

Norwalk approves new special event permit software

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Stamford resident Stephanie McLaughlin finishes the SONO Half Marathon and 5k Saturday, October 20, 2018, in Norwalk, Conn. Events like these require special permits from the city, which is installing a new software program to make it easier for organizers to get permits.

Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

NORWALK — The city is about to get a new permitting system aimed at making it easier for people to get approvals for events.

The Common Council unanimously approved a 12-month agreement worth up to \$28,100 with **Event Approvals Inc.** for “special permit software,” including installation, training and configuration services.

“I think this goes a long way,” Council President Tom Livingston, District E, D, said at Tuesday’s meeting. “Their interaction with city hall often sets the tone for everything they do afterward. I think it will help all these organizations.”

Councilman Greg Burnett, at-large, D, said making this electronic will alleviate some of the issues with the system.

“It’s a paper process — I’ll say somewhat awkward (process),” he said. “It’ll be electronic, fine tune the process, customer service friendly.”

According to city code, groups or organizations that want to have a public gathering or a special event that is either on city property or requiring a road closure are required to obtain a permit from the city. These events include carnivals, block parties, fundraisers, parades, exhibitions, assemblies, road races, walk-a-thon and parent-teacher organization programs.

“Depending on the type or scope of event, other city departments may need to review and approve the permit applications to insure all city codes and regulations and state laws are met,” reads a memo from City Clerk Donna King and Karen Del Vecchio, director of information technology.

Those departments can include code enforcement, zoning, public works, health, fire marshal, police and recreation and parks. Events that require additional permits, such as selling alcohol or closing roads can require involving additional agencies and even sometimes approval by the full Common Council.

The process for getting a special event permit is done by hand, King and Del Vecchio said, which can be “confusing, time-consuming and frustrating for event organizers who are required to visit each department in the city for sign-off.”

Mayor Harry Rilling said he hopes the new process will alleviate some of the issues people ran into trying to organize events.

“It was very frustrating for people to have to run to department to department,” he said. “A lot of times they had to take their days off.”

Because of that, King and Del Vecchio said last year they started researching ways to automate the intake and approval process. **Event Approvals** had “the features Norwalk needed,” according to King and Del Vecchio.

Once installed, the new system will allow organizers to complete an online application via a web portal and when actions are taken, such as a department approval, the organizer receives an emailed update.

Staff members also have records of what’s been done and notes left by other departments. The system will also produce a common calendar for both staff and the public to keep track of events.

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