

Staff Report

**PROCESSES TO NOTIFY PARTIES AFFECTED BY
SPECIAL EVENT STREET CLOSURES**

September 9, 2014

BACKGROUND:

At the August 12, 2014, City Council meeting, the Council requested options to modify the process for street closures during special events to ensure that affected property owners and business owners are notified of the closure.

In 2013, the City received 29 applications for events involving the closure of streets or City parking lots. **Applicants are often informally asked by the staff Special Events Review Committee about their plans to notify the affected neighbors prior to events. The special events application form does not request information about the notification process proposed by the applicant.** However, the City has a notification signature form if event organizers request it. Most special events are annual occurrences where other affected parties expect the event to take place, or are events undertaken by experienced organizers familiar with processes to notify neighbors.

Complaints to the City regarding special events are rare. When received, City staff forwards the complaint to the organizers and keeps the complaint on file for planning future iterations of that event. In 2013, no complaints were recorded. For 2014, two complaints were recorded for Hope Run, two complaints were recorded for MSCD Country Night, and one complaint was received for the Ames 150 Celebration.

NOTIFICATION EXAMPLES:Main Street Cultural District

The Main Street Cultural District (MSCD) prepares a letter for door-to-door distribution by interns to everyone in the district. The letter includes details of the event and contact information, and is distributed about three weeks before the event.

Campustown Action Association

The Campustown Action Association (CAA) posts information about its events in its regular newsletter, goes door-to-door with information to everyone impacted in the district, and provides letters to participating businesses, which are usually the businesses affected by the closure.

Both MSCD and CAA use email to communicate information about events with their members and many non-members, because those organizations have well-established email lists.

City Staff

For events that affect reserved parking space renters in City lots, City staff generally emails the renters to notify them of events. For road races, postcards might be mailed to residents along the route.

Several weeks in advance of large road races such as Hope Run, City staff may place electronic message boards at various locations throughout the route, which display the closure date and time. These message boards provide warning not only to residents, but also to motorists who live outside the race route and expect to be able to travel through the area.

METHODS TO CONFIRM NOTIFICATION:

Historically, the burden has been on event coordinators to appropriately notify affected parties. To ensure notification, the City Council might consider requiring the following methods to be implemented:

1. **Written notification plan submitted to the City prior to event approval** – This kind of plan could be incorporated into the special events application. The burden would be on the applicant to propose the appropriate method(s) to notify the affected parties of the closure.

Pros - City staff could review the plan and determine if more aggressive notification measures need to take place. A plan provides flexibility to determine the most appropriate outreach methods for the event. For example, new events might require more aggressive outreach than events that are held annually along the same route.

Cons - Requiring a plan alone does not guarantee that the plan is followed.

2. **Gather signatures from affected parties** – Organizers would go door-to-door to the affected residents and business owners and obtain a sign-off confirming that they have been informed. If desired by the City Council, this sign-off requirement could include an indication of their support or opposition to the proposed event.

Pros - Prior to event approval, City staff would be able to confirm that the outreach actually took place.

Cons - This requirement could take substantial time for organizers to complete. For example, the Hope Run 5k route takes place on streets fronted by 560 housing units, including apartments. The route is a circle, which means that approximately 1,100 residences are either on or within the route. Additional City staff time would be required to review and verify the signatures. City staff would likely need to increase the recommended application submittal timeframe to accommodate the extra processing time involved in larger events (currently 30 days prior to the event). It is possible that a signature could be obtained from a

business employee, but that the information still might not be forwarded to the business manager or owner.

3. **Mail notification to affected parties** – Organizers would obtain a mailing list of addresses affected by the closures and would mail a postcard or letter describing the event.

Pros – Requires fewer volunteers than door-to-door canvassing. Provides a document that affected parties can keep for reference until the event concludes. City staff has the ability to quickly generate mailing lists for specific areas using existing GIS resources.

Cons – Does not provide confirmation that the notice was received. Mailing lists may not be complete. Would increase the postage and printing costs for event organizers.

4. **Post temporary signage throughout the affected area** – Sandwich boards, signs staked in the right of way, or electronic sign boards would be placed throughout the affected area prior to the event, similar to the signage used for pending zoning actions.

Pros – Signage could be distributed quickly for events confined to a single area. Costs for organizers would be kept low. Organizers could receive some advertising benefits from signage placed in the area.

Cons – No guarantee that all affected parties will see the signs. Signs may be misplaced or stolen. Additional time demand on City resources if City sign boards are used.

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN OTHER COMMUNITIES:

A sampling of notification requirements in other communities is listed below. Signature gathering is the predominant method of notification.

City	Notification Requirements
Ankeny	Closure of streets requires approval signatures of all property owners within the closed portion of the street. The City Clerk’s Office verifies the signatures.
Cedar Rapids	No written standards. Written notification (email or letter) is requested for larger events for all affected property owners adjoining the street closure.
Council Bluffs	Block party on residential streets requires signatures indicating 100% approval. Other street closures require majority approval via signatures.
Des Moines	Signatures required if a non-residential street is closed longer than one hour. Must indicate approval/disapproval, and if more than 50%

	disapproval is received, event is forwarded to City Council for approval or denial. Apartment complexes are to be represented by the property manager. If event is on a residential street, the applicant must describe its methods for flyer or other notification.
Dubuque	The City <u>may</u> contact or require the applicant to contact affected parties for feedback on the impact of the event. The applicant <u>may</u> be responsible for notifying the affected neighbors. Event organizers <u>may</u> be required to obtain signatures of approval from 75% of adjacent business and property owners.
West Des Moines	60% of residents in a residential area must sign off and approve the event in a residential area. Events in Valley Junction must receive 75% approval from businesses.

FURTHER CITY COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUIRED:

Given the fact that there have been relatively few complaints regarding our current notification process, the Council must first decide if a new process is needed. If the City Council is interested in pursuing more stringent notification requirements, City staff will need to know the following:

1. What notification method is preferred (e.g., creation of a notification plan, signatures, written notification, signage)?
2. If signatures are to be required, should the City require that a minimum proportion of signatures indicate approval (e.g., 50%, 75%, 100%), or should the signatures merely be confirmation that notification has taken place?
3. Should the notification requirements be the same for all types of events, or should there be different requirements for events in the business district versus in a neighborhood, and events confined to one area versus a road race?

NEXT STEPS:

If the City Council desires to expand present notification processes, answers should be provided to the questions listed above. Staff would then draft a policy that will be brought back to Council for approval.