen concurred that the Committee in the past has made approvals via email.

Mr. Bennett said the actions taken by the Committee in the past outside of a regular meeting have all been conditional. He said the Committee's approval of the date, time and location for the event could be made conditional on a decision from the leadership team.

Mr. Wright said he was hesitant to provide conditional approval for date, time and location given how the various departments are aligned with the issues.

Mr. Bennett allowed that all departments are in the same boat. He agreed with the previous statement of Capt. Sanabria that if the leadership team says the event is a go, all departments will provide the best support possible.

Ms. Shelton said parks has been directed to proceed absent conditions that will prevent the show. It all comes down to the Governor's information that says vaccinated and unvaccinated areas are recommended but not required, and requiring masks for certain people but not others. The bottom line is there still is a lot of public fear and volatility going on, and not having any other shows close by adds yet another complexity to the mix.

Capt. Sanabria said his choice would be not to vote to approve the date, time and location.

Mr. Anderson asked who ultimately has the final say should the Committee say no and the leadership team say yes.

Mr. Wright said he was willing to vote on whether to approve the date, time and location, but not necessarily to approve the event itself until after the leadership team makes a decision.

Ms. Shelton clarified that the Committee is the team of experts that is charged with advising the leadership team. If the Committee says yes, the leadership team will assume that public safety and all the other criteria can be met.

Mr. Anderson suggested deferring the event until the September 4 date. By that time things will be more settled and police, fire and transportation will be able to provide better support. He said the Committee could choose to support the event if it is moved to September to partner with the Bellevue Arts Fair.

Mr. Ogliore said the September 4 date was previously tossed out as an alternative should July 4 not be an option. He clarified that as a representative of the Bellevue Downtown Association he was fully in support of going ahead with the July 4 date.

Sgt. Shovlin said it has been his experience that when he says no but the chief says yes, the answer is always yes. He said he assumed the same was true for all other city departments. If the Committee concludes that the event can be done even though it is a bad idea, if leadership says it is going to happen, it is going to happen. Chair Freeburg added that the decision of the City Manager always overrides any decision made by the Committee.

Ms. Shelton pointed out that Kemper Development Company wants a decision by the end of day June 14. If things are not resolved by then, there will be no show regardless.

Mr. Christiansen suggested the Committee should not wait for leadership to reach a decision. He said the Committee should vote to approve the date, time and location for the event based on approval by the leadership team. He agreed that all concerns should be folded into the conditions.

Ms. Shelton said the leadership team will benefit from having the conclusion of the Committee in hand before coming to a final decision.

Mr. Anderson said the overarching issue of public safety should be voiced as a concern. He allowed that the June 30 statement from the Governor may reduce the level of angst and tension among the public. Waiting until September to hold the show makes the most sense.

A motion to conditionally approve the date, time and location for the Bellevue Family 4th, subject to a final decision by the leadership team in regard to public safety and other concerns, was made by Mr. Ogliore. The motion was seconded by Capt. Sanabria and the motion carried by majority vote. Capt. Sanabria and Mr. Anderson voted against the motion.

Capt. Sanabria clarified that his no vote was based on public safety concerns around managing such a large crowd in the face of so many unknowns.

❖ 2021 Musical Showcase of Local Musicians

Chair Freeburg said the event is part of the annual Bellwether event and the proposal is to hold the event in Downtown Park.

Ms. Stamm said Bellwether is an annual event put on by the city in conjunction with other partners. For 2021 the city is working with EastHUB, a fairly new non-profit. Bellwether is involves visual, 3D and 2D art and music and will run through all of September. The musical showcase element is planned for September 18 in Downtown Park. The event is open to the public and there are no plans to make it an annual event.

Evan LeSure with EastHUB said the idea is to have four or five live performance groups playing from a stage in Downtown Park. Beginning in early to mid afternoon, the event would conclude by mid evening. Covid restrictions are expected to be greatly reduced by September. Some visual art will be sited around the park to tie into the main Bellwether exhibition. Setup and teardown are expected to occur the morning of the show and after the show, but if necessary some of the work will be done the day before and the morning after.

Ms. Stamm said specific details of the event are still being worked out.

Mr. Ogliore proposed the Bellevue Downtown Association and the city should partner up in terms of reaching out to the neighbors around Downtown Park. He said he has years of experience in working with the neighborhoods, who do have concerns about amplified sound. The Bellevue Downtown Association has four dates planned in July and August for the summer music series and approaching the neighbors together would seem to make sense. Mr. LeSure said working together makes sense.

Chair Freeburg said the expectation is that the musical showcase event will draw about 750 attendees.

Mr. Heider noticed that no map had been included with the application. He asked if the plan was to use the staging area by the pond. Ms. Stamm said that was her intent. Mr. Heider said parks would be okay with that.

Mr. Wright commented that it has not been clear in the past when the Committee requires a

special event permit and when it does not. Chair Freeburg said the work to update the code and the administrative manual has included that issue. She said she has been trying to determine what the Committee's past practice has been. Generally speaking, events with 500 or more attendees and amplified sound have been required to have a special event permit.

Mr. Christiansen said the Committee typically has two or three events annually for which the Committee determines a special event permit is not needed.

Capt. Sanabria commented that the purpose of the Committee is to bring together all the city entities that are affected by events, giving event organizers a single place to go to have their concerns addressed. He said the musical showcase event as outlined will only impact the parks department. He suggested the event should not be required to obtain a special event permit.

A motion to not require a special event permit for the musical showcase event was made by Mr. Wright. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ogliore and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Code/Administrative Manual Updates

Mr. Bennett said the Special Events Committee governs the operation of the Committee. The Council adopted the code in 1993 and it has been edited and updated over the years, with the most recent update occurring in 2008. The code actually calls for reviewing the code every two years. For the current update, one proposed change is to add a diversity, equity and inclusion representative to the Committee from the Diversity Advantage team.

Continuing, Mr. Bennett noted that the Committee previously approved by motion simplifying the application process by eliminating the application of intent requirement. Also in the proposal is to remove from the code all references to dollar amounts associated with certain fees. The biggest change associated with the update is the notion of moving the flat fee schedule to the administrative manual. The fees are intended to offset costs for departments incurred as a result of special events. The administrative manual will serve as the procedural guide for the Committee.

Mr. Bennett said another change is to reduce the expected attendance threshold from 2000 to 500 for events to require a Special Events Committee review. He allowed that 1000 may be a more appropriate threshold, or where multiple departments are involved. Replacing the current flat fee schedule is more of an open and transparent fee structure will enable event planners to know which permit and services they will receive for their fees. Procedures will also be added to address references in the code, such as assisting those who cannot afford to pay for their required permits and services. The code also references co-sponsorship but does not clarify what that means. Councilmember Barksdale asked to include in the code a dispute resolution procedure. The update will also include a greater emphasis on ADA accommodations and on waste management.

The code feeds the administrative manual, and the administrative manual will feed the creation of an event planning guide to improve the customer experience. Mr. Bennett said Chair Freeburg is in the process of creating that guide using best practices from across the country. The website will also be updated to event planners can gain the information they need from that source.

Finally, Mr. Bennett said the update will also formalize the implementation of an online application permit process.

Mr. Wright asked for clarification the process for providing feedback about the update process and the goals. Mr. Bennett asked to have proposals and suggestions submitted in writing so they can be reviewed collectively.

Chair Freeburg said she would be sent out a timeline of goals and a will be sending a flowchart for the special event permit process.

With regard to the threshold for requiring a special event permit, Mr. Wright said he would like to hear feedback from the Council liaison about including the threshold in the code.

❖ Post-Event Evaluations – None

❖ Comments/Follow-up

Mr. Bennett suggested the July meeting should include a discussion of the winter events and if they will be going ahead.

Ms. Scott asked how the Committee members would be notified regarding the decision of the leadership team about the July 4 event. Chair Freeburg said she would let the Committee members know via email.

Sgt. Shovlin reported that he had received an email from Captain Sanabria who talked to the chief of police during the meeting and learned that from the perspective of police the Bellevue Family 4th event is a go.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ July 8, 2021

8. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ogliore. The motion was seconded by Ms. Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.