



MEMORANDUM TO: Finance Committee

FROM: Sam Powers, Community and Economic Development Director

DATE: September 17, 2015

SUBJECT: Strategic Event Partnership Process Review

In October 2013, outdoor special event permitting and programming was transitioned to the Office of Economic Development. Staff was tasked with cultivating strategic partnerships to capitalize on the benefits of special events. This included leveraging city resources to help achieve City Council goals in a manner that is both fiscally responsible and achieves maximum economic and community development returns. An additional goal would help chart a long term course for outdoor special events to move towards fiscal self-sustainability.

The City is in the second year of its three-year Strategic Event Partnerships (formerly known as Co-Sponsored Anchor Events). Three nonprofit organizations, the Asheville Downtown Association, Folk Heritage Committee, and YMI, conduct specific Council approved special events that meet Council strategic goals. In return, the organizations receive specific in-kind services from the City, including administrative coordination, public safety, street closures/parking meter services, public works services etc.

Under the current City Council direction, these partner agreements will be reviewed by Council during the 2016-17 budget process and any Council directed changes/additions would be effective July 1, 2016, applicable to a scope of work for the partner organizations beginning with the 2017 calendar year.

There is significant community standing, cultural benefit and value leveraged through the City's investment in these existing event partnerships (Asheville Drum Circle, Asheville Holiday Parade, Downtown After 5, Goombay, Shindig on the Green) and in the Pritchard Park Cultural Arts Program. The three-year agreement structure requires the partner organizations, in the form of an annual application, to outline their performance objectives for each anchor event; to define any significant variances expected in the anchor event programming goals set for each organization, and to submit an annual report which the city and the partner organization can use as a shared tool to gauge and track the effectiveness of mutual investments.

An important aspect of the three year agreement is that it allows the City to review event/organization performance over time. The partnership structure also encourages reinvestment in additional mutually agreed programming opportunity achieved as a result of high output achieved by reducing barriers specific to an event, increasing flexibility while compounding the overall benefits provided through synergistic opportunities.



Numerous organizations that are planning events routinely inquire about city financial partnerships, and city staff advises them of the three-year cycle. We advise that any other financial requests would require Council approval and a budget amendment. In 2014, City Council favorably approved a MoogFest proposal for an economic development partnership. The MoogFest approval did not affect the Strategic Event Partnership process. Likewise, a recent request by LEAF proposed to expand youth services in the City of Asheville under a one-year service agreement in the amount of \$15,000, and was approved by City Council within the Parks Department existing budget.