



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council
From: Director of Corporate Services
Subject: **Special Events Permitting Review**

File No.: 4320-70
Date: July 31, 2024

PURPOSE: To seek Council approval to include a review of the Special Events Regulation Bylaw No. 2393, 2005, in tandem with the development of a Special Events Policy to ensure a comprehensive understanding and mitigation of event associated risks.

BACKGROUND:

The benefits of local governments supporting events extend across multiple domains, including culture, community cohesion, economic development, and beyond.

Cultural Enrichment: Events provide platforms for celebrating and showcasing diverse cultural traditions, art forms, music, dance, food, and more. They serve as avenues for cultural exchange, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures within the community. By supporting events that promote cultural diversity, local governments contribute to preserving heritage, promoting inclusivity, and enriching the cultural fabric of the community.

Sense of Community: Events create opportunities for community members to come together, interact, and forge meaningful connections. They strengthen the sense of belonging, unity, and social cohesion within the community by providing spaces for shared experiences and collective participation. Through events, individuals can build relationships, foster camaraderie, and develop a sense of pride and identity in their community.

Economic Development: Events have the potential to drive economic growth and development within a community. They attract visitors, stimulate tourism, and generate revenue for local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, shops, and service providers. Events also create job opportunities, boost local spending, and contribute to the overall economic vitality of the area. By supporting events, local governments can spur economic activity, support entrepreneurship, and enhance the sustainability of local businesses.

Community Well-Being: Events contribute to the well-being of community members by offering recreational, leisure, and entertainment opportunities. They provide outlets for relaxation, enjoyment, and stress relief, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. Participation in events promotes physical and mental health, nurtures creativity, and fosters a sense of happiness and fulfilment within the community. By supporting events that cater to diverse interests and age groups, local governments can promote holistic well-being and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

Civic Engagement and Participation: Events serve as platforms for civic engagement, volunteerism, and community involvement. They offer opportunities for individuals to contribute their time, skills, and resources towards common goals and causes. By providing avenues for participation and

collaboration, events empower community members to actively engage in decision-making, problem-solving, and community building. Local governments that support events facilitate citizen participation, strengthen social ties, and cultivate a culture of civic responsibility.

The City currently supports events in a variety of ways including in-kind support, grant contributions and permitting (e.g. park use, road closure and special events permits). The permitting process for special events is a crucial aspect of City efforts to ensure public safety, maintain order, and protect the well-being of our community. By requiring event organizers to obtain a special event permit, the City is able to thoroughly assess and approve important details such as event location, date, expected attendance, traffic control plans, and emergency response protocols. The permitting process also allows the City to address potential issues such as noise levels, waste management, and public health concerns, to maintain the overall quality of life for our residents and visitors.

Allowing special events to take place on public land without adequate permitting processes can pose several risks to the safety and well-being of attendees, the surrounding community, and the environment. Some of the potential risks include:

Public Safety Concerns: Without a permitting process, there may be inadequate measures in place to ensure the safety and security of attendees. This could lead to accidents, emergencies, or other incidents that put individuals at risk.

Lack of Infrastructure Planning: Events held without a permit may not have proper infrastructure in place, such as adequate transportation, parking, or waste management facilities. This can lead to congestion, environmental damage, and health and sanitation issues.

Disruption to the Community: Events held without a permit may cause disruptions to the local community, such as increased noise levels, traffic congestion, or damage to public property. These disruptions can negatively impact residents and businesses in the area.

Environmental Damage: Events held without proper permits may not adhere to environmental regulations, leading to damage to natural habitats, pollution, or other negative impacts on the environment.

Legal and Liability Issues: Without a permitting process, organizers may not have proper insurance coverage or liability protection in place. This can leave event organizers, attendees, and the government vulnerable to legal and financial risks in the event of accidents or incidents.

In general, implementing a permitting process that acknowledges the positive impact of community events and provides appropriate and supportive government assistance is key to preserving the benefits for the community while also effectively addressing public safety and risk management concerns. This approach ensures that event organizers, the City, emergency and health services, and attendees all work together to create safe, successful, and enjoyable events that contribute to the well-being and vitality of the community.

DISCUSSION:

Community events play a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing social interactions, and promoting community cohesion. However, ensuring the safety and well-being of both event attendees and the City is paramount. The existing deficiencies in the Special Events Regulation Bylaw, combined with the

lack of an overall City Events Policy present risks that need to be addressed to host and support safe and well-organized events.

While there is a permitting process in place for special events as outlined in the City's Special Events Regulation Bylaw, it does not always adequately mitigate risks. For instance, events with fewer than 1000 attendees are not required to apply for a Special Events Permit and may only need to obtain a road closure or park use permit. The disparity between the requirements for a special event permit and a road closure or park use permit is significant. Special event permits require organizers to consult and seek support for their events plans from the RCMP, Fire Department, and Island Health. In contrast, road closure permits require traffic management plans and that event organizers notify emergency services of the event, while park use permits limit requirements to adherence to such things as park bylaws and insurance requirements. This difference in consultation and approval requirements between the road closure and special event permitting processes means that the risks associated with events that bypass the Special Events permit process may not be sufficiently addressed, potentially leaving the City and its residents vulnerable to safety, logistical, and environmental concerns.

Event Example: A recent event in our community sought an Event Road Closure Permit instead of a Special Event Permit as they anticipated less than 1000 attendees. With less rigorous permitting requirements the event organizers were not required to engage with businesses and residents who would clearly be impacted by the event. The lack of required notification or consultation by the event organizers to businesses, and residents who would be impacted by the event resulted in hardships which may have been avoided. Additionally, although a road closure permit was issued, the event organizers relocated City traffic control equipment to areas that were not outlined in the permit request nor the approved traffic management plan, which resulted in access to a local park being blocked from public access. This unauthorized road closure posed significant life safety risks as emergency responders would have been impeded from reaching the park promptly in the event of an emergency. In addition to life safety risks, the unauthorized closure of the road to the park negatively affected businesses resulting in disruptions to operations and revenue loss. The aforementioned unmitigated risks underscore the critical need to address deficiencies in the Special Events Regulation Bylaw.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan – Special Event Findings

The City's 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) identifies special events as an area in need of policy development.

Key Finding: The City has many events year-round that support community identity and spirit; insufficient policies and strategies for events may be affecting the ability to adequately support significant events.

As outlined in the analysis of the feedback solicited through the PRMP development, the "biggest gap is boots on the ground just prior to, during and after the event". While the PRMP identifies logistical hosting gaps and needs, it does not explicitly identify safety or risk management/mitigation in the review recommendations. Although "regulatory requirements" are noted as required component of a future policy, what would be considered as a regulatory requirement is not described. The event policy development work is anticipated to start in 2025 or 2026 providing an opportunity to incorporate risk management and safety into the policy's development framework. Some possible ways in which the future Event Policy can more effectively mitigate risk and enhance public safety include:

Enhance Consultation Requirements: Implement commensurate consultation requirements with impacted businesses and residents to address their interests and safety concerns during the planning process.

Improved Coordination: Establish coordination systems with relevant authorities, such as internal City departments, RCMP, Fire Department, and Health Authority as a prerequisite for event permits to address safety risks effectively.

Review of Permitting Processes: Reassess the permitting process to more appropriately align permitting processes with the level of risk.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Courtenay Parks and Recreation Master Plan: recommends the development of a Special Events and Hosting Policy.

Official Community Plan:

- LU 16 Prioritize infrastructure investment using a multiple bottom line decision-making approach based generally on the following parameters and priorities: High growth areas, public health and safety, environmental responsibility, regulatory needs, asset management principles, economic efficiencies and impact, such as partnerships, project coordination and economic spinoffs.
- ST 6: Advance the short- and medium-term actions identified in the Transportation Master Plan and Cycling Network Plan with high priority allocated to actions that promote cycling, transit, shared use and accessibility including but not limited to ...
 - i. Prioritizing safety and operational improvements that improve road safety and efficiency

Regional Growth Strategy: Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Options 1 and 2: The specialized work outlined in options 1 and 2 is not included in the current financial plan. The cost to conduct a risk analysis as part of, or in advance of the Special Event and Hosting Policy development framework, is estimated at \$15,000-\$25,000.

Option 3: No implication, maintains the status quo.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Option 1: Event permitting and support is currently provided by the following departments as follows:

- Parks, Recreation and Community Services: responsible for issuing park and facility use permits, City hosted events, and relationships with arts, culture and community organizations.
- Operational Services: responsible for issuing Road Closure Permits, providing general event support (e.g. traffic management plans, equipment loans, before and after infrastructure requirements and logistics etc.), and relationship with the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Area.
- Corporate Services: responsible for administering the Special Events Regulation Bylaw and promoting hosted events.
- Fire Department: conducting event inspections to ensure emergency service access, and ensuring compliance with all fire prevention requirements.

- **Financial Services:** responsible for providing guidance to the organization on matters of risk.

Any growth in the number of events requiring permits, or an expansion of permitting requirements will likely require additional resources. An operational review, conducted as part of the Special Events and Hosting Policy development process, would identify any new operational requirements.

Option 2: Includes option 1 implications, and creates new administrative and financial requirements as an event risk analysis is not currently in the 2024 workplan. If selected, this option is anticipated to impact existing workplans and some project timelines.

Option 3: No administrative implications, maintains the status quo.

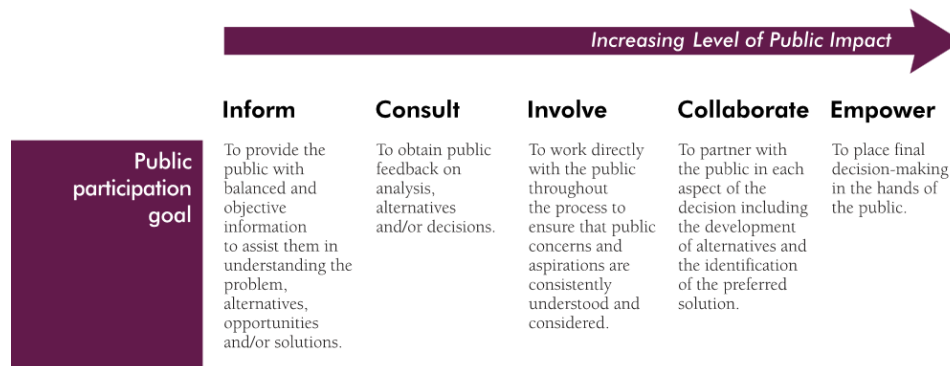
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Arts, Culture, and Heritage - Implement Strategic Cultural Plan
- Local Economy - Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities for the City in the delivery of economic development services in the region
- Local Economy - Review City processes that may be barriers to economic development

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public via a report to Council based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council direct staff to review event-related bylaws and permitting requirements as part of the development of the Special Events and Hosting Policy anticipated to be undertaken in 2025/2026, identifying options and opportunities to improve risk management related to health, safety, business and community impacts.
2. THAT Council direct staff to report back on the impacts and implications to the 2025 workplan should staff undertake a more immediate review of the City's event permitting processes and identify options and opportunities to improve risk management related to health, safety, business and community impacts in advance of the Special Events and Hosting Policy work planned for 2025/2026.

3. THAT Council receive the report “Special Events Permitting Review” for information and take no further action.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Special Events Regulation Bylaw No. 2396, 2005

Prepared by: Kate O’Connell, Director of Corporate Services

Reviewed by: Kurt McDonald, Fire Chief

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Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Scott Hainsworth, Manager of Procurement and Risk

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)

THAT Council direct staff to incorporate health, safety, and risk management/mitigation into the City’s Special Event and Hosting Policy development framework; and