



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 22-064

Date: May 25, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

From: Chris Lagerbloom, ICMA-CM, City Manager

Subject: Barrier Island Special Event Planning and Operations

Throughout 2022, the City Commission has relayed concerns about the planning for special events on the barrier island, specifically the associated traffic and congestion impacts that are created. The intent of this memorandum is to provide you with a better understanding of the special event planning process, event day operations, and some recommendations that are being implemented to mitigate the challenges.

The special event process starts with an application from the event organizer that outlines the event details, needs, and general information. The application serves as the baseline for staff review, which includes Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Mobility and Public Works departments, as well as Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale and the Fort Lauderdale Open Spaces Coordinator. To make sure the event organizer understands the City's expectations, there is a coordination meeting with the applicant to discuss the logistics, concerns, and negotiate through conflicts and challenges of the event. During these meetings, the City is represented by staff from Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Mobility, Fort Lauderdale Police, Public Works and Fort Lauderdale Fire, Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale and the Fort Lauderdale Open Spaces Coordinator. The meeting is scheduled weekly, contingent on event applications, and is open to the public with invitations being sent out to civic associations and local businesses that may be impacted by the event. The City seeks to have as much participation at these meetings as possible, so that any concerns and issues can be mitigated before the event.

Once the event details are worked through, the applicant is required to enter into an agreement with the City. The agreement outlines the event details, roles, responsibilities, and other legal considerations such as insurance and indemnification. If the event is less than 500 patrons, with no requests for road closures, amplified music exemption and/or alcohol, the Parks and Recreation Director can administratively approve the event. For larger events, or events with greater than 500 patrons and/or requests for road closures, amplified music exemptions and/or alcohol, the application package and event details are prepared for a City Commission meeting where the Commission approves or denies the event. Currently, staff does not have the authority to deny an event without Commission authorization.

For events with roadway and sidewalk impacts, the event applicant is required to submit a Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) application. The MOT identifies the mobility impacts and provides alternative travel options through pedestrian and vehicular detour plans. The MOT should align with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) standards and, alike other MOT applications, the application is reviewed by multiple City departments including Transportation and Mobility, Development Services Department, Fort Lauderdale Police, and Fort Lauderdale Fire. Once the MOT is approved, the event organizer is required to facilitate the signage, cones, variable message boards, and/or other physical requirements to ensure the MOT plan is implemented and followed by the public which is satisfied through hiring of a certified MOT company.

The Fort Lauderdale Police Department is involved throughout the event planning efforts and identifies the staffing requirements for crowd control, traffic operations, and general security measures. The event organizer is responsible for funding police staffing. During the event, the Police Department monitors and manages the real-time conditions and makes decision based on underlying circumstances to mitigate any associated issues. The safety and wellbeing of the general public is prioritized which may include road closures, traffic stoppages, and other actions to manage the event ingress and egress. During the ingress and egress, the pedestrian movements to and from the event are prioritized over vehicular movements.

Given the recent feedback of barrier island special events, City staff are working to better define the event requirements and staffing levels. While it would be ideal to add more traffic controllers to the events, it has to be balanced with the available resources (many times there are multiple events throughout the City at the same time). The following are items that are currently being reviewed:

- **Festival Street Closure:** The section of Las Olas between Seabreeze and Fort Lauderdale Beach Boulevard, also known as the festival street, was created to expand the Oceanside Park space to allow for food trucks, vendors, and additional pedestrian space. The festival street mitigates the vehicular interactions from the event space. As the festival street is relatively new, there has not been a standard in place for when it is utilized. Based on the associated traffic impacts created by utilizing the festival street, it will only be used for City events and events that are granted approval for the road closure by the City Commission for events that have a significant number of attendees, equipment or vehicles that would be damaging to the artificial turf or require redirection of traffic surrounding the event space for public safety.
- **Las Olas Garage Rooftop:** The Las Olas Garage rooftop has been utilized over the past year as an event space. The event space is challenging based on the garage logistics and there have been numerous complaints from the neighbors about the lighting, sound, and traffic impacts of these events. In early 2022, there was an event that damaged the facility amenities and at that time staff

suspended any new applications for the space. Staff evaluated the requirements for future use, and it will only be utilized for City events and major events that provide a significant economic benefit to the City.

- Recommendations to Deny: In May 2022, there were two events that staff brought to the City Commission with a recommendation to deny. This recommendation is uncommon, but given the recent challenges, staff will be providing a more objective lens to provide the City Commission with a recommendation based on the associated impacts. The City Commission will make the final decision on if the special event is approved or denied.
- Staffing Requirements: Given the neighbor feedback, each City department is reviewing the staffing levels that are provided for events. This includes the public safety billable hours and general services, like the number of parking attendants to mitigate traffic impacts. As stated earlier, the number of staff will fluctuate depending on the event, the available resources, and other competing factors. In addition, the City is researching alternative staffing plans such as creating a dedicated event liaison that would be the central point of communication between the City and the event organizer throughout the event day.

In closing, the City Commission is the ultimate decision maker on the events that take place on the barrier island. Should there be a desire to reduce the number of events, restrict specific dates and or times, restrict specific locations for special events, or overhaul the process; I'd recommend that we schedule a discussion at an upcoming Conference meeting to further discuss the concerns and the associated impacts.

For further information regarding this update, please contact Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation and Mobility, at brogers@fortlauderdale.gov.

c: Tarlesha W. Smith, Esq., Assistant City Manager
Greg Chavarria, Assistant City Manager
Alain E. Boileau, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, Interim City Auditor
Department Directors
CMO Managers