



# CITY OF CONCORD

*New Hampshire's Main Street™*

## REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**FROM:** Ad-Hoc Special Events Committee

**DATE:** June 20, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Proposed LEAN Recommendations to the City's Event Permitting Process

### **Recommendation**

Accept this report and its proposed changes to the City's Events Permitting Process.

### **Background**

One of the key recommendations from the Ad hoc Special Events Committee was to have City staff conduct a LEAN exercise to identify obstacles and redundancies in the events permitting process and recommend strategies to streamline the effort to improve customer service.

An all-day LEAN event was held on Wednesday, May 17, 2017 at City Hall. The following individuals participated in the effort:

- Tim Sink, President, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce
- Michelle Johnson, Intown Concord Executive Director
- Kate Fleming, Intown Concord Events Coordinator
- Miriam Carter, League of NH Craftsmen, Interim Executive Director
- Dan Andrus, Fire Chief
- Keith Mitchell, Deputy Police Chief
- Barrett Moulton, Sergeant, Police Department
- Mike Santa, Code Administrator
- Gene Blake, Health & Licensing Officer
- Chris Hilstro, Licensing Coordinator
- David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director
- Laura Bryant, Recreation Supervisor
- John Andersch, Recreation Assistant
- Jim Kennedy, City Solicitor
- Laura Gallagher, Legal Intern
- Carlos Baía, Deputy City Manager

The event was facilitated by Kate McGovern from the State's Bureau of Education and Training.

## Discussion

The group mapped out the entire events permitting process using Market Days as a case study. *This exercise made it evident that the existing process required 8 distinct review points which seemed unnecessarily complicated.* It also illustrated that the existing process requires applicants for events of this scope to initiate contact with several different departments all for the same event. For example, the event organizer would need to apply with Code for the permits for the use of the street for the fair. Simultaneously, they would need to contact the Parks Department for a permit to use Eagle Square and Bicentennial Square, they would also need to apply to the Fire Department for a permit for the beer tent. City Council would also be involved, and as a result, add time to this process through the need to approve the initial street closure request and then to approve requests to allow the serving of alcohol on City streets.

This process was quickly identified as being overwhelming—particularly to new event organizers—and not customer service oriented. The external stakeholders commented that they found City staff to be very friendly and willing to help but once the current process was mapped out graphically during the LEAN event, the reaction by everyone (external and internal) was that the current system could very much be improved.

The following recommendations from that LEAN event were presented to the Events Committee at its May 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Committee voted to recommend these changes to the City Council.

1. City should create a stand-alone webpage or “micro-site” for Concord events that would be easily found through standard search engines and would have most of the information anyone interested in events would need to know. It should also be visually appealing and also include video tutorials and testimonials. It should include the necessary permit application that could be filled out electronically, if the customer so desired. As a long-term recommendation, this process should ultimately be automated to a large degree so that the form and payment can be sent electronically.
2. City should have one universal events permit form where information required for Fire, Parks or Council could all be captured (rather than three or more forms today);
3. With limited exceptions, there should only be one (1) point of contact for an event organizer at the City. That would be the Code division. The Health and Licensing Officer or Licensing Coordinator will coordinate amongst the various departments (Parks, Fire, Police, GSD) and relay the necessary information back to the applicant.
4. Authority for the permitting of events in Eagle Square and Bicentennial Park should be transferred to the Code division out of the Parks and Recreation Department.
5. It is imperative that consistency and transparency imbue this event permitting process. Today, certain events and their vendors are subject to the assessment of certain fees while others are not despite the fact that they are similar in nature. The consensus of the LEAN team was that this requires clarification and

simplification but there was not enough time for the LEAN team to resolve this matter during its exercise. The recommendation here is that City staff—working with external stakeholders—pursue needed changes to create a customer-friendly, transparent application of fees that does not inhibit the fostering of events. City staff is committed to this effort. This may ultimately require amendments to the existing City ordinance which is a two month process at City Council.

6. City Council should consider delegating authority for the approval of road closures and the serving of alcohol on City streets to the City Manager. This would eliminate up to 30 days of delay on each end of the permitting process. Staff could still provide Council with a summary of those approvals on a monthly or quarterly basis for reference. This change would require amending the current City ordinance.
7. City should implement a post-experience electronic survey for event organizers linkable from the new permitting webpage or “micro-site” discussed in #1 above. This survey should also be referenced in the permit application.
8. The LEAN event also began with an observation that there are archaic sections of the City’s permitting ordinance that should be reviewed and potentially be recommended for amendments. The LEAN team did not have an opportunity to tackle this specific issue but City staff will follow through on it over the next several weeks. Implementation of any recommendations for this item would require Council action.

*If the above recommendations were all to be implemented, the review points in the permitting process for the case of Market Days would drop dramatically from eight (8) to one (1). This conclusion was quite impactful and the LEAN team believes the changes could make a tremendous difference in the experience of other applicants as well.*

The recommendation to re-assign the responsibility for permitting of Eagle Square and Bicentennial Square from Parks and Recreation to the Code Administration Division was reviewed by the City’s Recreation Parks Advisory Committee at its June 15, 2017 meeting. Although RPAC was unable to obtain a quorum that evening, the members present were supportive of the change.

Draft amendments shall be forthcoming to Council to implement the ordinance changes noted above.