

Weary police rap Beach Street Revival

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SANTA CRUZ — Police are saying the annual impromptu street party that accompanies the Beach Street Revival has to go.

In a repeat of last year's rowdy performance, an estimated 4,000 onlookers and "revivalists" staged a celebration of their own — replete with broken glass, tossed beer cans and another opened fire hydrant — like last year.

All this was to the dismay and annoyance of 17 Santa Cruz policemen.

"The problem is there just weren't enough of us to do anything effective," said one tired policeman today.

Even Rick Petersen, organizer of the Beach Street Revival, agreed the crowd was "angry, unruly and boisterous...It really bothered me."

Police Sgt. Bob Hennig said the crowd consisted mainly of onlookers to the '50s and '60s blast. But he added some of the street revelers were from the main event.

For the record, there were two arrests, one streaker, two broken windows, a broken fire hydrant, several dumpsters of trash, "a lot of fighting and drunks," said police.

"The potential for violence was great," said Hennig, who added, "I would really encourage anyone who's in a position to do so to revoke that permit next year."

Petersen explained many of those causing trouble were in town for other events. The Grateful Dead concert at the County Fairgrounds, tourists, and people who just came to see the parade — which officially ended at 8 p.m. — stayed on to see what else might happen.

"It was a conglomeration of people," he said.

But he also said, "I know where my people were (during the street party). The median age of our group is 36 years old. And most of those were in the dance."

Petersen laid some of the blame on the transient element in the community, but added he was "disappointed" in the pandemonium created in the wake of the parade.

He said he had 10 or 12 people working as security guards in the parking lot and nearby.

Police say they helped, with sheriff's deputies, in maintaining a lid on things.

Nonetheless, police found themselves pounded with beer cans and bottles, jeered and razzed.

Said Hennig, "Most of the people were drinking,

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several were throwing bottles and cans, and a lot of people were driving recklessly down the street."

Nearly everyone agrees the revival "gives these people an excuse to come out and party."

But, the street blast is at the expense of the taxpayers. Said Hennig, "We accrued 85 hours of overtime that night — and that's only police. There were city work-crews cleaning the streets afterward, as well."

Hennig said the worst part of the night occurred after

the official parade ended at 8 p.m. Police were battling the revelers until 1 a.m.

"There's no way we can control that kind of situation without more people," Hennig said. "We were lucky nobody was killed."

Petersen is adamant the "blast from the past" is good, healthy fun.

Police are just as adamant that the event is the catalyst for unsupervised pandemonium in the street.

"It's just totally out of hand," said an officer today, adding, "I hope I never go to another one."