



**Executive Directive 19-02**

**Supporting Special Events**

*July 5, 2019*

San Francisco is a national hub for special events, from iconic street fairs, to annual concerts, large athletic events, cultural events, and neighborhood block parties. Special events of all sizes are an important part of our neighborhoods, providing social spaces for residents and visitors to get to know one another and engage in artistic and cultural expression. According to a report issued by the Controller in 2015, outdoor events in San Francisco produce more than \$1.1 billion annually in economic benefits, attract 3.3 million attendees, reach every Supervisorial District, support 9,300 private sector jobs, and define the identity of the many communities that together make up San Francisco. In 2017, the Controller and the City's Civic Bridge program issued reports on how the City bureaucracy permits these important outdoor events, making a series of recommendations for improvement.

Two recommendations from the 2017 reports have already been implemented, including:

- Publishing a central process map and permit cost calculator that lays out the permit process and deadlines; and
- Creating a master calendar to be used by all City departments as the singular source of special event information.

In spring 2018, the Entertainment Commission began managing the Citywide Master Calendar of Special Events in collaboration with the Department of Emergency Management with the goal of improving the City's situational awareness and use of resources for special events. In September 2018, the Entertainment Commission launched the City's first SF Outdoor Event Planning & Permitting Guide, an online roadmap designed to empower event organizers with the knowledge to produce safer and more successful special events. The Guide and its accompanying Permit Fee Estimator serve to assist event organizers in navigating the rules, permits, agencies, fees, and best practices related to outdoor events.

Furthermore, the reports made recommendations to centralize, standardize, and clarify the permitting process by implementing:

- A special events task force, or steering committee, to scope and consider the development of an organizational model that facilitates a streamlined permitting process, for both City departments and event organizers; and
- A consolidated digital permitting system to clarify requirements for the customer and centralize communications between departments.

Currently, the City permitting process for special events is decentralized and involves multiple departments and committees. According to both 2017 reports, obtaining comprehensive information on, applying for, and obtaining permits for special events is difficult for event organizers because there is no central department – or website – that coordinates the process. Permitting a major event in San Francisco can involve up to 8 primary and 7 secondary City agencies, each with different fees for permits and City services. The primary City agency permitting the event struggles to confirm that other agencies have approved the event and exactly what they approved. As a result, the City places burdens on event organizers to achieve compliance, and City departments face challenges in ensuring successful and safe events.

It is imperative that San Francisco, like other large urban areas around the country, step forward and review the current system to help ensure that all future events, whether they are large scale street festivals or small neighborhood events, are safe, successful, and enjoyable for all. By supporting a diverse pool of events and organizers, the City can help unify and strengthen communities and neighborhoods across San Francisco. With the impending opening of 49 South Van Ness, where several permitting agencies will have a footprint, the City should consider alternative options for special events permitting structures. Citywide coordination will be challenging, but we should utilize our shared location and resources to consider options that can better serve our constituents, while continuing to support the community, cultural, and economic vitality of events in San Francisco.

**Directives:**

Through this Executive Directive, I hereby direct that:

1. An interagency body named the Special Events Steering Committee (Committee) shall be convened to review the recommendations from the aforementioned reports and to develop an implementation plan for those recommendations and any others made by the Committee. Specifically, this body shall be charged with advancing significant reforms to the permitting process with the following key objectives in mind:
  - a. Special events are good for the city, are good for our neighborhoods, and support the vibrant culture of San Francisco, and City employees tasked with reviewing permit applications shall be driven by that perspective;
  - b. The process to apply for a permit shall be friendly, streamlined, and efficient;
  - c. Fees shall be kept to a minimum; and
  - d. The existing framework for permit review does not meet the above objectives, and therefore, alternative organizational models should be considered.
2. The Committee shall be co-chaired by the City Administrator and the Director of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, who shall develop an organizational



structure for this Committee, as well as a list of participating Departments including but not limited to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, Public Works, the Department of Public Health, the Entertainment Commission, the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Port, the Digital Services Agency, and the Recreation and Parks Department.

3. The Committee shall prepare a report to the Mayor within six months of the date of this Directive.

This Executive Directive will take effect immediately and will remain in place until rescinded by future written communication.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "London Breed".

London N. Breed  
Mayor, City & County of San Francisco