

City of Salem, Massachusetts



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City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033."**

The City Council Committee on Community & Economic Development, Co-Posted with the Committee of the Whole

will meet in the Mayor Jean Levesque Community Life Center on February 27, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.

for the purpose of discussing the matters(s) listed below. Notice of this meeting was posted on

February 2, 2023 at 1:38 P.M.

(This meeting is being recorded)

ATTENDANCE: Community & Economic Development committee members: C. Hapworth (Chair), C. Dominguez (joined late), C. Merkl, and C. Watson-Felt, C. Morsillo. COW members Pres. Stott (joined late), C. Varela, C. Prosniewski, C. Cohen (joined late).

ABSENT WERE: C. McClain.

SUBJECT(S)

To debrief on Haunted Happenings 2022 with feedback and Public Testimony.

Chair Hapworth opened the meeting by reading the agenda. Meeting began at 6:05 P.M.

Acting Mayor Robert McCarthy: I'd like to recognize Ellen Talkowsky for her dedication and hard work during Haunted Happenings. Hard to put a dollar amount on this event. This past year, revenues were close to same amounts as expenditures. All departments very committed to having successful Haunted Happenings. Willing to listen and learn from input.

Anna Freedman, Finance Director: Presentation of financials; revenues and expenditures of October 2022 (on file in the City Clerk's Office).

Chair Hapworth: C. Dominguez has joined us. Recognize Kate Fox.

Kate Fox, Exec. Director of Destination Salem, which is an independent non-profit that receives partial funding from the City of Salem (Gives presentation of organization and what they do. On file in City Clerk's Office). Businesses rely on Haunted Happenings for their yearly revenue. Promote Haunted Happenings as "Family Friendly". 1,000 new jobs created.

Chair Hapworth: Thank you to presenters. C. Cohen has joined us. Haunted Happenings can be frustrating. We tell ourselves is good for businesses. Please quantify what impacts weren't included, especially year-round? What are the long-term benefits?

Acting Mayor: Looking at parking violations by visitors. Funds go to general fund. Also towing. Increases to ferry revenue. Direct benefits from agencies that use parking areas put \$20 cap per car. We could possibly increase. We don't get revenue from that.

Anna Freedman: My numbers look to offset City's costs with revenues to take the pressure off tax rate for homeowners and residents.

Chair Hapworth: How can residents benefit throughout the year?

A.F.: This is the first year we've done sponsorships to help with expenses.

Chair Hapworth: Thank you. Questions from Committee: C. Morsillo?

C. Morsillo: Thank you, Chair. Anna Freedman: Talk about historical numbers.

A.F./ Chief Lucas Miller: Public safety spending: Overtime and operations. Largest increase in personnel costs due to larger crowds in October and first week in November.

A.F.: DPW costs were up post-COVID. Personnel costs \$30,000 for clean-up, etc. Added crowds. Overtime was up. Shuttle costs were up to offset parking, portable toilets.

Acting Mayor: DPW put up more barricades/ barriers to control crowds and create better flow downtown. Escalating costs are personnel and additional safety measures.

C. Merkl: Echoes Mayor McCarthy; appreciates proactive measures of City leadership. Question for K.F.: What is tax revenue for hotel/ motel for each year?

K.F.: 5-year average.

C. Watson-Felt: Thank you, Chair. I have questions which were raised to me. 1,000 jobs created. How did you get that number?

K.F.: Through Massachusetts Council of Travel & Tourism and survey of businesses.

C. W-F: Any survey data of amount of funds lost by businesses in October?

K.F.: No.

C. W-F.: Growing imbalance between business revenue. Estimation on revenue earned from commercial lots and plans to regain revenue for City? More shuttles?

David Kucharsky, Director of Parking and Traffic: 18 lots. Rates still being worked out.

C. W-F.: Additional lots?

D.K.: Private property owners asked, but no one has accepted.

C. W-F.: to Chief Miller: My gratitude to the Police. Please share numbers on success of private lots? Issues?

Chief Miller: No numbers on private lots.

C. W-F.: Private vs. residential lots for parking violations?

Lt. David Tucker, Traffic Division: Not aware of complaints.

C. W-F.: Nothing further.

C. Varela: Thank you, Chair. RFP single-source vendor contracts take away from City establishments.

Elizabeth Rennard, City Solicitor: Difficult to manage.

C. Varela: Conversation needed with existing City vendors to have opportunity a seat at the table before single-service vendors outside of Salem. I am speaking as a Salem vendor. We can do better!

Pres. Stott: Thank you, Chair. As a member of the Committee: To Acting Mayor, who owns Haunted Happenings? Who manages it? It has become difficult to manage. Revenue should be meal tax and parking. Biggest expense is shuttling. Need other revenues. How are sponsorships chosen? Need to be careful of sponsors.

Acting Mayor: Owner is the Mayor's Office with support of all departments! Everyone knows their role. Ellen Talkowsky is the one person outside the Mayor's Office who owns Haunted Happenings! She has lots of institutional knowledge. We looked at different satellite lots for parking to support. Open to suggestions. We are approached for sponsorships. We need to offset revenue with creative ways to fund this. Most feedback is if has negative impact on businesses in Salem. Must be better at messaging Salem businesses. Large expense to add portable toilets, especially if only used mostly in October.

Chair Hapworth: Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Pres. Stott for asking who owns Haunted Happenings. Need to consider more than one person to "own". C. Cohen, then C. Merkl.

C. Cohen: Thank you, Chair. I am not a member of the committee. I commend DPS, Police and Fire for their good work! Lt. Tucker, how do you feel road closures/ barriers worked in "Hocus Pocus" area?

Chief Miller: For Ocean Avenue, we closed it entirely. Fewer complaints.

C. Merkl: Thank you, Chair. Feedback on increasing revenue with parking. Need to be mindful of who collects fees in lots and that it doesn't counter measures on shuttles. Easier to charge in lots than on shuttles. Feedback helpful and always welcome.

C. Dominguez: Thank you, Chair. How much growth do you anticipate we can afford as a City, a small City! To planners: How do you control the growth?

Acting Mayor: Kate Fox said "Hocus Pocusites" brought the crowds. Also, post-COVID travel and tourism. Long weekend and good weather in 2022. Short-term rentals are already sold out for this October! Perhaps there won't be an increase this year. Open to suggestions.

Chair Hapworth: Public comment. Please keep to the issue at hand.

Polly Wilbert 7 Cedar St.: Worked for David Mugar and company who put on Boston's 4th of July celebrations. Upwards of 500,000. I know how large-scale events are put on. Hidden fact: higher paid professionals on police force. Overtime increases. Are liquor licenses from 9AM-12 Noon a good idea? Burden on downtown residents in great. No benefits to locals. Need to downsize or "Right-size". Thank you.

Chair Hapworth: Thank you, Polly.

Susan Moulton 98 Washington Square: Haunted Happenings 6-weeks; not just in October. Destination Salem's sponsorship is a cost not listed. Thank you.

Chair Hapworth: Alan Hanscom.

Alan Hanscom 82 Washington Square: Learned how to navigate crowds, but this October very difficult. Vendors on Commons more respectful, but damage of exposed tree roots. Grass trampled. Hoping Park & Recreation will work on that.

Chair Hapworth: Advertising brings visitors. We know number of visitors from Destination Salem.

Fawaz Abusharkh 4 Harrison Road: Not about profit and loss. Needs to be more of finding balance to service visitors and not insult residents. In other cities, if not a resident, can't park there. Have a parking lottery. Need to help Salem businesses. Need new vision. Salem comes first, always! Residents and businesses!

Annie Harris 28 Chestnut Street: I run a small non-profit. Delighted for this hearing. Generally a proponent for Haunted Happenings, but 2022 was overwhelming. My business was negatively impacted. Need to help year-round businesses! Negative impact on residents. Many felt trapped walking and driving! Survey didn't ask how residents felt about Haunted happenings. Use revenues to beautify Salem and upkeep. Seek outside professional help as to how to proceed. Thank you.

Chair Hapworth: Thank you, Annie.

Gary Gill: 72 Flint Street: Put parking along Bridge Street to Flint Street. Residents suffering! Have 2 kids' weekends and 2 adult weekends. Shuttles! Can't allow even residents to use cars during October. Start walking!

John Andrews 269 Essex Street: Conversations out of hand; dangerous rhetoric! Have lots of important data.

Chair Hapworth: Any more questions? No?

C. Merkl: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, residents and audience.

Chair Hapworth: Motion from the Committee?

Pres. Stott: Appreciates candor. More conversation needed.

Gary Gill: Is this the first meeting? Will there be more?

C. Morsillo: Motion to keep in Committee.

Chair Hapworth: Back to Council. Remain in Committee if you go with C. Morsillo's motion.

Gary Gill: Businesses should be part of this conversation. Who are you representing?

C. W-F.: Thanks to all employees who came. Lots time and thought. This is a start. Keep in committee to allow more businesses/ residents to have input. To Mayor: Difficult for 1 person/ 1 department to run. Welcome more solutions and ideas.

C. Morsillo: Keep in committee. Next meeting, meet with small businesses and Committee on Community & Economic Development. City was very clean in October! Bravo, Chief Miller! I never feel unsafe.

Chair: C. Dominguez seconded motion. Vote: 5 members voting; 5 voted to keep in Committee. Another motion"

C. Morsillo: Motion to adjourn.

On the motion of C. Morsillo, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

(Chairperson)