

Beach Street Revival, cruise takes a detour

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✓ WATSONVILLE — The Beach Street Revival, the annual car show and cruise through downtown streets, has taken a detour.

The annual event, which features hundreds of vintage cars and a weekend of celebrations at the county fairgrounds, has been canceled this year.

Rick Petersen, organizer of Beach Street Revival, could not be reached this morning, but the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce said the event has been canceled in Watsonville.

Charmaine Crismon, of the Chamber, said Beach Street Revival this year will consist of a "reunion," which will be staged at the Holiday Inn in Santa Cruz sometime this summer. No cruises in either Watsonville or Santa Cruz are planned.

Crismon said Beach Street Revival organizers were turned off by last year's troubles with city officials in staging the event. The event, which is in its 19th year and is held in July, has been held in Watsonville for the past four years. Before that, organizers staged the event at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk, until they ran into bureaucratic roadblocks and costly city fees.

Timing for last year's Beach Street Revival couldn't have been worse. On April 17, a low-rider car show at the county fairgrounds erupted into gang violence. Members of the Highway Patrol and the county sheriff's office,

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outfitted in riot gear, moved in to quell the rumble and promptly closed the show. Nearly 8,000 people from around the Central Coast and Central Valley attended the event. But instead of leaving Watsonville after the show closed, thousands took to cruising the streets of Watsonville.

What followed was a traffic disaster.

Traffic choked city streets for nearly 10 hours as cruisers took control. Numerous fights, including stabbings and shootings, broke out. Watsonville police, along with the Highway Patrol and county deputies, were kept busy trying to control the crowds. Residents reported vandalism and crude behavior by cruisers.

One City Council member said the city was in "no mood" for another car show, regardless of whether or not it was the Beach Street Revival. Not fair, said Petersen, who argued that his car show attracted a completely different type of crowd. Many of the Beach Street Revival participants and spectators are older, more mature, and only a few cars in the show are low-riders, he argued.

Petersen said the event had never caused any problems in Watsonville or Santa Cruz. Aside from a short-lived traffic congestion caused by the evening cruises, police have not experienced any serious incidents involving gang-related violence or vandalism during Beach Street cruises.