

Item 25-0988: World Peace Festival Special Event Application

Common Council

Wed, Sep 03, 2025 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 04:12

I have no other business to present to you, so we'll move on now to public participation. One member signed up. One member of the public signed up to speak. Again, these are items that appear on the agenda. We ask that members of the public limit their time to five minutes or less, and we will help you keep track of time. Again, we have one member of the public signed up to speak, and so we'll welcome Sarah Leet, who has two items she wishes to speak on. Welcome Sarah.

Sarah Leet (Resident) 04:43

Thank you, Mayor Woodford. My name is Sarah Lee, and I live at [XXXXX] West Oklahoma Street. My comments tonight are related to the World Peace event and the park naming policy. I begin my statements tonight talking again about the themes of communication, particular in situations where there is an artificially compressed timeline. Again, I find this unacceptable. One of the first lessons I learned at Lawrence was not in the classroom. A lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine. I ask you to think about this.

Sarah Leet (Resident) 05:13

While, I did not agree with the decisions made at the last Council meeting. I can understand and respect the argument that policies are not made willy nilly. Staff do have experience, and there does need to be some need for consistency. With that context, I am frustrated by the need to appear to hear tonight to point out the obvious: it is one thing to offer a sacrificial lamb following policy; it is another thing to enforce some policies and not others, especially in a two-week time frame. One may argue that the policies on the agenda tonight are not as important as prior policies that have come to the table. However, according to a number of you, policy is policy.

Sarah Leet (Resident) 05:53

I am paraphrasing here, however. Alder Smith mentioned that policies are carefully thought through. Alder Fenton echoed that that policies are not adopted without thought. Alder Meltzer mentioned that we must respect the experts. Alder Hayden indicated that he tries to be consistent in voting. The special event policy was revised in February of 2024. It updated the application deadline to 45 days. The application asked the applicant to sign, indicating that they have read the policy. I do not know if they did in this case, and we're just hoping an exception would be made, or if they signed without reading, as is common in today's society of accepting Terms and Conditions multiple times per day. I have nothing against the World Peace event. I wish the organizers well in a future event, but I do not believe that an exception should be granted in this case.

Sarah Leet (Resident) 06:50

On to Parks and Rec, the discussion at Parks and Rec greatly deviated from the agenda, in my opinion. While there were concerns voiced about the time frame and changing the policy, ultimately, the committee decided that, since there was no time, even though there has been 28 years to update the policy, instead, the process could be amended to essentially say, "It's okay if you deviate from this policy." It is one thing to update the process to recommend such a change if it is done in conjunction with a plan or a proposal or a recommendation to update that policy within a short amount of time to mirror the desired changes, but to just try to slip something through is unacceptable, no matter the impact or lack thereof. This should have been thought of

when the change was—changed to the name of Memorial Park to Veterans Memorial Park was done. As it is, I do not see how in good conscience you can approve this process change.

Sarah Leet (Resident) 07:48

The mayor commented that sometimes timelines are driven by factors that don't allow much—much more time. Time in neither of these situations was constrained. These are not decisions that need to be made under duress. You've already lost a lot of confidence from citizens. I ask you to take time to reflect on your votes tonight. As Alder Wolff said, "Sometimes we have to say no, and it's okay to do that." As in the past, your votes tonight, will have consequences passed the items on tonight's agenda. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mayor Jake Woodford 08:28

Are there any other members of the public who wish to speak on an item that appears on the agenda but did not have the opportunity to sign up ahead of time? Hearing none, we'll close public participation.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:01

All right. We'll stick with safety and licensing. This is 25-0988, World Peace Festival special event application. We have a motion and a second to approve. We'll open the floor for discussion with Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:20

Thank you, Mayor. Little background on this, or a little more information. Committee recommended unanimously to approve this application. Yes, the policy does state 45 days for submittal. This application was submitted at 25 days, I believe, so definitely a shorter than desired timeline. There was one open approval that was needed when it was at the committee level, and that was the approval from Valley Transit. I was told that that is now secured. So, all departments have approved the application, so there's no outstanding approvals. It—you know, the reason for the 45 days is to allow ample time to review everything. Everything has been reviewed. I would highly encourage us to support this and allow the festival to take place.

Mayor Jake Woodford 16:15

Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 16:18

Thank you, Chair. As I mentioned when we discuss this in the safety and licensing committee meeting, I would like to be very clear about a vote to approve this being something that is a pure exception for this one-time sort of thing. Like, this event, this event organizer can't continually have these kinds of last-minute approvals. This is simply due to the new process, et cetera. So again, I'd just like it clear for the public that this is not something that we will regularly be trying to do is just make exception after exception after exception. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 16:57

Alder Fenton.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:58

Thank you, Your Honor. Adding on to my—what my colleagues have said, when we adopted this new policy last year, after a lot of discussion about how it would be implemented, it was stated that the city clerk's office would work with applicants because there are a lot of long-standing events, and the policy change was new for them. So, I don't really see making this exception as a departure from policy when said policy was adopted with the understanding that for the first year of new events that the clerk's office would be working with them. In this

particular case, the city clerk's office was proactive and contacted the event planners, but it turns out that they had booked the park, the facility, for a week earlier than it had been the in the prior year. So again, per Alder Hartzheim's understanding, I don't think this is a process that we'll be going through in future years, but for this first year, we agreed at adoption that we would work with the applicants. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 18:27

Any further discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 13 to zero. That item has been approved.