

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

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Kelly Bachus, Supervisor, Special Events
Date: December 9, 2024
Subject: 2024 Special Events Update

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

The Special Events (SE) section is part of the Community Attraction & Promotion area 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 a 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)

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 (2023)
2. Intermediate Actions (2024)
3. Development Opportunities (Ongoing)

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 2: Intermediate Actions (Throughout 2024)

Community Engagement Surveys & Meetings

| Outcomes of Community Engagement | |
|---|---|
| Successes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support received throughout the process • Consistent contact |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third party documentation • Application process • Site map creation • Understanding the Municipal requirements • Fees |
| Areas for Growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitizing application process • Considerations for yearly events • Ease of process and paperwork |

| Outcomes of Internal Engagement | |
|--|--|
| Successes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Collaboration • Safe community events • Supports provided |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review timelines • Incomplete applications • Ease of approval process • Lack of event history |

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| Outcomes of Internal Engagement | |
| Areas for Growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalization of approval process • Capacity building workshops for event organizers • Strategic planning support for internal departments hosting events |

2024 Event Highlights

It was a busy year for events in Chatham-Kent. Appendix A provides information on the number, location and types of events that occurred, including:

- 186 events were processed and approved in 2024 (an additional 16 from 2023)
- The majority of events occurred from May–November* (161)
- Events occurred in every community across Chatham-Kent
- 68% of events were put on by local organizations, businesses or service clubs
- 4 new cultural celebrations (Nagar Kirtan, ONAM, CK Welcomes, TOCK)
- Collaboration occurred across 16 different municipal departments
- 50% of events required road closures

In April 2024 the Mainstreet Stage was launched and was used at a number of events across Chatham-Kent. Feedback from event organizers that rented the stage has been positive with many noting that the stage helped to elevate and enhance their events. A more detailed report on the stage operations will be presented to Council in 2025.

Feedback from event organizers is important and helps to ensure that the supports and services offered by the Special Events section help the community to deliver events. The following testimonial provides some context to the support offered:

“The support and collaboration provided through the Municipality’s special events process was integral to the success of our event, they assisted by problem solving safety concerns, communicating requirements, coordinating resources, and providing feedback during our debrief session” – New Event Organizer

Phase 3: Development Opportunities (2025)

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:

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| Deliver Excellent Service | Promote Safety & Well-Being | Grow Our Community | Ensure Environmental Sustainability |
| 2 a,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
- Customer Service
- 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 minutes.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)

Events are central to building community culture and connections and help residents to discover their community, create opportunities for learning and building relations across communities, and help to promote diversity and inclusion in Chatham-Kent, while also attracting visitors from outside Chatham-Kent.

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.

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.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. In 2022, Council passed a recommendation to collect fees from special event organizers requesting road closures and barricades for an event. In 2023, the User Fees bylaw was adjusted to include road closure and barricade fees. Community user groups provided feedback regarding the negative impact of the additional fees. To encourage special events in Chatham-Kent, Public Works and Special Events suggested the idea that the barricade fees be funded from the Together CK Reserve. Council will be asked to approve this Business Case in the 2025 Budget Update.

Prepared by: Kelly Bachus, Supervisor, Special Events

Reviewed by Victoria Bodnar, Manager, Community Attraction & Promotion

Reviewed by: Audrey Ansell, M.A. Ec.D., Director, Community Culture & Connections

Reviewed by: Michael Duben, B.A., LLB, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment(s):

Appendix A: 2024 Special Event Statistics