

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Chief Administrative Office
Community Culture & Connections
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Audrey Ansell, Director, Community Culture & Connections
Date: November 6, 2023
Subject: 2023 Special Events Update

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

In May 2023, the Special Events section moved to Community Culture & Connections from Parks, Fleet and Facilities. The Community Culture & Connections department consolidates municipal service areas with mutual interest and synergy in building quality of life across Chatham-Kent. The service areas include Arts + Culture, Community Attraction & Promotion, and Library Services.

The Special Events (SE) section is part of Community Attraction & Promotion and manages the event approvals process, providing a single point of contact for event organizers and a central coordination point for approving municipal departments that form part of the municipal review team. The SE area does not approve events per se, rather it coordinates the approval process. SE has dedicated, full-time staff and receives excellent processing support from the municipal Customer Service team.

SE application approval steps are based on the:

- [Special Event Manual](#)
- [Municipal Alcohol Policy \(MAP\)](#)
- [Special Event application/approval process.](#)

The SE process is focused on helping organizers meet municipal expectations set out in the SE Manual and MAP as well as those of several government agencies including:

- Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA)
- Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)
- Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO)
- Private Security and Investigative Services Act (PSISA)

The SE function is responsible for collecting complete and relevant event information from organizers and providing it, in an effective and timely manner, to the appropriate municipal departments for approval. When all municipal departmental approvals have been completed and all required documentation is in place, a SE Letter of Approval is issued to the event organizer.

Comments

Since May 2023, a simple three-phased approach to integrating and managing the Special Events section has been adopted, the phases are:

1. Immediate Actions
2. Intermediate Actions
3. Development Opportunities

Underpinning this work, the SE section has committed to key goals that will support efforts occurring now and into the future and they are:

- a) Supporting and enhancing the SE application process for event organizers
- b) Supporting and enhancing internal SE application processing
- c) Excellent Customer Service to enhance SE delivery in Chatham-Kent

Phase 1: Immediate Actions

a) Supporting and enhancing the SE application process for event organizers

The [SE website](#) has been redesigned to provide clear, easily accessed information about the varying requirements associated with different event activities.

The SE application process has been adjusted to eliminate the need for organizers to submit multiple applications for scheduled, recurring events, in order to accommodate sporting leagues throughout their season.

Event organizers are provided with an application requirement summary after their application has been reviewed at intake which clearly outlines any outstanding or additional information and documentation required for the review and approval process.

b) Supporting and enhancing internal SE application processing

Surveys directed to the CSR team and the internal departmental review team led to process adjustments resulting in advanced event notification, (prior to requests for approval), and refinement of collaborative roles and responsibilities.

The internal SE departmental review team agreed to a clear and consistent understanding of Special Events as well as the documentation requirements for different event activities.

Adjustments to the internal application storage and tracking process were also made and have provided consistent and current information access and sharing, facilitating enhanced organizer support.

c) Excellent customer service

Clarification and simplification of the application and approval process has already yielded enhanced customer service, which has been further augmented in the following ways:

- A full-time SE Coordinator position enables proactive management of event applications, which helps organizers to receive direct and timely support and guidance throughout the application process.
- Providing strategic support to event organizers in the community as well as municipal departments. Examples include the Regimental Parade for Changing of the Colours, the Fergie Jenkins Statue Ceremony, and the Come Together CK Corn Hole tournament; events that accessed supports ranging from planning assistance to on-site event support and coordination.
- Debrief meetings, with the internal departmental approval team, enable adaptation for future events through an assessment of strengths and challenges following significant events.
- SE has also provided a consistent and informed perspective to policy and application process development for new initiatives including the Mainstreet Credit Union Mobile Stage and the Filming Locally in Chatham-Kent (FLiCK) initiative.

In strong alignment with Council's Term Priorities, the SE area has sought meaningful and effective engagement with community organizers, examples include:

- Attendance at community events to provide support and build awareness.
- Sharing the Together CK funding opportunity with event organizers.
- [SE web content](#) redesign enabling organizers to access up-to-date process information.
- Participation in meetings and workshops in order to better support event organizers including:
 - Network of Municipal Event Planners
 - Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario
 - Technical Standards and Safety Authority
 - Solicitor General - Public Safety Division (Private Security and Investigative Services Branch)

2023 Event Statistics

From January–November 2023, approximately 170 event approvals have been processed, with the majority (148) processed since May 2023. This compares to 138 event approvals processed in 2022 and 218 in 2017.

| Type of Events Processed | Licensed Area | Road Closures |
|---|--|---|
| Private events - 12% (weddings and parties) | 21% of approved events include a licensed area to serve alcohol. | 56% of approved events include road closures. |
| Small community events - 64% (parades and markets) | | |
| Large community events - 24% (festivals and multi-day) | | |
| Top 3 event months | Top 3 event communities | Top 3 event types |
| September (31) June (30) November (20) | Chatham (61) Tilbury (18) Wallaceburg (18) | Parades (32) Walk/Run/Cycle (31) Shows/Markets (17) |

Phase 2: Intermediate Actions

[The Let's Talk CK platform is currently hosting information on SE engagement plans.](#)

The engagement plans include:

- A survey to collect feedback from event organizers on the current SE application process as well enhancement opportunities.
- Four community meetings to be held in November 2023, where topics covered will include:
 - Implementation of SE Road Closure and Barricade Fees (as approved by Council - [Report to Council December 5, 2022](#)). The charges will come into effect on January 1, 2024.
 - Understanding SE application requirements and the approval process.
 - Feedback from community organizers.
 - Changes to the SE application and approval process.
 - Highlighting the new Mainstreet Credit Union mobile stage.

Ongoing review of the current SE application process review, and research into other municipal best practices and processes, has provided informed insight and guidance for development of SE within the municipality in ways that include:

- Completing a departmental review and revision of the SE Manual and MAP to reflect current industry trends, requirements and municipal updates.
- Digitalizing the SE application and approval processes to support the goal of enhancing both customer service and tracking. Combining the current application storage and tracking system (presently manually populated and hosted on two separate municipal storage systems) with a new digital application platform for automated storage and tracking.

- Ongoing community engagement through a variety of channels; including event attendance, in-person community meetings, Let's TalkCK surveys and social media posts.
- Providing strategic planning support to municipal departments involved in hosting events in Chatham-Kent (e.g., Special Olympics).

Phase 3: Development Opportunities


As the SE goals and objectives laid out above are achieved, additional opportunities exist (pending available resources) to enhance and grow the community impact of events.

Ways in which SE can seek to elevate event experiences for organizers and attendees while simultaneously generating a positive community impact include:

- Industry equipping and organizer training in areas such as Creating Accessible and Inclusive Events (DEIJ focused), Event Promotion and Collaboration, Volunteer Attraction and Training.
- Developing a program to assist organizers in tracking event attendance will allow a clearer picture of the economic impact events generate.
- Exploring municipal/community assets such as portable water filling stations or grant support programs that would support/enhance events.
- Increasing organizer support and engagement through regular follow up and debriefing contact after key events.

Council Term Priorities

This report supports the following Council Term Priorities:

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Deliver Excellent Service | Promote Safety & Well-Being | Grow Our Community | Ensure Environmental Sustainability |
| 2 c, d | 5 b | 4 c, d | |

Consultation

There was no consultation involved in the preparation of this report, however, the Special Events section regularly consults and collaborates with the following teams within the municipal structure:

- Legal Services
- Police Services – Community Mobilization
- Police Services – Traffic
- Fire Services
- Clerk's Office
- Public Health
- Engineering and Transportation
- Public Works
- Building Enforcement
- Licensing
- Recreation, Facilities and Parks – Bookings
- Recreation, Facilities and Parks – Site Supervision and Support
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice
- Community Attraction & Promotion
- Tourism

Communication

Communication is proposed to be through the inclusion of this report on the Council agenda and related communications. The Special Events engagement through the Let's Talk platform and community sessions will also serve as communication avenues.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)

Events are central to building community culture and connections and help residents to discover their community while also attracting visitors from outside Chatham-Kent. Providing information and support that is accessible to special event organizers is achieved through offering/accepting AODA compliant fillable pdf forms and paper-based forms and offering supports by phone, email and in-person at Municipal Service Centres. The municipal website is screen reader compatible and translatable into a range of languages and the [Special Events web content](#) has been redesigned to provide; Easy navigation; Plain language explanations and instructions; and DEIJ resources.

Community engagement to help diverse community groups consider and deliver special events has included: Relationship building with diverse community group organizers; On-site networking and support at diverse community events; Coordinating messaging and connections through Community Attraction & Promotion, CK Local Immigration Partnership and DEIJ; and encouraging organizers to look at DEIJ considerations in their planning, marketing, and execution of events.

Financial Implications

Prior to May 2023, Special Events received part-time support from a role within Parks, Facilities & Fleet. As part of a May 2023 corporate reorganization, a full-time Special Event Coordinator role now supports the Special Events area, with funding for this role

realized within existing corporate budgets. Council will be presented with information on the 0.5 FTE increase as part of the 2024–2027 Budget.

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