

City and County of San Francisco

Office of the Controller – Budget and Analysis Division

ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF SPECIAL EVENTS IN SAN FRANCISCO

SPECIAL REPORT

*Prepared by the Controller's Office
and the Office of the Legislative Analyst*



October 20, 2007



MEMORANDUM

TO: Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

CC: Supervisor Bevan Dufty *Handwritten signature*

FROM: Ed Harrington, Controller and Andrew Murray, Office of the Legislative Analyst *Handwritten signature*

DATE: October 20, 2007

SUBJECT: Board of Supervisors Inquiry to the Controller (Reference #20070814-009) and to the Legislative Analyst (File #071213) – Analysis of Establishing an Office of Special Events in San Francisco

This report is being issued in response to requests made by Supervisor Bevan Dufty to the Controller's Office (Reference #20070814-009) and the Office of the Legislative Analyst (File #071213) to conduct research on establishing an "Office of Special Events" in San Francisco. Because of the overlapping nature of these requests, the Controller and Office of the Legislative Analyst worked together to produce the findings and recommendations of this report. The exact text of the requests is included in Appendix A.

Executive Summary

Special events provide important cultural and economic benefits to the City, but often cause concern among residents of the neighborhoods where they take place. The City's special events permitting and planning process must balance these competing interests.

This report addresses the following three questions:

- Can the City enhance its cultural and economic profile by playing a more active role in attracting, creating, and promoting special events?
- Can the City increase the number and quality of special events by streamlining the permitting process?
- Can the City increase the utilization of and revenue from City facilities used for special events?

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are summarized below. A complete list of the findings and recommendations is included in Appendix B.

Findings in Brief

- San Francisco could benefit economically and culturally from additional special events, yet no City agency currently focuses on attracting, creating, and promoting new events. Although the Entertainment Commission has the statutory mandate to perform these functions, it lacks the capacity to effectively carry them out. The Mayor's Office is best suited for this role, and in fact, the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce

Office of the Controller

City Hall • 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 316 • San Francisco CA 94102-4694 • (415) 554-7500 • Fax (415) 554-7466

Office of the Legislative Analyst

City Hall • 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244 • San Francisco, CA 94102-4689 • (415) 554-5184 • Fax (415) 554-5163

Development currently contributes to these efforts in a limited capacity. The Mayor's Office could benefit from working more closely with the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau, Grants for the Arts, and the San Francisco Special Events Committee or a newly created nonprofit organization. In addition, unsponsored events like Halloween are probably best managed by the Mayor's Office in cooperation with a private events producer. Finally, the City could be more proactive in pursuing sporting events.

- Many City departments and commissions are involved in permitting and coordinating special events in San Francisco. There is no obvious first point of contact for event organizers. This process appears to work reasonably well for long-standing annual events but may be difficult to navigate for new events. The fragmented process also results in a lack of transparency and consistency in decision making.
- The Entertainment Commission has the statutory authority to facilitate the permitting process for special events, but lacks the capacity to effectively perform this function. Likewise, while the Interdepartmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation (ISCOTT) provides an effective forum for departmental review of special events permits, it is not able to provide sufficient facilitation for new and one-time events. In addition, the mechanisms for public involvement in the events permitting process could be improved.
- Coordinated marketing and booking of City facilities for special events could increase their utilization and possibly provide greater revenue to the City.

Recommendations in Brief

- The City should establish a new program, the Mayor's Office of Special Events, to act as a single point of contact for initiating permit applications, to provide information to event organizers and the public, and to assume responsibility for attracting, creating, and promoting special events. Chapter 90 of the Administrative Code should be amended to transfer responsibility for these activities from the Entertainment Commission to the Mayor's Office of Special Events. The position in the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development currently assigned to special events planning should be moved to the Mayor's Office of Special Events, and one new position should be allocated to this office. Once established, the Mayor's Office of Special Events should seek to involve the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau and Grants for the Arts more in event attraction, creation, and promotion.
- The Entertainment Commission should be housed in the Mayor's Office and the Administrative Code should be amended to require coordination between the Entertainment Commission and the Mayor's Office of Special Events. Taking this action would provide increased facilitation of the permitting process for event organizers and help address neighborhood concerns regarding special events through the Entertainment Commission's public hearing process.
- The Mayor's Office of Special Events should establish a web site devoted to special events, with information for event organizers, people looking to attend special events,

and residents concerned about the impact of special events on their neighborhood. The web site should also contain information on the City's special events venues and how to book civic facilities.

- The City should seek to ensure fair and consistent treatment of event permit applications by City agencies through issuing policies or guidelines regarding special conditions and fees to be charged or waived.

Introduction

Background

Every year, hundreds of special events take place on the streets, in the parks, and on the waterfront of San Francisco. Many of these are annually planned events, such as street fairs, music festivals, art exhibitions, parades, and holiday celebrations, while others are one-time events, such as the 2007 Major League Baseball All-Star Game festivities. Most of these events are privately produced and sponsored, by corporations and nonprofit organizations. However, a few large annual events have no sponsor and are produced by the City and County of San Francisco. These include the New Year's Eve and Fourth of July celebrations, as well as the Halloween festivities in the Castro.

Special events are an important part of the cultural life of San Francisco and a driver of economic activity. However, in some instances they are also a source of concern to City residents who live in the neighborhoods where events take place. Residents worry about the threats to safety and security, noise disturbances, vandalism, and pollution that may accompany a special event, and often appeal to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to intervene in the event permitting and coordination process. The special event permitting and planning process must balance these competing interests, and the Mayor and Board of Supervisors should weigh these concerns when considering streamlining the event permitting process or increasing the number of events that take place in the City.

Purpose of the Report

The impetus for Supervisor Dufty's request for a study on special events in San Francisco was the cancellation of a City-sponsored Halloween celebration in 2007. Following a violent incident during the Halloween festivities in the Castro in 2006, Mayor Newsom and the Board of Supervisors sought to improve planning for Halloween in 2007. The Mayor's Office, along with Supervisor Dufty and the Entertainment Commission, attempted to develop an alternative plan for a Halloween celebration away from the Castro. These efforts included an agreement with a private event promoter to produce an event in a lot near AT&T Park. When the promoter withdrew from these efforts, the Mayor's Office decided to cancel holding an official City-sponsored Halloween party. As the annual Halloween celebration has been a community event that has attracted hundreds of thousands of San Francisco residents and visitors for many years, the cancellation spurred a discussion regarding what role the City should play in event coordination and facilitation. It also raised questions about a host of other issues, including the City's broader cultural programs, permitting process, and the use of public facilities.

This report addresses the following three questions:

- Can the City enhance its cultural and economic profile by playing a more active role in attracting, creating, and promoting special events?
- Can the City increase the number and quality of special events by streamlining the permitting process?
- Can the City increase the utilization of and revenue from City facilities used for special events?

Methodology

In writing this report, the Controller's Office and Office of the Legislative Analyst reviewed relevant provisions of the City Charter and Municipal Code, analyzed the events permitting process, interviewed knowledgeable City employees and local event producers, researched practices in other jurisdictions (including Boston, Chicago, Houston, New York and San Diego), and consulted with the City Attorney's Office.

Question 1: Can the City enhance its cultural and economic profile by playing a more active role in attracting, creating, and promoting special events?

Existing Situation and Opportunities

As noted, San Francisco is home to a number of special events, including many neighborhood festivals and parades. Three opportunities for the City related to special events are discussed below: attracting new, established events to San Francisco; creating new City-sponsored events; and playing a role in improving existing events or managing unsponsored events.

Case Study: Chicago's Mayor's Office of Special Events

Chicago is repeatedly cited by experts in the destination management and event planning industry as the leading big city in creating its own special events and festivals and enabling neighborhood organizations and other private parties to do the same. The city's Mayor's Office of Special Events is the central contact point, providing a special events planning resource guide and a single special events permit package incorporating all of the forms required by the relevant regulating agencies. The office's homepage includes an event calendar with a search function.

In addition to a large number of neighborhood events, the city is instrumental in the production of a number of citywide events of national acclaim, including the Chicago Blues Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival, Taste of Chicago, and Outdoor Film Festival. The city has also successfully attracted a number of one-time events, such as the 2007 AIBA World Boxing Championships. Chicago is the US representative in the bid to host the 2016 Summer Games, an honor it won over San Francisco.

Chicago's office is noteworthy in its consolidation of numerous special events functions, including the Mayor's Office of Protocol, Chicago Film Office, Neighborhood Festivals

Program, and Sports Development Office. Other divisions of the office illustrate its focus on event creation and production: Event Operations, Event Programming, and Corporate Sponsorship.

The city is the organizer of Chicagoween, produced with the financial support of corporate sponsors, including AT&T and the local NBC affiliate, which draws approximately 250,000 attendees. For the event, Daley Plaza is transformed into "Pumpkin Plaza," complete with pumpkins, a Haunted Village and an orange fountain. Special programming includes circus performances, storytelling, and pumpkin decorating. It also involves the Halloween Happening participatory children's costume parade.

Findings

#1: San Francisco Could Benefit Economically and Culturally from Additional Special Events

Many players in the City's economic development arena agree that the City could benefit, economically and culturally, from more and better special events, such as festivals and sporting events. Also, an opportunity exists to improve the impact of events by managing their scheduling. Such a conclusion is consistent with the findings of the forthcoming San Francisco Economic Strategy (April 18, 2007 version), created jointly by the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD) and the Controller's Office of Economic Analysis (OEA), which states:

San Francisco's export base is essentially based on two main categories of exports: knowledge-intensive services (financial & professional services, media and high-tech) and experience-based services (tourism). These export activities drive San Francisco's economic growth. The better the City is able to accomplish them, the greater the growth potential throughout the economy.

...

In addition to growing the number of visitors, San Francisco needs to continuously improve the product, to develop new ways of encouraging visitors to spend more during their stay. One way to do that is to broaden the tourism product, by incorporating a broader range of neighborhoods, cultures, and experiences into the "San Francisco experience". Another way to do this is to progressively develop more unique restaurants, museums, attractions, boutiques, theaters, architecture, and other forms of the urban experience, in core tourism areas and elsewhere.

The San Francisco Economic Strategy recognizes the challenge of balancing increasing entertainment opportunities with maintaining quality of life for neighborhood residents:

There is an intimate connection between investing in the quality of life that San Francisco residents experience, and strengthening the City's competitive advantage in a growing but increasingly competitive international tourism industry.

Ted Egan, the Chief Economist of the Controller's Office, specifically notes that there is a particular opportunity for neighborhood commercial districts that are currently off the beaten

path to gain patronage through hosting events, which might make them more regular destinations of San Francisco residents and tourists alike.

#2. No City Agency is Currently Focused on Attracting, Creating, and Promoting Special Events; the Mayor's Office is Best Suited

Attracting and creating new special events is not a primary focus of any San Francisco organization. Although the Entertainment Commission has the statutory authority to do so, it lacks requisite resources and expertise. Among other responsibilities, the Entertainment Commission is charged with promoting entertainment. One of the Powers and Duties of the Entertainment Commission (Administrative Code Section 90.4) is to "promote the use of City facilities for cultural, entertainment, athletic and similar events that generate revenue for the City, in consultation with the City departments having jurisdiction over such facilities." In addition, within the Declaration of Policy (Administrative Code Section 90.1), the Entertainment Commission is directed to "promote the development of a vibrant entertainment and late-night entertainment industry within the City." However, although it currently works with applicants to help them secure event permits issued by itself and other city agencies, it does not devote significant resources to event attraction or creation.

The Entertainment Commission's ability to expand its core services beyond the present levels and focus is limited by the need to address a number of operational issues, as identified in the recent Civil Grand Jury report.¹ Therefore, it is reasonable to consider whether the Entertainment Commission's unfulfilled responsibility to attract and support special events (including those without sponsors) should officially be transferred to some other unit. This might address a perceived conflict within the Entertainment Commission of permitting (and therefore regulating) special events, while also being responsible for promoting and expanding them. It might also effectively address accountability issues indigenous to the Entertainment Commission, such as those regarding lines of authority, job responsibilities, and accountability of the Executive Director, as raised in the Civil Grand Jury report.²

If the motivation to attract and create new events is economic, it is most squarely the responsibility of the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development. However, the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development has only worked to attract a modest number of high-profile events (including the 2016 Summer Games and the 2007 Major League Baseball All-Star Game), and plays a limited role in creating City events. One economic development staff member currently works on a full time basis to facilitate permits, conduct community outreach, and make other arrangements for significant privately sponsored and civic events (such as New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July). The profile of the Mayor's Office is a significant advantage in attracting new events and sponsorships and coordinating the activities of City agencies to support events.

¹ *The Entertainment Commission: A Work in Progress*, 2006-2007 Civil Grand Jury, City and County of San Francisco, report released July 9, 2007.

² Finding C.2. "Many of the Commissioners, and the Executive Director himself, are unclear as to the exact lines of authority in terms of supervision of the Executive Director, and the same lack of clarity applies to the job requirements of the Executive Director."

#3. Convention and Visitors Bureau or Other Nonprofit Agency Could Effectively Play Larger Role in Attracting and Promoting Special Events

The responsibility to attract or promote events might also be viewed as a responsibility of the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau ("Visitors Bureau"). The Visitors Bureau receives 56% of its approximately \$14 million annual budget from the City's hotel tax to promote San Francisco as a tourist destination and to book conventions and trade shows at the City's convention center, primarily to book hotel rooms. Based on conversations with Visitors Bureau staff, it views its core mission and competency as promoting San Francisco's attractions. The Visitors Bureau could expand this focus to also address attracting special events that would likely result in hotel bookings.

Although the Visitors Bureau does not consider creating special events to be part of its core function, a reallocation of existing resources or the addition of new ones would make it possible for the Visitors Bureau to become more involved in such. The Visitors Bureau already plays a role in organizing the City's annual Fourth of July celebration. Its nonprofit status provides a flexible framework from which it could attract sponsorships and other funding for events. Another nonprofit organization, the San Francisco Special Events Committee, which works closely with the Mayor's Office of Protocol, might also be a contributor to an effort to build homegrown special events. This organization conducts fundraising activity on an as-needed basis and contracts with private event promoters to produce special events at the Mayor's request. For example, the Office contracted with Rita Barela Productions to produce the 100th Anniversary of the 1906 Earthquake and obtain the necessary permits.

#4. Grants for the Arts Could Participate in Event Attraction, Creation, and Promotion

If the motivation to create additional special events is partially cultural, groups beyond the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development and Visitors Bureau might reasonably share the responsibility. San Francisco's Grants for the Arts, which is supported by a share of the Hotel Tax, already provides financial support to a number of annual celebrations and parades, such as the Castro Street Fair, Chinese New Year Parade, Cinco de Mayo, Folsom Street Fair, and the Stern Grove Festival. It also provides support to what it classifies as Civic Events, such as Juneteenth, Memorial Day, Veterans' Day, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance. These are privately organized events that receive special consideration outside of the normal grant application process because they are priorities of the Mayor's.

Grants for the Arts' support of special events could expand with additional resources or by redirecting current resources. Its current role is primarily reactive, responding to requests for funding from existing efforts. However, it could certainly become more proactive in attracting or creating events, particularly to fill gaps in current programming.

#5. Unsponsored Events Like Halloween Are Likely Best Managed by the Mayor's Office in Cooperation with a Private Event Producer

As noted above, one motivation for this research project is the specific case of the Halloween celebration in the Castro. Something of a spontaneous event, the City has been trying to determine the best way to manage and support it. The model of partnering with a private

producer is appealing, as it draws on the expertise of the City's event planning industry while limiting the cost to the City. If this model falls through, relying on the Mayor's Office of Special Events, discussed below, or the Entertainment Commission, per its specific charge to "plan and coordinate the provision of City services for major events for which there is no recognized organizer..." (Administrative Code section 90.4(h)), are the best alternatives. Successful management of Halloween by the City would require tasking one of the aforementioned agencies with the responsibility.

#6. The City Could Be More Proactive in Pursuing Sporting Events

Note that although it has been a topic of consideration for some time, the City does not currently have a unit focused to pursuing sporting events, although the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development is active on a limited scale in this regard. Many other jurisdictions, including Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Jose, have government agencies, public-private partnerships, or nonprofit organizations dedicated to attracting sporting events.

Recommendations

#1. Create a Unit Responsible for Special Event Attraction, Creation, Cultivation, Promotion, and Facilitation

A new program, the Mayor's Office of Special Events, should be created, responsible for attracting and promoting special events, and creating and cultivating a limited number of homegrown, signature special events. The program should also have responsibility for facilitating permitting (by serving as an information clearinghouse and first point of contact, as recommended below) and other City support of prominent privately organized events. Also, it should be integral to seeking sponsors for and backstopping unsponsored events if necessary, such as Fourth of July and Halloween. This office should also provide policy direction regarding special events, including helping to create a strategic master event calendar/program that would help ensure optimal distribution of events throughout the year, across neighborhoods, and the creation of new, signature events. Policy consideration might also include developing a uniform fee policy, policy for cost recovery of City services, and public noticing requirements. This office should coordinate with other City units related to special events, including those responsible for facility booking. This office should specifically work with Grants for the Arts to consider its role in creating and expanding local cultural events. In addition, the City should consider associating the Mayor's Office of Protocol with the new Office of Special Events.

The Board of Supervisors should amend Chapter 90 of the Administrative Code to create the Mayor's Office of Special Events and transfer responsibility for promoting events and the use of city facilities for events, as well as planning and coordinating City services for unsponsored events like Halloween, from the Entertainment Commission to the newly created office. These amendments should include language requiring the Mayor's Office of Special Events to coordinate closely with the Entertainment Commission.

Note that one full-time employee within the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development already supports prominent special events. This position should be transferred to the Mayor's Office of Special Events. One additional position would be necessary to meet the

new responsibilities outlined above. This position would be responsible for addressing special events policy as well as leading new event attraction and creation efforts.

#2. House the Entertainment Commission in the Mayor's Office

The Entertainment Commission does not currently have the capacity to address its authority to promote, facilitate, and expand the City's entertainment offerings. The Civil Grand Jury found that this shortcoming was in part due to poor communication with the Mayor's Office.³ In order to improve communication, the Entertainment Commission should therefore be housed within the Mayor's Office and closely coordinate its functions with the office that will undertake broader special events activities and policy, the new Mayor's Office of Special Events. The Mayor's Office of Special Events will serve as the primary first point of contact for producers and residents regarding special events. As the Entertainment Commission already plays this role to some degree, the two organizations' activities should be closely coordinated. In addition, the Entertainment Commission should consider using its public hearings as an informational forum to discuss special events and make recommendations regarding special events policy to the Mayor's Office of Special Events and permitting agencies.

#3. Involve the Convention and Visitors Bureau in Event Attraction, Creation, and Promotion

As noted, the Visitors Bureau's mission of attracting visitors and spurring hotel booking is closely aligned with the economic development opportunity created by special events. The City should discuss a potential expanded role for the Visitors Bureau in attracting new events, creating local events (including serving as the fiscal agent in some cases), and promoting existing events to tourists and residents.

Question 2: Can the City increase the number and quality of special events by streamlining the permitting process?

Existing Situation and Opportunities

Currently, several City departments and commissions have the authority to issue permits related to special events. There is no formal centralized office or "one-stop shop" where event producers can obtain information about holding special events or submit permit applications. Therefore, event organizers frequently have to interact with a variety of agencies when planning their event. If the event requires a street closure, the event producer must obtain a Temporary Street Occupancy permit from the Department of Parking and Traffic, through the Interdepartmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation (ISCOTT).⁴ If the event is to

³ Page 6: "Communication between the Entertainment Commission and the Mayor's office has not been sufficiently good to allow such efforts [promoting the development of a vibrant entertainment and late-night entertainment industry] to move forward."

⁴ The Interdepartmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation (ISCOTT) consists of representatives from the Department of Parking and Traffic, Department of Public Works, Police Department, Fire Department, Public Health Department, Municipal Railway, City Planning Department, and Entertainment Commission. Under Article 21 of the Traffic Code, ISCOTT has the authority to issue permits for the temporary use or occupancy of public streets. Before acting on any permit, ISCOTT is required to consult with any other City department or agency that could be affected by a temporary use or occupancy of a public street and to conduct a public hearing.

be held in a public park, the producer must obtain a permit from the Recreation and Park Department, and if the event is to be held on Port property, the producer must obtain a permit from the Port Commission. Most special events require a Loudspeaker or Sound Amplification permit, which is issued by the Entertainment Commission or Recreation and Park Department.⁵ In addition, events that include the sale or distribution of food or beverages must obtain a permit from the Public Health Department, and events that include the use of open flame devices or fireworks must obtain a permit from the Fire Department. Table 1 below illustrates the many permits that may be necessary for a special event, and the agencies that issue them.

Table 1: Permits Required for Special Events

Type of Event	Likely Permits Required	Issuing Agency
Street Fair	Temporary Use or Occupancy of a Public Street	Parking and Traffic/ISCOTT
	Loudspeaker/Sound Amplification	Entertainment Commission
	Temporary Food Establishment Permit for Special Event	Public Health
	Open Flame Devices, Fireworks, Tents	Fire Department
	Temporary Occupancy of Street for Construction (e.g., of a stage or platform)	Public Works
Concert/Music Festival in a Public Park or on Port Property	Use of Public Park or Port Property (for Special Event)	Recreation and Park or Port
	Loudspeaker/Sound Amplification	Entertainment Commission or Recreation and Park
	Temporary Food Establishment Permit for Special Event	Public Health
	Open Flame Devices, Fireworks, Tents	Fire Department

In addition to obtaining the appropriate permits, event producers may have to work with other City departments and pay various fees. For example, many events require staffing by the Police Department, the costs for which must be borne by the event organizer, and many require coordination with the Department of Public Works for clean-up after the event.⁶ In addition, “major” events (as defined in the Traffic Code) require an Emergency Medical Service Plan approved by the Department of Public Health, as well as an insurance policy naming the City as an additional insured party, on a form approved by the Office of Risk Management. The involvement of various city agencies in permitting and coordinating special events is demonstrated by the sample Temporary Street Occupancy permit issued by ISCOTT included in Appendix C.

Case Study: San Diego Exemplifies Best Practice in Special Events Permitting

Many experts in event planning have identified San Diego as a model of effective customer service regarding permitting special events. The San Diego Office of Special events serves as a single point of contact for special events permitting. It maintains an informative website, provides a useful handbook of guidelines for special events producers, and facilitates permit issuance by accepting a single, consolidated permit application, and walking it through the

⁵ The Entertainment Commission issues sound amplification permits for the Port through a Memorandum of Understanding. The Recreation and Park Department issues their own sound amplification permits.

⁶ The event producer may also make separate arrangements for clean-up rather than use the Department of Public Works.

approval processes of relevant agencies. The permitting process is backstopped by a clear local ordinance and policy that address process, prioritization, appeals, and fees (and waivers).⁷ This provides a high degree of transparency and consistency to the process. Note that denied special event permits are appealable directly to the city council Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhood Services.

San Diego's office is also actively engaged in seeking and submitting bid proposals to bring major events to San Diego. Once a major event is secured, the office serves as the liaison between the event organizer, host committee, community, and city departments. San Diego is often cited as a major competitor with San Francisco for conventions, special events, and tourists.

Findings

#7: Permitting Process May Be Difficult to Navigate for New and One-Time Events

According to several event organizers interviewed for this report, the current special events permitting process in San Francisco works reasonably well for long-standing annual events with experienced organizers who are familiar with the process, but may be difficult to navigate for new events and one-time events. Since there is no single, publicized point of contact for special events permits, event organizers unfamiliar with the process may spend a great deal of time simply figuring out who to contact at the various agencies involved. Indeed, it is unclear how event organizers currently ascertain where to initiate the permit application process, as there is no web site devoted to special events or written guidelines distributed by the City. In addition, communicating with several different agencies is time-consuming and often confusing, and since many special events in San Francisco are organized by volunteers, the City should seek to make the permitting process as expeditious and easy to navigate as possible.

#8: Entertainment Commission Lacks the Capacity to Be a “One-Stop Shop”

Chapter 90 of the Administrative Code states that it is the policy of San Francisco to have the Entertainment Commission “assist the organizers and operators of cultural, entertainment, athletic and similar events and establishments to apply for, and obtain from the commission and other City departments...all necessary permits from the City.” However, based on our research, the Commission only has the capacity to perform this function in a limited fashion for certain events. According to Deputy Director Jocelyn Kane, the Entertainment Commission’s four staff members spend at least 50% of their time dealing with special events permitting and facilitation (as opposed to dealing with other kinds of permits issued by the Commission, such as Place of Entertainment permits). The Entertainment Commission has a seat on ISCOTT, issues permits for sound amplification, addresses neighborhood complaints and concerns regarding sound amplification permits in its public hearings, and provides a sound technician to assist in setting up sound equipment and monitoring noise levels. In our interviews, event organizers reported that the Entertainment Commission staff is very helpful and makes every effort to facilitate the permitting process. However, in its current form, the Entertainment Commission has not been funded to be, nor has it assumed the role of, a “one-stop shop” for new and one-time events. In

⁷ San Diego Administrative Code Division 40: Special Events

its July 2007 report, the Civil Grand Jury found that the “Entertainment Commission appears to have minimal involvement, at best, in [the events] permitting process.”⁸

#9: ISCOTT Provides an Effective Forum for Permit Review by Various City Departments, But Lacks the Capacity to Provide Sufficient Facilitation for New and One-Time Events

The process of issuing temporary street closure permits through ISCOTT is generally sound and working well. According to several local event producers, ISCOTT is the first point of contact for many event planners. ISCOTT provides a forum for several City agencies to simultaneously review event permit applications and gives the public an opportunity to present their concerns regarding proposed events. In addition, when ISCOTT issues a permit, Cindy Shamban, the Department of Parking and Traffic representative, provides the event producer with a packet that includes information regarding the permit holder’s rights and responsibilities and a checklist of other permits that are required for the event. ISCOTT also maintains a list of upcoming street closures on the Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) web site.

However, ISCOTT does not provide further facilitation of the permitting process once a temporary street closure permit has been issued. After providing the permit checklist, Ms. Shamban does not have sufficient time to shepherd permits through other agencies, or follow-up with event organizers to ensure that they are obtaining the necessary permits.

#10: Mechanisms for Public Involvement in the Permitting Process Could Be Improved

While the ISCOTT process provides for a public hearing for temporary street closure permits, this procedure alone might not provide for adequate consideration of neighborhood concerns regarding special events or allow for sufficient public involvement once a permit is approved. For one thing, the ISCOTT process only applies to events that require a street closure. Events held in public parks and on Port property are not always subject to a public hearing, and the Entertainment Commission only requires a public hearing regarding sound amplification permits for events that will occur after 10:00 p.m.

The ISCOTT process itself might be improved by providing greater public outreach to ensure that San Francisco residents are aware of the hearings and have an opportunity to present their concerns. As a staff committee, ISCOTT lacks the visibility and notoriety a commission might enjoy, and therefore having an organized system of public outreach is essential. Article 21 of the Traffic Code requires permit applicants to post notices of the public hearing at least seven days in advance of the hearing in the “area of the proposed temporary use or street occupancy according to rules and regulations prescribed by the Director [of the Department of Parking and Traffic].” In addition, Ms. Shamban has a list of neighborhood organizations and businesses that she emails when an application is submitted for an event in their area. While Ms. Shamban’s efforts are commendable, this system does not ensure that the public at large and businesses not in the immediate vicinity of the proposed event are aware of the hearing.

Furthermore, there is currently no formal mechanism for the public to issue complaints or express concerns once special events permits are issued. As a result, residents often contact the

⁸ *The Entertainment Commission: A Work in Progress*, 2006-2007 Civil Grand Jury, City and County of San Francisco, report released July 9, 2007.

Mayor's Office or their representative on the Board of Supervisors and ask them to intervene on their behalf. Currently, at least one staff member in the Mayor's Office spends a significant amount of time mediating between the event organizers, City departments, and the public. This process is not the most effective method of addressing neighborhood concerns.

#11: Permitting Process Lacks Transparency and Consistency

The fragmented and ad hoc nature of the current permitting process results in a lack of transparency in decision making and can lead to inconsistent treatment of event permit applications. In our interviews, several event producers expressed the opinion that events are treated differently with regard to special conditions placed on their permits and fees charged (or waived) depending on the agency issuing the permit. In many cases, the reasons for this disparate treatment were unknown. In particular, the event producers pointed to differences in decisions made by various district police captains, and in treatment by the Port and Recreation and Park departments, as opposed to ISCOTT and the Entertainment Commission. At present, there are no written guidelines or policies that address when a fee can be waived. According to Port of San Francisco staff, any fee waivers for events on Port property must be approved by the Port Commission, although these are generally granted only for large events, such as the Fourth of July celebration or the 2007 Major League Baseball All-Star Game activities.

One result of the lack of transparency and consistency in the permitting process is the perception by some event organizers, expressed during our interviews, that the City does not recognize the value of special events to the quality of life and economy of San Francisco. They believe that department employees are sometimes inflexible and uncooperative with event organizers in order to avoid dealing with vocal City residents who oppose events in their neighborhood. They believe the City should embrace special events and departments should work with the organizers to make events happen while addressing neighborhood concerns.

Recommendations

#4: Create a Dedicated Web Site for Special Events

Currently, there is no web site devoted to special events in San Francisco. The City should create one that provides information for event organizers, including permit application materials and links to and contact information for the relevant departments and the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau. It should also provide information for individuals interested in attending special events, including a calendar of events. Such a calendar currently exists on the City's 311 web site and the Visitor's Bureau web site.⁹ However, these pages are not directly accessible from the SFGov home page and may be difficult to find. Indeed, the 311 events calendar does not even appear on the first page of results if one searches for "events" or "special events" on the City's web site. Finally, the web site should provide information for concerned citizens, such as a calendar of public hearings regarding special events and direct them to the appropriate agency to lodge complaints. If the City creates an Office of Special Events under the Mayor, as proposed above, this office should maintain the special events web site. Otherwise, it should be the responsibility of the Entertainment Commission or ISCOTT.

⁹ Under "Events in San Francisco" at http://www.sfgov.org/site/sf311_index.asp?id=58009

#5: Establish a Single Point of Contact for Initiating Special Events Permits

To assist event organizers unfamiliar with the City's special events permitting process, the City should establish and publicize on its web site a single point of contact for initiating special events permit applications. This office would provide information to event organizers, including the permit checklist currently distributed by ISCOTT, and perhaps a more thorough "orientation packet" with information on the rights and responsibilities of event organizers, and the fees they may be required to pay. This office could also provide increased facilitation of the permitting process. However, event organizers would not be required to go through this office and could submit permit applications directly to ISCOTT or the other permit-issuing agencies. If the City creates a Mayor's Office of Special Events, as proposed above, this office should serve as the point of contact for initiating special events permits. Otherwise, it should be the responsibility of the Entertainment Commission or ISCOTT.

#6: Improve the Mechanisms for Public Involvement in the Special Events Permitting Process

In order to adequately address neighborhood concerns, the City should increase community outreach and enhance posting requirements to increase public awareness and participation in ISCOTT hearings. In addition, the City should identify a single entity for handling complaints about special events and, as noted above, include information on the special events web site. By creating a Mayor's Office of Special Events and moving the Entertainment Commission to the Mayor's Office, the City will be fostering coordination between the mediation and facilitation functions currently provided by the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the public hearing function of the Entertainment Commission. Once it is established, the Mayor's Office of Special Events should take a leadership role in assessing the public participation mechanisms of the permitting process, and further consider the relationship between ISCOTT, which is a staff committee, and the Entertainment Commission, which is an appointed body. Finally, as recommended above, the Entertainment Commission should consider using its hearings to discuss neighborhood concerns regarding special events and make recommendations on events policy.

#7: Ensure Fair and Consistent Treatment of Event Applications

One way to ensure that event applications are treated consistently would be to provide increased guidance to departments regarding fee waivers, cost recovery, and the imposition of special conditions on event permits, as San Diego does. The proposed Mayor's Office of Special Events should be responsible for determining and issuing these guidelines, or recommending legislation if deemed necessary. In addition to providing transparency and consistency, this action may also partially address the sentiment that the City does not recognize the importance of special events.

#8: Consider Creating a Single Application for Special Events Permits

One way of further streamlining the event permitting process would be to create a single application or packet of applications for all of the relevant permits, as is the practice in San Diego. This application packet could be available on the special events web site. However, taking this action may only be beneficial if the City assigns one agency the responsibility of receiving the application packet, distributing it to the appropriate departments, and following up with the department staff to ensure timely review of the applications. At this juncture, it is unclear whether such a system would make the permitting process more efficient or create a bottleneck. In our interviews, at least one event producer expressed concern over putting the permit application process entirely in the hands of one office. He was more comfortable bearing the responsibility of working with several different agencies to obtain permits himself rather than relying on a City employee to monitor the status of the applications.

Question 3: Can the City increase the utilization of and revenue from City facilities used for special events?

Existing Situation and Opportunities

The City owns numerous prominent facilities, under the jurisdiction of different departments, that are available to rent for one-time uses, including concerts, trade shows, conventions, sporting events, and receptions. These include the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, City Hall, County Fair Building, Kezar Stadium, Monster Park, Moscone Center, the Asian Art Museum, and the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center (comprised of Davies Symphony Hall, the Opera House, and the Veterans Building). Bill Graham, City Hall, and Moscone are all under the jurisdiction of the City Administrator, whereas Monster Park, Kezar Stadium, and the County Fair Building are under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department (RPD). The Asian Art Museum, and War Memorial and Performing Arts Center are under the jurisdiction of their own departments. The facilities vary in the amount of value (derived through utilization, revenues, local economic development, and other impacts) they provide to the community. The marketing efforts for these facilities are performed in each separate department.

Findings

#12. Coordinated Marketing and Booking Could Increase Utilization of Certain Civic Facilities

The City does not currently have robust metrics in place to measure the benefit derived from civic facilities. Although some, such as the Moscone Center, have high utilization rates, others, such as Bill Graham and Monster Park, do not. Note that marketing is just one of many factors that impact the utilization and revenues of the facilities. In addition, the inherent strengths and weaknesses of a facility and competition with other facilities are important factors.

Individuals associated with event operations for various facilities suggested during this research project that it would be easier for private event coordinators, and therefore financially attractive

to the City, if the City better coordinated or consolidated booking support, as it might result in additional events and greater utilization.

Recommendations

#9. Create a Single Information Point for Booking Civic Facilities

The large number of agencies marketing and booking civic facilities makes it challenging for individuals and organizations unfamiliar with the City's offerings to select and book a facility. Better communication and coordination would be beneficial. Providing transparent, coordinated booking and event support should be balanced against competing resource demands, and a realistic assessment of the costs and benefits. Some suggested that a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system might be an appropriate means of coordinating booking. At the very least, the City should create a single high "findability" website providing information on the City's venues and contact information. This site should be coupled with that for special events generally. In addition, the City should consider establishing an online calendar that indicates what facilities are available, when. This would serve both members of the public interested in reserving facilities, as well as City staff cross-marketing facilities that are not their primary responsibility.

Conclusion

Special events are important to the culture and economy of San Francisco. The cancellation of a City-sponsored Halloween celebration has shed light on the fragmented permitting process currently in place and the ad hoc system of attracting, creating, and promoting special events. Establishing a Mayor's Office of Special Events, and linking it to the Entertainment Commission, will provide for a single point of contact for new events, and allow for greater facilitation of the permitting process. It will also enhance the City's ability to address neighborhood concerns and ensure transparency and consistency in decision making.

Appendix A: Text of Board of Supervisors Requests

The Request to the Controller (Reference #20070814-009):

Requesting that the Office of the Controller conduct research into the need for, feasibility of, and fiscal impact of a dedicated and separately funded Office of Special Events in San Francisco. Specifically:

- 1) What are the cost benefits of annual city events such as Fleet Week, Halloween, neighborhood street fairs, Gay Pride, Lunar New Year, and others.
- 2) What are the cost expenditures of such City departments as the Entertainment Commission, Office of Protocol, Mayor's Special Events Staff, San Francisco Police Department, Recreation and Park Department, Port of San Francisco, and others.
- 3) What would be the cost impact of creating a dedicated Special Events office, with the capacity to consolidate and/or oversee the activities currently engaged in by these various departments, comparable to the Special Events Offices in Chicago, Boston, New York City, Houston, and other cities.

The Request to the Office of the Legislative Analyst (File #071213):

Motion requesting the Legislative Analyst to conduct research into the need for and feasibility of a dedicated and separately funded Office of Special Events in San Francisco. Specifically, whether the activities currently engaged in by such City departments as the Entertainment Commission, Office of Protocol, Mayor's Special Events Staff, San Francisco Police Department, Recreation and Parks Department, Port of San Francisco, and others might be effectively consolidated into and/or overseen by an office comparable to the Special Events Offices in Chicago, Boston, New York City, Houston, and others.

Appendix B: List of Findings and Recommendations

Findings

1. San Francisco Could Benefit Economically and Culturally from Additional Special Events
2. No City Agency is Currently Focused on Attracting, Creating and Promoting Special Events; Mayor's Office is Best Suited
3. Convention and Visitors Bureau or Other Nonprofit Agency Could Effectively Play Larger Role in Attracting and Promoting Special Events
4. Grants for the Arts Could Participate in Event Attraction, Creation, and Promotion
5. Unsponsored Events Like Halloween Are Likely Best Managed by the Mayor's Office in Cooperation with a Private Event Producer
6. The City Could Be More Proactive in Pursuing Sporting Events
7. Permitting Process May Be Difficult to Navigate for New and One-Time Events
8. Entertainment Commission Lacks the Capacity to Be a "One-Stop Shop"
9. ISCOTT Provides an Effective Forum for Permit Review by Various City Departments, But Lacks the Capacity to Provide Sufficient Facilitation for New and One-Time Events
10. Mechanisms for Public Involvement in the Permitting Process Could Be Improved
11. Permitting Process Lacks Transparency and Consistency
12. Coordinated Marketing and Booking Could Increase Utilization of Certain Civic Facilities

Recommendations

1. Create a Unit Responsible for Special Event Attraction, Creation, Cultivation, Promotion, and Facilitation
2. House the Entertainment Commission in the Mayor's Office
3. Involve the Convention and Visitors Bureau in Event Attraction, Creation, and Promotion
4. Create a Dedicated Web Site for Special Events
5. Establish a Single Point of Contact for Initiating Special Events Permits
6. Improve the Mechanisms for Public Involvement in the Special Events Permitting Process
7. Ensure Fair and Consistent Treatment of Event Applications
8. Consider Creating a Single Application for Special Events Permits
9. Create a Single Information Point for Booking Civic Facilities

**Appendix C: Sample Temporary Street Closure Permit for A Special Event
Issued by ISCOTT**

**TEMPORARY STREET CLOSURE PERMIT
FOR A SPECIAL EVENT
ISSUED**

Temporary Street Closing

Ms.

San Francisco, CA

Dear:

Your application for the temporary street closures of:

has been **approved**.

This permit has been issued to you, the sponsor of the event, on the basis of the site plan and other information which was presented to ISCOTT. Any subsequent changes to this plan must be submitted in writing, including a new site plan if appropriate, to Cindy Shamban of the Department of Parking and Traffic. She will consult with the various impacted City agencies and will inform you, in writing, if the changes are acceptable. DEVIATION FROM THE FINAL APPROVED PLAN COULD MEAN IMMEDIATE REVOCATION OF THIS PERMIT.

The following list is a reminder to you of the conditions to which you have agreed in order to have received the approval for your temporary street closure. You, as the sponsor of the above event, are responsible for making sure those conditions with a bullet next to them are being met.

- Removal of the Public Hearing Notices that were posted by Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) staff on the above approved street(s). Return a signed copy of the enclosed "Declaration" from within 10 days to DPT.
- Insurance Requirements: See attachment. Insurance must be submitted to the Department of Parking & Traffic, attn: Cindy Shamban by .
- By acceptance of this permit, the permittee agrees to indemnify, hold harmless and assume the defense of the City and County of San Francisco from and against any and all claims, demands and actions for damages resulting from work under this permit, regardless of the negligence of City and County of San Francisco.
- The establishment of temporary blue zones for the duration of the event (72 hours advance signing is required). See the Enforcement Notification Form attached to the permit for further information.
- The number of portable toilets required is; at least of them are required to be wheelchair accessible. Each of the accessible bathrooms shall have a sign on them which reads: "Priority is to be given to individuals with disabilities in the use of this accessible facility." Each cluster of bathrooms should have at least one wheelchair accessible bathroom.

- Signage at each entrance to the event that shows path of travel, restrooms, phones (if any), all accessible features, drinking fountains and the name of a contact person and their location who is responsible for dealing with any problems which may arise during the street closure.
- A 14 foot emergency access lane throughout the entire street closure.
- San Francisco Entertainment Commission Permit. If there is to be amplified sound, a sound permit is needed. Please contact the Entertainment Commission at 554-5793 for further information. The Entertainment Commission would appreciate the submittal of an application soon after you receive this permit. See the sound permit application enclosed.
- Contact from the District Police Station, at least **before your event**. He can be reached at. It is through him that you can arrange for barricades and the posting and towing of vehicles. **NOTE:** In the event that police barricades are requested, and provided, the event sponsor is responsible for returning all of the barricades to the same location and same configuration as they were delivered when provided. In instances when barricades are not gathered and reassembled, additional fees for personnel hours will be assessed and may preclude use of police provided barricades in the future.
- Paying for San Francisco Police Department services during the course of the event pursuant to Article 21, Section 806 of the San Francisco Municipal Code.
- As of January 31, 2006, the SFPD is no longer providing barricades for events other than street fairs; parades and Civic events. You, as the event organizer, are responsible for arranging for barricades through a private vendor. Barricades should be delivered as close to the event time as possible and must be picked up as soon as possible after the event has ended.
- By, please notify Cindy Shamban, DPT, of the barricade vendor, the vendor contact person, their contact information and date of barricade delivery and pick up.
- Hiring Parking Control Officers during the course of the event. Please contact Assistant Director Debbi Fong-Borthne to confirm at 553-1620.
- Paying for the advance signing costs. This work will be done through the Department of Parking and Traffic, Traffic Sign Division.
- Paying all MUNI fees connected with substituting diesel buses for electric buses.
- Department of Public Health's Temporary Event Permit(s). Please contact Mr. Ajamu Stewart, Special Events Coordinator for DPH at 252-3828. **Note: DPH requires at least 10 working days to process permit applications.**
- San Francisco Fire Department Permit(s) is required if there is to be cooking with propane, butane, charcoal briquettes or open flame and/or tents erected. Please contact Inspector Manuel Pegueros at 558-3366 for more information. **Note: SFFD requires at least 10 working days to process permit applications.**
- **EMS REQUIREMENT:** There is a requirement for an Emergency Medical Service Plan. Attached to this permit is further information on this requirement. **This plan is due by.** If you have any questions, please contact Dr. John Brown directly at 415-355-2607 or you can refer to the following website: www.sanfranciscoems.org
- Department of Public Works' Permit (s). (A reminder: all stages must have a ramp with a

slope not to exceed 1:12 or an ADA approved portable lift.) Please contact Street Use Permits at 554-5810.

- A one day alcohol permit is required from the Alcohol and Beverage Commission (ABC). Please contact them at 415-356-6500 for further information.
- A permit from the Recreation & Park Department is required. Please contact Ms. Sandy Lee at 415-831-5500 for further information.
- A permit from the Port of San Francisco is required. Please contact Ms. Joyce Chan at 415-274-0259 for further information.
- Arrange with the Department of Public Works or make your own arrangements for cleanup after the event. If you want to use DPW, please contact Ms. Alison Mickels at 695-2130. **You are responsible for cleanup. If DPW is sent into the area after the event to do additional cleanup, you may be liable for the cost of this service.**
- Adherence to the recycling plan. A letter or a copy of the invoice from both garbage and recycling vendors confirming their services for this event must be submitted to the Department of Parking & Traffic, Attn: Cindy Shamban by. See attachment to this permit for further information.
- Please contact Ms. Jordana Thigpen of the Taxi Cab Commission, at 503-2183, for further information on the establishment of a temporary taxi zone at least **two weeks before your event**.
- Monitored Bicycle Parking is required. Be sure that the location of the bicycle parking is on the site maps and on event advertising. Please refer to the "Suggested Guidelines For Monitored Bike Parking at Special Events" that can be found in the ISCOTT application packet for further details.
- The placement of tobacco advertising and promotional displays in publicly visible locations is strictly prohibited by San Francisco Police Code Section 674. In addition, the placement of tobacco advertising and promotional displays on property owned or controlled by the City and County of San Francisco is strictly prohibited by San Francisco Administrative Code Section 4.20. Any violation of this ordinance during your event could result in the revocation of this permit.
- Other:

Further information about all of the above will be found in the Temporary Street Closure application packet. There may be other items for which you are responsible that are not covered in this permit. You are still responsible for all provisions laid out in the Temporary Street Closure Application packet. If you have any further questions, please contact Cindy Shamban, of my staff, at 701-4683.

Very truly yours,

Jack Lucero Fleck
City Traffic Engineer

By: Harvey Quan
Senior Engineer

