

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HALF MOON BAY

AGENDA REPORT

For meeting of: **September 7, 2021**

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Bob Nisbet, City Manager

TITLE: PUMPKIN FESTIVAL SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT APPLICATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the Pumpkin Festival Special Event Permit application, receive a presentation from representatives of the Beautification Committee, and decide if the event should proceed this year given ongoing health concerns associated with COVID-19.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no significant fiscal impact to the City if the event is cancelled. If the event proceeds, the City will contribute approximately \$35,000 in a combination of sponsorship funding and “in-kind” services. The event is a major fundraiser for local non-profits and generates economic benefits to local businesses through tourism. The Beautification Committee can provide an estimate of how much collectively is generated to support non-profits, should the event proceed.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT:

This action supports the Healthy Communities and Public Safety elements of the Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND:

2020 would have been the 50th anniversary of the Pumpkin Festival; however, it was cancelled due to COVID. This year, the Beautification Committee is planning to proceed with a “mini” festival and are calling it the 49.5 annual festival (so they can save the 50th anniversary for 2022). Their decision to proceed—albeit a scaled down version—was made in May/June when federal and state public health orders and guidelines were being amended to open businesses and allow outdoor events such as the Pumpkin Festival. Since mid-July, the Delta Variant has caused an uptick in transmission cases nationwide and in San Mateo County. Some federal and state guidelines have been reimposed (such as wearing masks), yet outdoor festivals are still allowed, with additional restrictions, requirements, and recommendations. Although the vaccination rate in San Mateo County is over 90 percent, vaccinations are still not available for children under 12 years old.

The Beautification Committee has submitted an application for a Special Events Permit (attached) so they can close City streets necessary to run the Festival. They have also submitted a list of safety precautions/protocols they will follow (attached). The event is proposed to be one day instead of

two and is a smaller footprint than festivals of the past. Additional information about the proposed event is contained on the website here: <https://pumpkinfest.miramarevents.com/>

DISCUSSION:

The Festival is organized, promoted, and run by the Beautification Committee. However, it is clearly bigger than any one group: it is a community event that is recognized nationwide and is part of what defines and provides identity to Half Moon Bay and the Coastside. It is a partnership between the Beautification Committee, businesses, non-profits, and the City. It has been one of the most successful street festivals in the state over the past several years and this is due to the Beautifications Committee's skills, experience, and ongoing efforts in running a successful festival. But it is also successful because the Festival is embraced by the City and community. The Festival works so well, in part, because it is in Downtown Half Moon Bay, is an open "free" festival, and raises funds for local non-profits and businesses.

That all said, the Pandemic—and the recent regression in beating this virus, has caused consternation over whether the event should proceed this year. To proceed, the event must receive a Special Events Permit from the City and ultimately, the final decision on issuing this permit rests with the Council. In addition to the Pumpkin Festival, there are several other smaller events being planned by the City or local non-profit groups. All are outdoors and most are small and dispersed enough to continue under the current protocols without concern. The City has scheduled its annual Summer's End Music Festival, which was also cancelled last year, for Saturday, September 25, at John L. Carter Park in downtown. This event is considerably smaller than the Pumpkin Festival, but has in the past drawn several thousand people, and due to the confined space of the event, present similar concerns as the Pumpkin Festival. Staff believes that any denial or modification to the Pumpkin Festival special event permit would likely need to apply to the Summer's End event as well.

Staff will make a short presentation and be prepared to answer questions regarding the latest data on the Pandemic, current federal and state guidelines for outdoor events, and what other similar events are doing.

Additionally, representatives from the Beautification Committee will make a brief presentation on their current plans for the event and the health and safety protocols they will follow. They have also informed staff that for them to adequately prepare for the Festival (or begin cancelling contracts, supply orders, communications, etc.) they need a decision at this meeting.

OPTIONS:

There are essentially three options for the Council:

- 1) Not issue the permit and cancel the Festival this year;
- 2) Direct staff to issue the permit and proceed with the Festival as planned;
- 3) Direct staff to issue the permit, but provide additional direction, conditions, and/or requirements for inclusion with the final permit.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Special Event Permit Application
- Health and Safety Guidelines