



Seattle
Special Events Office

Special Events Committee Meeting Minutes

November 10th, 2022

Via WebEx meeting

Member and Partner Representatives in Attendance:

Agency	Representatives	Noted in Minutes As
Citizen Representatives	Lisa Fraiser	Citizen Representative
Department of Construction & Inspections	James Dasher	DCI Noise Abatement
Department of Neighborhoods	Osbaldo Hernandez Shahagun	DON
Finance and Administrative Services	Christopher Lopez	FAS
King County Metro Transit	Jonathan Rose	Metro
Mayor's Office	None in attendance	MO
Parks and Recreation	Carl Bergquist	Parks
	Orlando Carter	Parks
Seattle-King County Health Department	None in attendance	Health
Seattle Center	Gretchen Lenihan	Seattle Center
Seattle Department of Transportation	Michael Minor	SDOT
	Wayne McCann	PEO
Seattle Fire Department	None in attendance	SFD
Seattle Police Department	Diane Lalor	SPD Operations
	Ryan Keith	SPD
Seattle Public Utilities	None in attendance	SPU
Special Events Office	Randy Wiger	Chair
	Hannah Tyo	SE
WA State Liquor & Cannabis Board	None in attendance	WSLCB

Additional Attendees:

Tina Inay - OED

Note: As always, these are "raw minutes notes" based on the discussion of the 11/10/2022 meeting and do not include every word spoken - not a literal transcript - merely a summary of ideas.

Post-Event Evaluations/Comments:

- None

Meeting Minutes Review:

- We do not have a quorum to approve meeting minutes and will have to review October and November's SEC meeting minutes at the December Minutes

Committee Business –

- Permit Specialist position – Hannah Tyo accepted the offer to fill the position Julie left in early August. Start is/was November 9.
- Started our partial Closure October 17 and will continue through Dec 4 – this will create some staff

bandwidth to work on needed process improvements.

- The hope is we can route the 2023 permits we received prior to October 17th BY Dec 5th
- We are working on a j drive reorganization (internal filing system)
- Chair will be sending out meeting invites for one-on-one department meetings after today's committee meeting – would like to have these before Thanksgiving. Would this work for Committee members?
 - Seattle Center: Recommendation of using subcommittee meeting time for these meetings
 - CHAIR: Great idea, but we are booked for the November 17th Subcommittee meeting times. We will send out meeting invites and are open to adjustments and changes to suit your teams.
- CHAIR: We are tasked with coordination and facilitation and in that we want to create a collaborative environment. Please let us know how we can improve our collaboration to keep the important work that comes through the Special Events Committee.

Right-sizing SEO workload

- We have identified that this office is significantly under resourced. Please see document provided for this email (in notes below).
- Discussion
 - PARKS: Continuing to search for that optimal staffing is ideal. We don't want burnout and Parks appreciates the coordination that SEO does for our customers.
 - CHAIR: Thank you for your kind words.
 - SEATTLE CENTER: Although the capping method is challenging, we have had to do this. We had to stop booking in Nov/Dec at Seattle Center because we do not have the capacity. It's not ideal, but we had to. When SEO reaches a certain number of bookings for a month, you could stop taking new ones. There is a little in-between here that you can make those demands from event holders.
 - CHAIR: Idea – we could create a max amount of permits we can accept a month/week. Also sounds like SC has an idea of how many staff hours it takes to put together an event.
 - PARKS: The thing that comes up for me is the collateral for the effect on departments. I am totally for 30-45 day before cut off. We need a hard deadline to avoid bias. Want to double check there are not things in the ordinance that would be affected by the partial decentralization.
 - CHAIR: Yes, we are considering how this would work.
 - PARKS: Like the idea of a maximum number of permits issued per week. Something to explore.
 - CHAIR: one other idea that we are considering putting to a vote is not accepting permit applications less than 30 days in advance. We won't go into too much detail today, but would like to discuss in December and put to a vote.

I. Recap

As previously noted in July 11 SEC meeting:

Currently SEO labor is insufficient to perform required tasks for daily permit process workflow operation, let alone addressing a significant backlog of deferred maintenance, incremental improvements, and problem items and policy work.

Optimum staffing is 4 permanent FTE to process approx. 400 permits per year (2019 reference)
Staff-to-permit ratio of 1:100.

For 2022, SEO staffing is 2 FTE with about 330 permits projected for all 2022 events.
Staff-to-permit ratio of about 1:165, or about 65% above optimum.

2023 may be 2.5 FTE Q2. Assumption that permits will return to approx. 400 permits per year.
Staff-to-permit ratio of about 1:160, or about 60% above optimum.

The program cannot function with this staff-to-permit ration without placing a significant # of permits at risk of failure to be issued.

II. Solutions for Right-sizing the SEO workload to the labor available

When a workload is greater than available labor, there are two options.

A) Increase staffing

Increasing staffing to reduce the ratio of staff-to-permits to a manageable level is a preferable option. Currently the proposed 2023 budget does not provide any funding for adding labor to the Special Events Program. Some solutions are being discussed, but none are far enough along in implementation to know if they might be successful.

B) Decrease the workload

There are 4 options identified:

- 1.) Do nothing – continue as previously.
- 2.) Allow some permits to fail to be issued.
- 3.) Cap the total # of permits issued in 2023.
- 4.) Partially decentralize SE Permit workflow.

(details on each on page 2)

There could be other strategies to be considered for reducing the workload to match available labor. If solutions can be implemented to provide a sustained increase in labor, then these strategies can be revisited, revised, or discontinued.

1.) Do nothing – continue as previously.

Although it appears that the SE program has been successful in issuing around 400 permits per year for several years (not counting 2020 and 2021 COVID years) - which raises the question of why is the Office struggled in 2022 and is projected to struggle in 2023 for similar workloads, it is apparent that part of how staff achieved an increasing workload was by means of shortcuts. The totality of shortcuts that has now become routine has resulted in significant verification lapses, increased city liability, lower levels of customer service, use of untested assumptions, a significant backlog of delayed corrections and improvements, and an increasing shift to a crisis-driven dynamic.

- It is unsustainable and unethical to permit the continued use of these shortcuts.

2.) Allow some permits to fail to be issued.

Staff could continue to provide quality service to avoid the shortcuts, but there would inevitably be a number of weeks – especially during the peak months of May into October – where the number of permits which need to be issued in a given week simply exceed the amount of labor available. Staff may put in the position on a weekly basis of making on-the-spot decisions as to which permits are left un-issued, possibly based on which events had turned in all their required documents (so that a permit could be issued), and which events haven't – which is unlikely to have any equity in the result. This means some events would be in their final planning stages and find out the week of their event that they would not be receiving a permit.

- Obviously, this is an unacceptable solution.

3.) Cap the total # of permits issued in 2023

Some cities do cap the number of Special Event permits they issue. A reasonable review of the circumstances of each city which does this has not been undertaken. It could be that a cap was put in place early in a city's history of issuing Special Events permits and has now become accepted as the norm there. For SEO a cap of 200 permits would be needed to reduce workload to available labor. A 50% reduction in permits (400 down to 200) creates serious racial equity issues, and functionally there is unlikely to be a successful way to choose which events do and do not get a permit, considering the number of for-profit businesses (races, business district festivals, etc.), the number of community celebrations, events with alcohol service, and free speech/mixed free speech events which all rely on the availability of permits. Given that the city does not have the option to refuse free speech/mixed free speech events, the number of these type of permits per year could be subtracted from the cap of 200, and then the remaining number of permits would be divided between all the remaining events.

- This is unlikely to be a viable solution.

4.) Partially decentralize SE Permit workflow.

The brief version of this solution is for SE staff to continue providing the early stages of permit coordination (application intake, review, routing to member departments, and overall tracking), but to discontinue issuing a final Special Events 'master permit'. Instead, each department would interact directly with applicants to be able to issue their part of the final master permit bundle directly to the applicant. In this solution, the SEO labor savings would come from the decrease in centralized coordination of the permit workflow (after the initial stages listed above). With the cessation of issuing a final bundled master permit, there would be no rationale for charging Special Events permit fees, which also provides significant labor savings (as the program does not have an online payment option and all fees are processed by hand). This would allow individual departments to charge fees directly which are currently charged by the Special Events program.

- While far from ideal, this solution could be viable in ways the preceding solutions are not.
- If at some point additional labor is added to the program, the coordination and related functions could be restored.