

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: TARA THOMPSON, ARTS & CULTURE MANAGER  
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT OVERVIEW AND REVIEW OF  
RELATED FEES

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

---

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning & Economic Development Department that the Council hold a study session to receive information on the Special Event Permit process and related fees, including cost recovery analysis, and provide direction to staff.

---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff will present an overview of the special event permit process with an emphasis on and to inform the discussion pertaining to current special event permit fees, types and volume in a typical year, analysis of City costs to support special events, and options for addressing cost recovery through changes to the fee schedule.

BACKGROUND

Special Event Permits encompass a variety of permit types, including Special Event Permits, Block Party Permits, Civic Site Permits and Film Permits. Currently housed in the Economic Development Division, the division's Arts & Culture Manager is responsible for managing the program with limited administrative support and one part time contract employee as budget allows. In a typical year, between 50-100 permits are issued for use of city streets, sidewalks, creek trails, parking facilities, alleys, City Hall campus, Depot Park, and Courthouse Square. The events in Courthouse Square usually account for about half of all issued permits. Events in parks are permitted by the Recreation & Community Engagement Department through a Park Permit.

Permitted special events range from weekly recurring events such as the Wednesday Night Market, week-end long events such as Sonoma County Pride Parade & Festival, and the Santa Rosa Marathon, and one-day events such as the Rose Parade & Festival, Human Race, Railroad Square Music Festival, bike rides, free speech events, community outreach, and more. The process for reviewing, conditioning, and supporting

## SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FEES

### PAGE 2 OF 5

each permitted event includes multiple staff from the following departments or divisions, depending on the location and type of event: Police, Fire, Transit, Traffic, Streets, Parking, Parks, and Recreation.

Current fees for Special Event Permits were adopted in 2017 through a City-wide fee schedule update when special event permits were issued by the Recreation & Parks Department. With the exception of attendance-based fees for Courthouse Square, the updated approach and subsequently adopted fees was a “one size fits all” fee structure regardless of the impact on the community or City resources.

### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On March 24, 1992, the City Council, by Resolution No. 20722, amended Council Policy 000-09, renaming the policy “Procedures for Permitting Special Events and Obtaining City Sponsorship,” and establishing an application fee.

On June 6, 2017, the City Council, by Resolution No. RES-2017-090, established new and revised fees within the City’s fee schedule for Event Permits.

### ANALYSIS

While there is general recognition within the City of Santa Rosa of the community benefits that result from Special Events, it is equally recognized the cost of City services and resources should be better or more adequately considered. Since Event Permit fees were last updated in 2017, the demand for event permits as well as the demand for City resources have increased. The reunification of Courthouse Square into a desirable event space has contributed to this increase by approximately 50%. During this same timeframe, departmental capacity to support special events has been impacted by challenges including staffing shortages, budgetary restrictions, and crisis management diversions (namely fires, power outages, and the pandemic).

An analysis of Special Event Permits in FY18-19 revealed that, in addition to the issue of volume, the increasing size and/or complexity of permitted events has increased the staff time required to review the application and proposed site diagrams and routes, set conditions, and establish requirements. Calculations for how much time each department or division spends to evaluate an application had not been considered in the past when setting permit fees. Thus, moving forward it is important Council consider a fee structure that more accurately takes into consideration the size and/or complexity of the event AND the actual cost of staff time, and allow better management options for when those impacts undermine the community benefit.

Prior to a 2017 policy and fee schedule update, the fees for Special Event Permits consisted of a flat \$75 processing fee for all events regardless of location, size or impact, with the possibility of an additional deposit collected to cover other costs such as traffic control and public safety services. The 2017 Council approved update adjusted the fees as shown in the “current” column in the table below. Upon analysis of

**SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FEES**

PAGE 3 OF 5

the actual cost of evaluating and reviewing permit applications, staff has calculated various cost recovery options for consideration, also as shown below, with some exceptions made for the application fee.

**SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS: CURRENT FEES AND COST RECOVERY OPTIONS**

<b>Fee Type (permit fees are per day)</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Option 100% Cost Recovery</b>	<b>Option 75% Cost Recovery</b>	<b>Option 50% Cost Recovery</b>
Special Event Permit Application Fee	\$75	\$75	\$75	\$75
Special Event Permit	\$125			
Basic event		\$225	\$169	\$112
Moderate event		\$550	\$412	\$275
Complex event		\$1,200	\$900	\$600
Seasonal Street Market Application Fee (annual fee per location)	\$75	\$75	\$75	\$75
Seasonal Street Market Permit (annual fee per location)	No Fee	\$1,200	\$900	\$600
Block Party Permit Application Fee	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25
Block Party Permit	No Fee	\$50	\$38	\$25
Film Permit Application Fee	\$75	\$75	\$75	\$75
Film Permit	\$175			
Basic set up		\$225	\$169	\$112
Moderate set up		\$550	\$412	\$275
Complex set up		\$1,200	\$900	\$600
Civic Site Permit Application Fee	\$50	\$75	\$56	\$38
Civic Site Permit for Civic Sites (except Courthouse Square)	\$50	\$75	\$56	\$38
Civic Site Permit for Courthouse Square (Non-Profit)				
1-250 ppl	\$50	\$150	\$112	\$75
251-750 ppl	\$100	\$225	\$169	\$112
751-1500 ppl	\$200	\$350	\$262	\$175
1501+ ppl	\$350	\$700	\$525	\$350
Civic Site Permit for Courthouse Square (Commercial)				
1-250 ppl	\$100	\$300	\$150	\$150
251-750 ppl	\$200	\$450	\$338	\$225
751-1500 ppl	\$400	\$700	\$525	\$350
1501+ ppl	\$700	\$1,400	\$1,050	\$700
Add-on fee for use of Courthouse Square side streets	\$25 ea	eliminate		

Current policy allows for staffing of permitted events to be reimbursed at the burdened rate, for a damage deposit to be collected and for reserved or blocked parking meter costs to be reimbursed, as shown below:

## SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FEES

PAGE 4 OF 5

### ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR PERMITTED EVENTS

Refundable Damage Deposit	up to \$2,500
Park Maintenance	Burdened Rate
Traffic Control Plan Review	Burdened Rate
Police Services	Burdened Rate
Fire Services	Burdened Rate
Reserved or blocked parking spaces	Current meter rate, plus cost of signs (event is responsible for posting signs)

There are other factors to consider when looking at the cost to support Special Event Permits, including city sponsorship through the Community Promotions Fund. As established by Council Policy 000-47, this is an annual Council allocation of, typically, \$125,000 for Community Promotion. The policy states that non-profit organizations are eligible to receive community promotion funds, and that the funds should be used primarily to fund City services, that the activity should generate revenue to the City, have broad-based community participation and be open to the public, and take place within city limits.

Historically, events such as the Rose Parade, Wednesday Night Market, and Human Race received community promotions funding mainly for in-kind city services. However, the amount awarded has never been adequate to cover the actual cost of services and the City has greatly subsidized these events for many years, mostly through Police, Fire and Transportation and Public Works services. While it is current practice to charge each event for the difference between funding received through the Community Promotions grant and actual costs for services, the reality is that this is not feasible for most events that receive funding, equating to an additional unplanned gift of City services.

### FISCAL IMPACT

The general fund is negatively impacted by Special Event Permits as current permit fees do not allow for full cost recovery for staff costs. Revising the fee schedule to allow for more than current or full cost recovery will positively impact the general fund. However, additional staff support is needed to process and issue permits. A part-time Administrative Secretary level position supporting Special Event Permits would be more cost effective with the additional revenue from increased permit fees supporting the new position.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council finds that the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT FEES  
PAGE 5 OF 5

effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

CONTACT

Tara Thompson  
Arts & Culture Manager  
[tthompson@srcity.org](mailto:tthompson@srcity.org)  
543-4512