

October 10, 2017

Nancy Colbert Puff
Acting City Manager
City of Portsmouth
1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Dear Ms. Colbert Puff,

On behalf of the Prescott Park Policy Advisory Committee, I enclose the Committee's recommendations for "2018 Event and Performance Schedule Parameters" for Prescott Park Arts Festival in Prescott Park. These recommendations reflect the receipt and consideration of considerable input from the Arts Festival and members of the community and much discussion and deliberation by the Committee.

These recommendations are provided at this time so that your office may advise the Arts Festival of schedule expectations next summer so it may begin planning its 2018 season. The Committee will continue its work regarding other policy matters in Prescott Park with a goal of making further recommendations in the future.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I can be of any assistance or provide further elucidation regarding the recommendations.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Watson
Chair
Prescott Park Policy Advisory Committee

cc: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2018 Event & Performance Schedule Parameters

Final Recommendation to City Manager

Prescott Park Policy Advisory Committee

October 6, 2017

Introduction

In April 2017, Mayor Blalock appointed the Prescott Park Policy Advisory Committee. Using the 2017 Prescott Park Master Plan as a guide, the Committee's charge is to advise the City Manager with respect to park policies; events, activities, and services in the Park; and operations of licensees and to serve as a communication forum.

The Committee's work has focused on developing recommendations to be used by the City Manager in crafting new license agreements with the organizations operating in the Park. The Committee has deliberated on a number of issues both raised in the Governance Recommendations found in the 2017 Master Plan as well as resulting from its discussions to date as a Committee. The topics to be addressed fall in the following categories: Events & Performance Schedule; Factors in License Agreement Payments; Sound Levels in the Park; Site Signage and "Commercialization"; Layout of Temporary Facilities; and Public Safety. The Committee's Charge is intended to be completed prior to the end of the 2017 calendar year.

In recognition that the timing of the Committee's full recommendations at the end of 2017 do not coincide with 2018 season planning and schedule development, the Committee has concentrated on finalizing its recommendations for the *Events & Performances Schedule* early as called for in the Letter Agreement with the Arts Festival and as recommended by the City Manager.

Parameters for the 2018 Schedule Events & Performances Schedule

The Committee deliberated on the schedule at length in multiple meetings from April to October 2018. The work included direct conversations with representatives of the Prescott Park Arts Festival and a meeting dedicated to public comment on the topic. In general, the Committee recognized that recommendations on the schedule like many other areas of recommendations the Committee is preparing are informed and guided by the Master Plan and the "Park First" approach concept.

Throughout its discussions the Committee recognized programming on the stage as an invaluable community asset, whose continued presence in the Park is desired. At the same time it recognized events and performances generally have four areas of impact: on the condition of the Park itself; on transportation & parking in the vicinity of the Park; off-site sound exposure; and limits on evenings

when the Park is available as a respite and for quiet enjoyment. Out of this list, one, the condition of the park - is addressed at least in part in the Master Plan through a paved path and turf system designed to accommodate an audience area. Discussions on all of these issues led to discussion about the potential benefit of having more spaces in the community that could host some of the largest events (as well as some of the smallest, e.g. outdoor movies).

Also during the Committee discussions, the Committee reflected on the need to have ongoing discussions and community involvement in assessing the effects and suitability of the Scheduling Parameters. The Committee agreed that additional discussion about the need for a similar advisory body to itself or other communication forum should take place in preparation for a recommendation on the topic. The Committee also discussed the need to build in to future agreements appropriate performance measures and standards to help monitor compliance, including potential consequences for non-compliance. This is another area where additional conversation is needed prior to completing the Committee's work.

This section below constitutes the Committee's recommendation for the 2018 Events & Performances Schedule.

Schedule Parameters and Approval Process: In recent years, the process for schedule approval has been limited to the one outlined in the 2012 Operating Agreement. Expectations for the schedule are not explicit, there are limited or no guidelines for season length, number of events, start and end times, etc. In addition, the schedule development by programmers took place without policy guidance and approval was given at the end of the scheduling process. The Committee recommends that schedule parameters (listed below) be established in future agreements and that the approval process for each season schedule take place on an annual basis with an approval decision, which effectively confirms the schedule parameters have been adhered to. This approach will provide some predictability from year-to-year for both residents and other Park users as well as schedule developers. Schedule parameters are recommended to include the following:

A. Program Type and Mix:

- a. Future license agreements define the expectations for an overall program mix. There shall be a variety of programming to be offered in the Park with a musical theater production core to the Festival Season. In addition, programming in the Park shall be appropriate for all ages and include a mix of opportunities for local performers as well as local workforce.

B. Festival Season Start and End dates:

- a. Season bookends shall be established for the regular festival season.
- b. The start of the season **shall be no sooner than the Friday of the week school year concludes** (using the Portsmouth School Board adopted school year calendar).

- c. The end of season **shall be no later than the Sunday night of Labor Day weekend.** However, no events which end after 7:00 p.m. on a night before a school day will be permitted.
- d. The establishment of bookends would not preclude separate approval of “Special Events” (ex. Chowder Festival, Road Race), which have traditionally fallen outside of the regular season schedule. All special events outside of the season **bookends shall end by 7:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and by 10:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.**

C. Program Times:

- a. All programming Sunday through Thursday **shall end at 10:00 p.m.**
- b. All programming on Friday and Saturday **shall end at 10:30 p.m.**
- c. For the purposes of this section all programming includes rehearsals, sound checks and the like.
- d. These are hard stop requirements and inclusive of intermission and delays of any kind to the program start, including inclement weather.

D. Weekly Schedule

- a. The recommendation below for a weekly schedule of one “Non-Performance” day (versus two “Non-Performance” days) and one “Low-Impact” day is based on the assumption that the recommendations made as part of the 2017 Sound System Review by Reuter Associates (and any other related recommendations) to concentrate sound in the Park and lessen off-site sound migration will be implemented prior to the start of the 2018 Festival Season.¹
- b. There shall be **at least one** day per week where there is no performance or event on the stage or in the Park (Non-Performance Day). This prohibition includes rehearsals, sound checks and the like as well events not requiring or utilizing amplified sound or music. Exception for daytime camp activities.
- c. There shall be **at least one** day (in addition to the Tuesday, Non-Performance Day) where the event held (and anytime during the day) is “Low-Impact” programming. For the purposes of this provision, “low-impact” is defined as programming reasonably expected to attract attendance levels consistent with those of “movie nights” and create sound impacts lesser than concert or musical theater programming. For the purposes of this section, a “movie night” is an example of low-impact programming.
- d. The Non-Performance Day in a week, shall be on **“Tuesday” for each week of the Festival season.**
- e. There shall be no more than two (2) music concerts per week. There shall be **no more than 24** concerts during a Festival season, which includes all music concerts, including music festivals.

¹ Recommendations on sound mitigation and off-site impacts will be further addressed as part of the Committee’s final recommendations and report to the City Manager.

- f. Programming (all types, including rehearsals, sound checks, performances, meet and greets etc.) on weekend days (Saturday and Sundays) will not begin before 12:00 p.m. Exceptions shall include cast “Meet and Greets” and “Camp Shows” (events traditionally held on weekend mornings) commencing **no earlier than 10:00 a.m.** which shall be permitted to take place on up to 6 weekend days.
- g. There will be more musical theater performances than any other performance type.

E. Intensity (audience size):

- a. The PPAF may schedule up to 3 events where the attendance will not exceed 3,400 persons, so long as City public safety officials determine events with this attendance can be safely held in the Park. For all other events: No event shall be scheduled where its attendance is reasonably anticipated to exceed 1,500 persons.
- b. Compliance with paragraph a. above (as well as other agreement terms to be determined), will be a factor in annual reviews of the schedule parameters.
- c. No events or performances in Prescott Park shall be held which cannot be safely accommodated in the Park.