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**To:** General Purposes Committee **Date:** July 06, 2011  
**From:** Alan Cameron **File:** 01-0340-30-  
Director of Information Technology CSER5/2011-Vol 01  
**Re:** **City Online Forms and the Previous Online Events Approvals System Funding  
Request from 2010 Appropriated Surplus**

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**Staff Recommendation**

That the \$60,000 being held from the 2010 Surplus Appropriation be allocated to fund the development of an online Event Approvals system.

Alan Cameron  
Director of Information Technology  
(604-276-4096)

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CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Staff Report

### Origin

At the Council meeting on June 13, 2011 the following referral was assigned to staff:

*That Item No. 7 – Consultant for Event – Online Form and the related potential Surplus Appropriation be referred back to staff for further analysis on other appropriate forms for online use.*

### Background

The City provides a significant number of online systems and staff continues to review existing processes to identify those that would benefit from online automation. The current online systems include:

- Recreation registration
- Home Owner Grant Application
- My Property Accounts
- Volunteer Recruiter
- Property Information Inquiry
- Pay Parking Tickets
- Purchase Garbage Tags and Vouchers
- Order Recycling Receptacles
- GIS
- Parks Database
- Archives Database – General and BC Packers Exhibit
- Public Art
- Customer Feedback/Request A Service
- Let's Talk Richmond (OCP and Planning Discussions)
- Discussion Forums – Talk Recycling
- Calendar of Events
- Email Notification System – Subscribe to the Website
- Job Applications
- Live Election Updates
- Council Meeting Scheduler
- BizPal
- Richmond Service Directory
- Fire-Rescue Recruitment Results
- Heritage Inventory

The current systems range from simple forms to fully automated systems. There are approximately 30 simpler forms used to solely to solicit information from the public, similar to a hard-copy survey handed out at an open house. An example of one of those forms is the City Centre Transportation Plan Update - Comment Sheet. The Recreation Registration system, however, is a far more complex system which automates the entire process of checking

individual accounts, confirming eligibility for courses, selecting courses, wait-listing individuals and taking payment.

## **Analysis**

### **Other Appropriate Forms for Online Use**

There are currently several other online initiatives underway to automate existing processes that involve publishing online forms. These initiatives have already had their requirements documented (the initial stage of any proposed technical development work) and are in various stages of development and implementation:

- Business Licensing
- Facility Booking
- Vote Anywhere
- Request a Service (being updated)
- Integrated Calendar of Events (being updated)

More recently there has been some interest in reviewing the feasibility of hosting City Grant Applications online too but that idea has yet to be developed to a proposal that can be reviewed.

Earlier this year the IT Steering Committee (which comprises all business units in the City) met to prioritize project proposals and the following online system ones were included in the submissions:

- Events Approvals system (\$60k)
- Integrated Calendar of Events (replace the existing system –\$70k)
- Domestic Animal Licensing (\$44k)
- Field Entry of GIS Data Capability (\$16k)
- Open Online Access to Corporate Memory (\$9k)
- Extend the existing Online Job Applications system to include RFR Applications (\$12k)
- Open Data Portal (\$17k)
- Extranet (external collaboration portal for volunteers, staff, consultants, vendors working on projects - \$100k)

The committee recommended the Event Approvals proposal be funded. The ranking of proposals was ultimately approved by TAG with four proposals only being recommended for funding.

After reviewing the Events Approvals proposal it became clear to the committee that the business procedures involved in approving events being held in the City are extensive. The process may involve numerous departments and external agencies, have many approvals, involve significant collaboration as requests are refined, involve numerous updates and requests for additional information, and conclude with approvals either given or withheld. These procedures typically involve significant collaboration, which takes a great deal of time and can result in

delays in refining and approving an event. The amount of disparate communication can also result in misunderstandings, delaying the final approval further. The committee agreed that customer service and effective use of staff time would benefit significantly from automating this process and publishing it online.

It was also anticipated that implementing an online system in the City will reduce the lead time for approvals without increasing the staff hours dedicated to the process. In addition, the Event Approvals proposal is the only proposal that has completed the prerequisite requirements documentation stage and is ready to be approved for technical development work. This is an involved process and the work needed to identify the requirements was significant. The Enterprise Team responsible for this proposal has completed that work.

### **Current Events Approvals Process**

Events in Richmond come in all sizes, from small community events (hosting up to 50 guests) to large international events (hosting tens of thousands of guests). Each event organizer must apply to the City to host their specific event no matter the size. More than 100 events take place in Richmond annually and the number is expected to continue to grow.

Applying for and receiving approval for events in Richmond can be lengthy and unwieldy for event organizers. When an event occurs in the City, a number of City departments and outside agencies are involved both in the approval process and during event itself. They are grouped together as the Richmond Events Approval Coordination Team (REACT). The members are:

Parks	Major Events
Recreation	Richmond Olympic Oval
RCMP	BC Ambulance Service
Fire Rescue	Translink – Coast Mountain Bus Company
Emergency Programs	Transit Police Service
Community Bylaws	Vancouver Coastal Health
Building Approvals	Insurance Corporation of BC
Transportation	Steveston Harbour Authority
Business Licenses	Canadian Coast Guard
Sport Hosting	Port Metro Vancouver

Challenges to the current Event Approval process include:

- Inefficient and ineffective approval process including approval of up to 18 different areas and involving 20 different business units/agencies (REACT)
- Lack of a coordinated communication process between business units/agencies (REACT) and event organizers
- Event organizers are usually not aware of City standards and often leave out key details from their application, causing delays in event approval

## **Proposed Online Events Approvals System**

Stakeholders, including REACT, current event organizers, City departments and other municipalities were consulted as part of the improvement process. The resulting proposed Online Event Approvals system is an integrated, user-friendly, efficient and effective tool for both event organizers and the City's REACT committee members.

The proposed Online Event Approvals system consists of numerous approval forms that are used to input information to a database. The database will provide logging and centralization of communication with the added benefit of automated workflows. Also, event organizers need submit common information such as names and addresses once only. The system will also lead the event organizers through the applications process ensuring necessary forms only are completed, again improving the customer experience. The approval forms are:

1. General Customer Information Form (REACT)
2. General Event Information Form (REACT)
3. Temporary Tents or Structures Information Form (Building Approvals)
4. Transportation Plan Information Form (Transportation, Translink, Transit Police Service)
5. Street Closures Information Form (Transportation)
6. Parking Plan Information Form (Transportation, Community Bylaws)
7. Electrical and Power Information Form (Parks)
8. Washroom Information Form (Parks)
9. Food and Beverage Information Form (Vancouver Coastal Health)
10. Merchandise and Vendor Information Form (Business Licenses)
11. Amplified Sound and Recorded Music Information Form (Community Bylaws)
12. Potable (Drinking) Water Information Form (Parks, Engineering and Public Works)
13. Water-Based Event Information Form (Steveston Harbour Authority, Canadian Coast Guard, Port Metro Vancouver)
14. Alcoholic Beverage Information Form (RCMP, Parks)
15. Pyrotechnics and Fire Information Form (Fire Rescue)
16. First Aid Information Form (BC Ambulance Services, Fire Rescue)
17. Safety Plan Information Form (RCMP, Fire Rescue, Emergency Programs)
18. Litter and Recycling Information Form (Parks)

## **Recommendation**

Improving the existing Events Application process was determined to be a corporate priority and was recommended for funding by both the IT Steering Committee and TAG. In addition, the prerequisite requirements documentation work for this proposed system has been completed in preparation of technical development work. It is therefore recommended that the \$60,000 being held from the 2010 Surplus Appropriation be allocated to fund the development of an online system to automate the Event Approvals process.

## **Financial Impact**

The estimated cost of developing the system is \$60,000. The IT Division will assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the system without any additional operating costs.

**Conclusion**

The City has numerous processes already online and several more pending. The prerequisite requirements documentation for an online system to provide a more effective Events Approvals process has been developed and a proposal was submitted requesting funding to develop an online Events Approvals system. The IT Steering Committee, comprising all business units, recommended this proposal proceed for funding.



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