

City Council spells out playbook for major events

Santa Cruz eyes rules for Steamer Lane, downtown and beach Events

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SANTA CRUZ » Sue Dirksen misses her Sundays.

"Don't you love waking up on a Sunday morning and being able to lie in bed and not have to do anything or hear anything," said the Bay Street resident. "Well, we don't have that choice."

Dirksen, describing 5:30 a.m. wake-ups by police motorcycles and subsequent cheers, cowbells and announcers, was one of more than a dozen people who turned out for Tuesday's Santa Cruz City

Events

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Council discussion about imposing formal timing and frequency limitations on major 200-plus-attendee events in popular parts of town.

The council unanimously voted to approve the updated policies. The policies require major events in the same parts of town to alternate weekends off, only occur from Labor Day to Memorial Day, are limited to eight hours and not occur simultaneously in both the beach/West Cliff area and Steamer Lane — with some exceptions for long-standing events.

The new provisions would

also limit Steamer Lane water events to 12 a year, six of which are multiday events.

Several residents such as Dirksen said they live close to West Cliff Drive and either have their streets shut down completely or saturated with visitors taking up scarce parking. Requests to remedy that situation ranged from better neighbor advance notification to allowing one road lane to remain open.

Other speakers raised concerns that prioritization of long-standing events could cause a chilling event on new and exciting opportunities.

Many supporters of the 2-year-old Open Streets event shared their support of the street closure event that was both relatively new

and could not always have a consistent date from year-to-year.

"I feel like the lottery for new events, to me, is a way to in some ways discourage new events," said long-time resident Grant Wilson. "The energy is like, I feel, putting people further at arm's length."

Councilman David Terrazas asked if there is a way to "nurture" newer community-based events.

Assistant to the City Manager Scott Collins told the Council that city staff members are in the business of enforcing policies and assessing impacts, not in showing preference for certain types of events. However, he added, the issue before the Council was simply an administrative

policy, allowing for some freedom and flexibility for the city to adjust where needed.

Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews said that a lengthy list of this year's already scheduled major city events, available under the calendar on the city's website (www.cityofsantacruz.com), was just "scratching the surface" on the number of events regularly occurring around the city — large and small.

Also during the meeting, an audience member asked to be arrested when he was told several times that he could not leave an audio recording device unattended on a railing surrounding the dais and then refused to leave at the mayor's request.