

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

October 14, 2021
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Freeburg – Parks
Andy Heider – Parks
Dane Waisanen – Fire
Mike Shovlin – Police
David Sanabria – Police
Rick Logwood – Transportation
Weijun Zhu – Transportation
Erin Hislop – Utilities
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative East
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative Downtown
Chris Dunham – Business Representative West
Roz Liming – Business Representative, Crossroads
Laurie Scott – Downtown Resident Representative
Jonathan Rose – King County Metro

OTHERS PRESENT: Brad Bennett, Imane Elmesbahi, Parks; Councilmember Barksdale; Jennifer Leavitt, Kemper Development Company

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 a.m. by Chair Freeburg who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral – None

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Waisanen. The motion was seconded by Ms. Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the September 8, 2021, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Ms. Scott. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ogliore and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report – None

6. OLD BUSINESS – None

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Application of Intent: Pakistan Independence Day Celebration

Chair Freeburg said the first iteration of the event was in August 2021. From all accounts it went well and the organizer is looking to do the event again on August 14, 2022.

Captain Sanabria said his memory was that the Committee had traditionally reviewed all applications for the upcoming year at the first meeting of the year. Chair Freeburg said her thinking was that applications that are received early should be approved. January 15 is the last date by which recurring events can apply to secure their historical date, applications received after the priority date risk event dates being taken.

Mr. Ogliore pointed out that the Committee could get into the game of how early organizers can submit their applications where two events might be interested in the same date. Having something closer to the deadline would allow for navigating that issue.

Captain Sanabria noted that there have been times when events competed for the same venue or date and time, and the past chair of the Committee had to navigate that. Where there is a specific meeting set to review all of the applications, the Committee is able to have in hand a more complete picture of what the asks for city facilities will be during the year. Recurring events were given preference in terms of date, time and location.

Mr. Christiansen allowed that there have been challenges in the past when taking the bulk approach in early January, particularly with events that occur early in the year. Such events need more time to prepare.

Councilmember Barksdale said it did not make sense to him that an organization wanting to schedule an event in February would have to wait until January 15 before gaining approval for date, time and location. He added that the issue should be addressed in the manual if it is not.

Chair Freeburg reminded the Committee members that the issue had previously been raised and the decision was made to keep the January 15 date. There was at that time, a discussion about allowing for early approval of recurring events seeking their same date. She stressed that January 15 is the latest date by which event applications can be submitted, it is not the date on which the Committee to act to review and approve applications. Applications not submitted by January 15 lose their priority. New events will not be approved for dates that an event historically occupies prior to the January deadline.

Councilmember Barksdale argued that a new event wanting a date early in the year should be given the time they need to plan, meaning they will need approval prior to January 15.

Chair Freeburg proposed tabling the discussion and bringing it up at the next Committee meeting to allow for some research into how things have been done in the past and possible solutions. The Committee members concurred.

❖ Snowflake Lane

Ms. Jennifer Leavitt reminded the Committee that the Snowflake Lane event always starts the day after Thanksgiving and runs through Christmas Eve. She noted that the event had been

modified quite a bit for its last iteration because of Covid. For the upcoming 2021 event, about 75 percent of the original show will happen. The parade component will go ahead, which requires closing the street with trucks and barriers at both ends while allowing for protected pedestrian crossings. The same is done for all of the private drives that attach to Bellevue Way from the Bellevue Collection properties; special barriers are used to protect pedestrians from coming from the garage onto the street.

For 2021 about 100 fewer kids will be used in the show. There will be a need to allow for enough room for them to spread out in their spaces while accommodating social distancing. While in the past years there has been a line of kids performing in the center of the street as the parade moves around them, the upcoming event will not include the line down the center, thus the little stages will not be needed, avoiding the need to cross through the public between the by the Cheesecake Factory. All characters will perform as a part of the parade, mitigating contact with the public at the sidewalk level. The stilt walkers will have some interaction with the public. By virtue of their height, the stilt walkers will be socially distanced from the crowd. They also help with traffic management by reminding people to step back.

Ms. Leavitt said there will still be snow and there will still be music, but there will only be one show per night running about 20 minutes. The timing with the trucks will mirror the 2019 event. A practice with the police team in the morning will be done as has been done before. The trucks will be parked onsite, eliminating the worry of having them weave through traffic. Eco blocks will be used as they have been in the past to prevent anyone from driving up onto the curb. Signs will be posted on all poles to remind people about masking. Installation will begin on November 2 and by November 22 all will be ready for full testing. All disassembly will be completed by January 11.

Councilmember Barksdale asked if there will be a designated path on the sidewalk for anyone to use who might need to get away from the crowd quickly. He also asked if those participating in the parade will be required to be vaccinated. Ms. Leavitt said she would check with the employer for all of the performers to see if vaccinations are required. She added that participants must be 14 or older to be in the show.

Chair Freeburg pointed out that parades are exempt from the vaccination requirement.

With regard to getting away from the crowd, Ms. Leavitt noted that the biggest nights of the show are those that are closest to the holiday season. She said there is really no way to provide for a designated way out of the crowd. As the show has evolved, the fence line has been changed. The fence is primarily used to provide for lighting, except for on the Lincoln Square side where there is a need to keep people from hopping over the grade change where the planter boxes are. Given that the street is closed to vehicles during the show, anyone needing to urgently get away from the crowd can easily exit via the street. Mass exit can be accommodated in the same way. There are a couple of key spaces that are manned by security to keep people moving, including in front of the Lincoln Square doors under the sky bridge, and in front of Starbucks. The challenge points are mostly between NE 8th Street and the drive by the Cheesecake Factory, and those doors are managed with security personnel, who also help keep people moving.

Mr. Rose said it was his understanding that Bellevue Way is the only roadway that gets blocked off. Ms. Leavitt confirmed that Bellevue Way between NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street is blocked off, along with a single eastbound lane by Crate and Barrel where the trucks are parked prior to their entry.

Ms. Scott asked what time the streets are blocked. Ms. Leavitt said National Barricade begins with the left-hand lane of Bellevue Way from NE 8th Street going westbound, and the straight lane southbound on Bellevue Way is the last to close. The street is fully closed by ten minutes to seven. Captain Shovlin added that a game-time decision is always made by the incident commander based on crowd size and the amount of traffic on the street.

Ms. Leavitt added that a covering is put up on the sky bridge to keep people from gathering there. A coating is put on the window and that helps to mitigate the crowding that occurred on the skybridge in past years.

Mr. Zhu asked Ms. Leavitt if she is the person he should contact in regard to permitting issues. Ms. Leavitt confirmed that, adding that the permit should be almost exactly the same as for the 2019 permit except for the addition of the eco blocks. Mr. Zhu noted that one year there was an issue with the placement of the eco blocks. There are ADA requirements and other factors that need to be considered. He said four different right-of-way use permits will be needed: one for placing the PCMS signs, one for UPO flagging, one for placing the eco blocks, and one for putting up lights and covering the sky bridge. Ms. Leavitt said GLY will get the permit for the crane that puts the lighting up on the buildings. Mr. Zhu suggested the permit applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Captain Sanabria asked if the performers would be brought back across from Bellevue Way. Ms. Leavitt said all performers will be at the sound end and will come up NE 4th Street in a mini parade to avoid any interaction with the crowds. The parade floats will still come off of NE 6th Street as they have before.

Mr. Zhu suggested the Routing Subcommittee should meet to review the particulars of the event and to identify any additional issues or questions.

Chair Freeburg reminded the Committee members that the Snowflake Lane application had been previously approved.

❖ Code/Administrative Manual Updates

Chair Freeburg shared with the Committee members that the manual and code had been submitted for review to the legal department. A couple of wording changes were suggested but nothing substantial.

❖ Post-Event Evaluations

A. Bellevue Beats Music Series 2021

Chair Freeburg noted that the weather was good for the event and said everything went smoothly without any real challenges.

Mr. Ogliore said there were between 50 and 60 people attending the Downtown Park Plaza venue. There were no weather issues and the people enjoyed free live music in outdoor venues. Load in/load out was very smooth, and support was offered from Downtown residents on the other side of the park. All the feedback was positive. In all there were 16 shows and hopefully next year there will be a return to the full complement of 30 shows.

Councilmember Barksdale asked how the event was advertised. Mr. Ogliore said the Bellevue

Downtown Association does not enjoy a large marketing budget and as such relies on the members using their social media platforms to get the word out. An events database has been built up over the years and emails are sent out to those names.

Councilmember Barksdale said he was unaware of the event and suggested the city could do a better job of promoting events.

B. Crossroads Movies 2021

Chair Freeburg said attendance for the movies were reduced from previous years due to Covid. There were some challenges given that the seating area was pushed back further from the screen. There was also a car accident that occurred during the event but it was handled quickly. No major changes are planned for near year's iteration of the event.

❖ Comments/Follow-up

Ms. Scott agreed with Councilmember Barksdale that the city could do a better job of advertising events. She said there were quite a few Downtown residents who were not aware of the concerts. There should be a format where people can go to find out what is going on in the city and that could be used to promote events. Chair Freeburg commented that the Committee is not a promoting body. She added that the Special Events Committee website is being improved to include lists of upcoming events. Additionally, economic development is looking at a promotional piece in concert with VisitBellevue to make it happen. She said over the summer months she worked with communications staff from the city to get some events posted to NextDoor.

Ms. Scott said it would be helpful for people living in the Downtown to know when events are planned, even if they do not plan to attend them. For instance, it would be good to advertise what times the roads will be closed for Snowflake Lane. Mr. Zhu pointed out that special events that will have traffic impacts are posted in advance on the city's traffic advisory website as well as on NextDoor. Information is also shared with Google so that Google Maps can be updated with regard to scheduled closures.

Councilmember Barksdale commented that there is a calendar on the city's website, and people can sign up to receive alerts. He proposed finding a way to leverage either one or both of those to advertise events.

Chair Freeburg said she would welcome assistance from a committee member to help push out awareness of events. She said she has been working with the communications team, but it takes time to get things developed.

Mr. Ogliore said the BDA has received complaints from residents about not being informed about events. When asked how they want to hear about events, some say they want to hear about them on the news. That, however, is prohibitively expensive, as are direct mailers to everyone in the city. A more direct way to get the word out is needed and he said he would meet with the city's communications team to see what can be done.

Councilmember Barksdale said he would be happy to lend his voice in support of efforts to improve methods for communicating about events to the public.

Ms. Scott noted that she serves as a member of the HOA of Washington Square where she lives.

She said bits and pieces of information about events is received from various sources, and she said as soon as she sees something she sends it to the general manager for publishing in the newsletter. If something could be pushed out to the HOA for each apartment and condominium complex, it would be very helpful.

Mr. Christiansen said he did not see it as the responsibility of the city to send out that type of information. Rather, it is the responsibility of the event coordinators. There likely would be a cost to the city with which the city should not burden itself.

Councilmember Barksdale agreed that any paid advertising should be the responsibility of event organizers, but added that he could see no harm in using the city's existing communication infrastructure to send word out. He added that it might be a good idea to have someone from the communications team serve on the Special Events Committee. Chair Freeburg said she could look at doing that. If they are to become permanent members of the Committee, the code would need to be revised accordingly.

There was general agreement in favor of adding a communications staff to the Special Events Committee membership.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ December 9, 2021

8. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 9:28 a.m.