



Office of the Town Manager
Stephanie Miller

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STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date:	Tuesday, April 14 th , 2026
Agenda Title:	Parks & Recreation: Special Events
Requested Action:	Hold Public Hearing and Vote on proposed updates to the Special Event ordinance language
Department / Agency Lead:	Parks & Recreation
Staff Lead:	Lauren Kruck, Special Events & Recreation Program Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Special Events permit process is based on Town Ordinance Article VI., Use of Public Grounds, Sections 14-101 through 14-103. This ordinance was last updated in 2022, though the Special Event Fee Schedule was updated with the 2025 budget.

We are proposing a change to the Ordinance VI language to do the following:

1. **Approval date:** Extending the window by which Special Events can be approved, from 6 months to 12 months prior to the event date.
2. **Unpaid fees:** Allowing for the denial of an application if Special Event fees from a prior event are unpaid.

The change to the *Ordinance to Establish Business, Professional and Occupational License Tax Rates for the Tax Year Beginning on July 1, 2025 (Ordinance 2025-06)*, regarding reducing the Itinerant Merchants License fees from \$500 to \$100, will be addressed withing the FY27 budget process.

BACKGROUND

In the January Town Council work session, we reviewed the Special Event permit process. The Town Council showed approval to take action on extending the permit approval window, denying organizers with past unpaid event fees, and lowering the Itinerant Merchant's License fee. These adjustments were reviewed in the March work session. In this council session, a vote is requested to finalize the updates to the ordinance. The Itinerants Merchants License fee adjustment will be addressed within the upcoming budget process.

Approval Date

For large events, the ordinance-mandated maximum of 6-months prior approval does not provide the applicant with enough time to organize this event. The following language updates to Article VI., Use of Public Grounds, Section 14-103 (m) is proposed:

Old language: No permit shall be granted for any event beginning more than **six** months after the date of the application.

New language: No permit shall be granted for any event beginning more than **twelve** months after the date of the application.

The remainder of the ordinance, addressing how staff will handle multiple or simultaneous applications for the same forum, will remain unchanged.

Unpaid Fees

While the majority of event organizers pay Special Event fees promptly, there is no enforcement angle for this on the rare occasions when these fees go unpaid. Therefore, the following language adjustment to Article VI., Use of Public Grounds, Section 14-103 (l) is proposed:

Old language: The applicant is responsible for any and all damage to public facilities caused by the applicant or by any agent or partner of the applicant. If a person receives a permit for an event and does not hold the event, then he or she shall pay the Town for the reasonable cost of assisting the applicant in developing any public safety plan for that event as well as any reasonable overtime or third party cost incurred by the town in relation to the event. *[end of section l]*

New language: The applicant is responsible for any and all damage to public facilities caused by the applicant or by any agent or partner of the applicant. If a person receives a permit for an event and does not hold the event, then he or she shall pay the Town for the reasonable cost of assisting the applicant in developing any public safety plan for that event as well as any reasonable overtime or third party cost incurred by the town in relation to the event. **If the applicant has held an event in the Town previously and not paid the associated Special Event fees, no permit shall be granted to this applicant until these fees are paid.**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Town Council votes to update the ordinance and license tax rates in the following ways:

1. Update the Special Events ordinance to allow for Special Event permit approval 12 months prior to the event date, rather than 6, with the new language listed above.
2. Update the Special Events ordinance to allow the committee to deny the permit for an event if past Special Event fees are unpaid, with the new language listed above.

Service Level/Collaborative Impact

1. Extending the window for event approval should not have a service level impact.
2. Denying a Special Event application if previous fees are unpaid should not have a service level impact.

Policy Direction/Warrenton Plan 2040

E-3.3: Maximize the Town's public spaces and right-of-way to allow for arts and cultural events to operate, including outdoor dining and gathering places.

E-3.2: Market to creative arts and entrepreneurial businesses to locate within appropriate Character Districts.

HR-6.2: Partner with the Town's Main Street organization and other entities to strengthen economic opportunities highlighting the Town's historical, arts, and culinary assets for placemaking events.

CF-1.5: Encourage the use of community facilities and grounds for community events and public functions.

New Overlay District guidelines: Arts and Culture District: Allows for temporary events, pop-up storefronts that are arts and culture focused along Main and Culpeper streets through a streamlined permitting process.

L-2.9: (Old Town Character District): Locate an event space in the Old Town UDA that can be used to accommodate public and private events, festivals of all types appropriate and other opportunities.

Fiscal Impact

1. Extending the allowable window between granting a Special Event permit and the event date should not have a fiscal impact.
2. Requiring all previous Special Event fees be paid before an applicant can receive a new Special Event permit should encourage compliance and positively impact revenue collection.

Legal Impact

Legal has reviewed and approved the updated ordinance language.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Special Event/Public Gathering Ordinance