

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 30, 2025

From: Community Services and Recreation Department

Subject: Short Term Wharf Events

Recommended Action: Receive report regarding the City events held on the Capitola Wharf during 2024 and provide direction regarding plans for 2025.

Background: On May 9, 2024, staff presented options for short-term Wharf use plans to the City Council. The City Council approved a plan that included three special events to be held during 2024 on the Wharf, one for a ribbon cutting/reopening and two Sunday mid-day events. The number of events was reduced to two due to a delay in the Wharf Resiliency Project completion and available weekends on the City's special event calendar. At that same meeting, Council directed staff to return in early 2025 to share lessons learned during 2024 and to develop a plan for 2025.

Staff is currently working with Fuse Architects on long-term options for the Wharf. Staff expects to present a draft of that to Council next month, then following Council review, circulate that plan for public comment. The contract with Fuse Architects calls for them to develop five conceptual options for the Wharf.

The Community Services and Recreation Department (CS&R) currently produces two other event series similar to the events that took place on the Wharf. Twilight Concerts, a permitted major special event, and Food Truck Fridays, a permitted minor special event. Twilight Concerts are musical performances with contracted sound production in Esplanade Park. Food Truck Fridays are a community event that offers three to four food trucks, a beer garden hosted by a local non-profit organization, and small-scale musical performance without contracted sound production in Monterey Park. The CS&R Department manages the contracts and all other requirements to produce these event series.

Discussion: The CS&R Department hosted two events on the Wharf in Fall 2024 to evaluate the feasibility of offering regular programming in 2025. The Wharf Reopening Event, held on September 25, 2024, was a major special event. The Brews & Beats Event, held on October 6, 2024, was planned to be a minor special event.

Highlights

Staff received resounding positive feedback from the community about the opportunity to participate in family-friendly community events.

Challenges

Staff collected feedback from the community, partner agencies, and staff members regarding the two hosted events on the Wharf. While the major special event (Wharf Reopening Event) launched as planned, there were several challenges that impacted the feasibility of repeat minor special events. Most notably, staffing limitations, traffic and parking, and number of attendees.

Venue Limitations: Staff learned that putting on events on an 855' Wharf over the ocean requires significant extra staff time. It is reasonable to expect extra staff hours during the development of a new program and also reasonable for annual event productions; however, for both events, the number of required staff hours surpassed what was expected and was significantly higher

compared to other similar event series. For example, event set-up needed to be completed during times with low public activity. This meant that unloading and set-up started much earlier compared to similar events. The portable stage proved to be effective but required a four-hour set-up time. Staff decided to keep the stage on the Wharf between events, which was a good temporary solution, but longer-term alternatives need to be identified for future events.

Food Trucks: The available space at the head of Wharf can only accommodate two small food trucks/trailers and one dessert truck per event, which is one less than originally planned. This resulted in longer lines for the public during peak times.

Booking food trucks proved challenging due to the Wharf's 10,000-pound weight limit, significantly narrowing the selection. Despite plans for electric operation to minimize generator exhaust, insufficient power outlets forced trucks to rely on generators.

Safety protocols necessitated early truck loading during periods of low public activity. This required trucks to arrive two hours earlier than at Monterey Park for Food Truck Fridays, impacting their earnings and leading to some declining participation.

Beer Garden: Both the Major and Minor Special Events, held mid-day on Wednesday and Sunday respectively, presented volunteer challenges for the Beer Garden hosts. Non-profit volunteers, crucial for operation, were less likely to participate due to the mid-day timing. Despite successful events, resupply proved difficult, requiring volunteers to walk the length of the Wharf to restock while the Beer Garden remained active.

Unlike Food Truck Friday Events, which are covered by regularly scheduled Police Department staff and security patrols, the Wharf's location necessitated dedicated security. The proximity of an alcohol retailer on the Wharf seemed to encourage public consumption within the event boundaries, requiring increased security measures.

Music: The Grand Opening Event, similar to a Twilight Concert, required a dedicated sound engineer. The Minor Special Event, modeled after Food Truck Fridays, relied on the band to provide their own sound technician. Limited electrical capacity and the need for shade structures for sound equipment presented unforeseen logistical challenges.

Weather: Both events encountered significant weather challenges. While wind was anticipated, the gusts were unexpectedly strong, requiring extra measures to secure tents and other equipment. The Minor Event also experienced extreme heat, necessitating additional shade structures.

Options for 2025 Events: Based on staff's experience, events on the Wharf take a significant amount of staff resources and would require a dedicated budget moving forward. In general, staff recommends that budgetary decisions are made during the City's established budget process. However, due to timing constraints, should the Council wish to proceed with events during Spring/early Summer 2025, staff would need to begin preparations for these events shortly. Should Council wish to focus on later Summer/Fall events, decisions regarding the event programming and associated budgets could be deferred to the FY 2025-26 budget adoption process.

Concerts: Logistically, music events have proven the most feasible to host. However, staff estimates the cost per event to be roughly \$4,000-\$7,000. In addition, staff will need to evaluate the feasibility of setting up and taking down the portable stage, or if constructing a temporary stage would prove more effective.

Food Trucks: Given the Wharf's weight constraints, transportation challenges, and the amount of time the food trucks need to dedicate to the event, it will be difficult to find food trucks for future events without incentivizing them to attend. Existing furniture on the Wharf will need to be

temporarily relocated, which may require Public Works Department staff overtime. In addition, given the small number of food trucks that meet the weight requirements, staffing in CS&R would need to be supplemented to manage events. Staff estimates that each food truck event would cost roughly \$5,000-\$7,000.

Beer Garden: Given the challenges for non-profit organizations to host events on the Wharf, in addition to the security concerns, staff recommends against including non-profit beer gardens during 2025 events. Staff is researching changes in state law that might allow for other alcohol service options and will present additional information at the meeting on January 30. Dedicated security would be necessary, which staff estimates would cost \$1,000 per event. Many of the issues associated with a beer garden could be resolved with the implementation of a long-term Wharf plan.

Restrooms: The cost of porta potties is \$1,200 per month. Staff recommends adding porta potties for nine months out of the year until the implementation of the long-term Wharf plan.

Should Council wish to proceed with some concert or food truck events on the Wharf this year, staff would begin planning events, refine costs, and include funding in the FY 2025-26 budget. It should be noted these would be General Fund dollars.

Summary: Should Council wish to have some events on the wharf during 2025, from a staffing and cost standpoint, a concert series would require the fewest additional resources. Adding in food trucks increases cost/complexity; even more so with a non-profit beer garden.

Fiscal Impact: Staff has learned that temporary Wharf programming with solutions like food trucks and non-profit hosted beer gardens necessitate significant staff time, including overtime, from the CS&R Department, Public Works Department, Police Department. The current staff workload would not be able to support a regular series of Wharf events without additional resources. This could be accomplished with the addition of a FTE or dedicated staff team, contracted event services, or a hybrid of staff and contracted event services.

At this point, costs cannot be firmly established without knowing the overall number of events (there could be some efficiency in scale). Costs for porta potties should be included moving forward for all temporary uses.

Depending on the number of planned events, and their planned scope, the cost range would be \$20,000 to \$60,000+ from the General Fund.

Fiscal impacts are dependent on the Council's direction regarding the number and type of events on the Wharf. Should Council want to see events planned for early summer 2025, staff would begin planning them now and include these costs in the proposed 2025-26 Budget. Alternatively, Council could consider Fall events during the budget process, while other priorities are also being considered.

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