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EX22.5 Strategy for Special Events Related Services and Permitting Processes

The St Lawrence Neighbourhood Association (SLNA) is an Association of residents in the St Lawrence area of the City of Toronto and is incorporated as a non-profit Corporation; the SLNA has served the St. Lawrence neighbourhood and its 30,000 - 35,000 residents since 1982.

We write to the Executive Committee concerning the above agenda item and have the following comments.

In general, the SLNA has no objection to recommendations 1-12 and 14. These would seem to streamline and improve the present City practices and allow for a more speedy response to requests to reserve public space. We do, however, note that a further report (on use of City Squares) will be coming to Council in the latter half of 2012 and wonder if it might not make more sense to hold this report until both can be considered together. As noted in this Report:

"A third issue was identified: "What the City's policy should be to access and make determination on request for fee waivers and in-kind support (fee waivers)". This issue, along with a comprehensive review of special events related services, fees and permitting processes, including a strategy to ensure consistent use of the City's civic squares will be addressed in a separate report due in the latter half of 2012. A further report from the City Manager currently titled "Public Square By-Law Report" will come forward in July 2012 respecting revisions of by-laws for the City's civic squares."

We also generally support the definitions of "special events" given in Appendix C

"A special event is defined as:

- Any pre-planned one-time, annual or infrequently occurring temporary activity;*
- Involves the use of, or having impact upon, public property, facilities, public parks, sidewalks or street areas owned, leased or controlled by the City of Toronto;*
- Requires a permit and/or pre-approval from the City; and*

- *Involves the use of any city services that would not be necessary in the absence of such an event.*
- *Can be organized by a private, charitable or not-for-profit organization.*
- *Admission can be free or a charge.”*

However, unless the term “private” in the last sentence covers them, we note that there is no mention of Special Events that are organised by profit-making groups or individuals. In our opinion there is a huge difference in allowing public space to be used by a non-profit group to the same space being used by a profit-making entity. We are also somewhat concerned that admission can be charged for citizens to use public space. (*“Admission can be free or a charge.”*)

One possible way to limit the number of event organisers imposing admission fees to access public space might be to impose a rental fee surcharge for bookings where an admission fee is to be charged. This is something we would like to see properly discussed and is yet another reason why it may be best to defer final consideration of this Report.

Though we generally approve of the concept of ‘pilot studies’ we are **strongly opposed** to the suggested “Pilot Project to Allow Commercial/Private Events in City Parks” (Report recommendation 14 and Schedule F).

In our immediate neighbourhood we have seen the disruption caused to the new Waterfront parks at Canada’s Sugar Beach and Sherbourne Common. These heavily used parks have been used on several occasions this past summer by for-profit events. Citizens (taxpayers) are not able to use the park, and the park itself suffers (trucks etc. on the grass, oil stains etc. on the decorative brickwork). We strongly oppose any commercial use of City parks, especially when this results in admission charges to any part of the park and would want all use of parks carefully monitored and controlled . In addition we suggest that a proportion (50%) of any permit fees collected for events in City parks be put into maintenance and capital projects in these parks.

Though we think it may be best to “hold’ this whole Report until it can be combined with the forthcoming one on City Squares noted above, we realise that recommendations 1-12 and 14 are primarily ‘housekeeping’ and good management and suggest that if the Executive Committee wishes to proceed that Recommendation 13 NOT be approved at this time and that this recommendation be returned to staff for further discussion and proper public consultation.

Parks are public space and the public should be fully consulted on plans (including ‘pilot projects’) that affect them. Proper public consultation of both this Report and the forthcoming report on Public Squares could, we suggest, occur together.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Kavanagh
President

cc. Councillor McConnell
SLNA Board.