



90-Day Festival Task Force Recommendations

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

Objectives: The 90-Day Festival Task Force has been tasked with making recommendations for:

- updating Oceanfront Parks Policy
- criteria for ROI of large festivals for visitors
- criteria for ROI for festivals for local residents
- criteria to ensure festivals are inclusive for diverse audiences
- process for evaluating requests for financial or in-kind support to festivals

Task Force Members: The 90-Day Festival Task Force was comprised of 16 people appointed individually by the Virginia Beach City Council. Members had very diverse occupations, interests and experience; however, all members were stakeholders residing and conducting business in Virginia Beach and shared a common goal to revise the Oceanfront Parks Policy to align with the City's current interests.

DEFINITIONS

*A **Tourism Event** is any special event that furthers the City's economic development goals and is primarily intended to attract participants from out of the immediate area. The event must generate a minimum of 1000 verifiable hotel room nights during the event to be considered a tourism event.*

*A **Community Event** is focused on the community. These types of events are organized and attended predominately by people from the community or nearby region.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our oceanfront is the premier location in Virginia Beach. The oceanfront needs to be accessible to the Virginia Beach community. The oceanfront drives tourism dollars that benefit all taxpayers throughout the City. It helps us all make memories that generate a positive image of Virginia Beach.

1. Our oceanfront is the premier location, so festivals at the Oceanfront will be primarily produced by the City and professional producers in order to protect the oceanfront and Virginia Beach communities. The City Contractor has priority on the oceanfront. Other community events will not be held at the oceanfront during resort season. New or smaller events may utilize venues outside of the oceanfront and collaborate with more experienced event producers. The fee for using the oceanfront needs to be higher than at other City venues.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2. Virginia Beach strives to provide inclusive festivals and events appealing to diverse audiences. Diverse festivals and events provide benefits to the community beyond tourism dollars and thus are welcomed and encouraged. Current City economic development programs should support growth of small, minority and women owned businesses.

3. Festivals and events that receive in-kind or financial City support need to produce a return on investment (ROI) to Virginia Beach residents. Events should benefit the City financially, in promoting our image, or through community benefits that support community vibrancy, well-being, inclusion, belonging, and connectedness.

4. The process for approving festivals and events needs to be standardized, consistent, and clear to applicants and Virginia Beach staff. The application should be comprehensive and shall include, for example, a business plan, producer experience, community value, and explanation of penalties for noncompliance, etc.

5. Financial or in-kind support from the City must go through an independent process. We recommend City Council allocate separate and distinct funding from the General Fund and create a new Community Events Committee for community events. We recommend the CVB staff continue to manage the process for tourism events.

6. Producers must be held accountable for their events, and the City must enforce rules. Producers who do not adhere to conditions agreed upon in the permit and provide verifiable accounting of any City funds should not receive any additional public funding. The City must enforce rules and periodically review the policy.

7. Politics shall not be part of the legitimate event approval process. To assure that festivals and events are supported and produced with accountability and transparency, especially to the residents of Virginia Beach, these policies and processes must be fair, equitable, and efficient without influence of politics, favoritism, or preferential treatment. The process we have recommended is a legitimate one and the City Council needs to follow it.



“A Council-appointed body with diverse and potentially competing interests came together and convened for more than 512 hours as an answer to Council’s request to find a better way to address the Oceanfront Parks Policy. We, as a group, have reached a consensus on the above 7 principles in the best interests of the community and the City of Virginia Beach.”

~ 90-Day Festival Task Force, 2024