

**STATEMENT OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR AND  
RECEIVING PERMITS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS WITHIN THE MADISON PARK  
SYSTEM**

**AUTHORIZATION**

The Madison Board of Park Commissioners is the approving authority for determining the appropriateness and acceptance of all special events in park and recreation areas within the Madison parks system. This policy is intended to provide guidelines and procedures that will ensure that the permitting process is done in a manner that encourages park usage, recognizes the needs of event organizers and attendees as well as park users not attending the special event, is considered standardized, perceived as fair by applicants and establishes a fee structure that minimizes public subsidy and results in cost recovery to the City.

**BACKGROUND**

Special events are common in City parks. Generally, special events are increasing in frequency and in size. For example in 2013 164 special event applications were processed and in 2014 that number had increased to 188. As a result, the Board of Parks Commissioners requested that the Long Range Planning subcommittee conduct a study of policies and practices and recommend policy changes, if warranted.

**FINDINGS**

A systematic research process was initiated and several various data sorts and reports were prepared. The policy analysis suggested the following:

1. The application process needed to be reworked to establish transparency, clarity and equity and reduce complexity.
2. A number of small events sponsored by Neighborhood Associations (NA) and Neighborhood Resources Teams (NRT) were well organized, uncomplicated and inappropriate for the full Special Event permitting process
3. The fee schedule needed review and adapting to better reflect actual processing costs and better approximates cost recovery objectives
4. Preliminary data suggested that a much simpler system may be possible by limiting special event classifications and assigning flat fees to the classifications. It was further determined that another period of data collection and analysis was required before confidently proposing such changes. .

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Preliminary Policy recommendations are attached and include:

1. Proposed 2016 changes in fees and policies for NAs and NRTs (attached):
2. Proposed 2016 changes for Reservable Spaces (attached)
3. The screen for determining whether an event required Special Event permits was simplified (attached).
4. Proposed 2016 fees needed to be adopted (see attached).

## **PROPOSED GUIDELINES**

1. Special events are defined as an organized activity that utilizes a park's amenities and space for a defined period and implies that these amenities and spaces are not accessible to non-event attendees during the event. Special events may be one-time or reoccurring.
2. Special event organizers may be individuals, groups or organizations. Organizations may be non-profit, public, or for-profit.

Certain attributes/activities/characteristics of an event will trigger the requirement of a special permit(s).

3. Special permits have fees associated with them. Fees for special events are established annually by the Park Commission..
4. The Park Commission reserves the right to deny a permit for particular event in a particular park if it deems that park is overly utilized during the requested period. Park staff will work with even organizers to identify a suitable alternate site for the even.
5. Event organizers must start the application process XX days before the date of the event. This requirement may be adjusted/waived by decision of the Community Services Director.
6. The Park Commission may delegate to staff approval authority for events that occur annually without significant changes from year to year.
7. Decisions of the Park Commission may be appealed within 10 days of the decision. The appeal body consists of the .....
8. The following webpage includes step-by-step instructions for determining and/or apply for a park event permit:  
<http://www.cityofmadison.com/specialevents/parkEvents/>
9. Any of these Guidelines may be waived by the Parks Superintendent.