



AUSTIN CENTER  
FOR EVENTS

## SEO Write the Rules Summer Session Meeting Notes

July 17, 2018

### Organizations Represented

FairMarket

SXSW

Eeyore's Birthday

Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association

Red Velvet Events

Austin Music People

Texas Disposable Services

Paramount Theater

### Draft Rules and Processes Presented

- Public Safety Requirements: EMS
- Public Safety Requirements: AFD
- Rain Plans
- Emergency Tent Requests: AFD

### Meeting Summary

- A large portion of the discussion focused on how Austin Center for Events (ACE) Staff can best provide guidance to event organizers on public safety plan expectations.
- ACE staff and event planning stakeholders agree offering a simple public safety plan template that captures baseline information would be helpful.
- There was consensus language should be added to the proposed rules allowing event organizers to submit alternative emergency or safety plans in lieu of a Public Safety Plan provided requirements were met.
- ACE staff and stakeholders agree clearer communication is needed regarding fire safety plan and changes to the international fire code.



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- 1 **Stakeholder:** Wouldn't the deadlines be the same as tier structure?
  - **Staff:** We'll always accept things earlier; Yes to following the tiers
  - **Staff:** Fire safety plan, still working on it. Site plan has to be provided at time of application. It's pretty basic what we're looking for. It's an awareness, so we know who to contact in case of an emergency
  - **Staff:** I believe the public safety plan has to be 30 days before the event
  
- 2 **Stakeholder:** If it's just basic information, do you want a word document with all of this information in it? There's really no instructions. The responsibility is on the venue or the event planner to identify these procedures, correct? And then we present that to you? If that could be a little more detailed as far as how this procedure occurs. Is that going to be on the ACE application now?
  - **Staff:** Every venue is different; level of safety plans required for each individual event will be different. If we get too detailed in the rules process, it will create a new burden on the smaller events that don't need certain parts. Keeping the fire safety plan vague in the rules to make it easier for smaller venues, work through it in the event planning process. Yes, a word document for the most part. The site plan requirements are pretty much going to be met when you submit a valid site plan. So, this isn't as complicated as it seems to be.
  - **Staff:** It is upon us to help you guys establish a safety plan.
  
- 3 **Stakeholder:** What are the requirements around evacuations, specifically with weather related stuff and general public safety issues as they relate to the evacuation? Is that something where there are standards when applying that the City reviews? Is there something you guys can provide on the front end so we know what those minimum standards are so they can be met?
  - **Staff:** We're working to find out if there are any NOAA or National Weather Service standards, particularly related to wind or lightening. Our goal is to break down weather plans by Tier level. If you're a Tier 1 event closing down a city block, you don't need to have as robust of a public safety weather plan as an ACL Festival. We want to know who your decider is, who is shutting down the event, and what your criteria are in order to do that. We'll have further guidance documents to come before implementation.
  
- 4 **Staff:** How difficult would it be to have baseline templates for various Tiers?
  - **Stakeholder:** Templates are always good if it's a foundation only template. The City will help you do it step by step and figure it out per venue. If there are just some clear guidelines, because you can't create a one-fits-all template.



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- **Staff:** We can provide guidance on what people need to consider, but I hesitate creating templates and put the responsibility of the owner to choose between 17 different templates.
- 5 **Staff:** This is new to everyone in here. This is new to us too. This is something that is new to the 2015 International Fire Code and is very vague, just like the document we gave you. We will all walk through this together. It's not as complex as it seems, it's who's responsible, how are you going to get everybody out, what routes are they going to go, and a good site plan. Weather related; when will you evacuate, what triggers a call, how will you communicate that, how security will coordinate to get everybody out. Really vague, broad things that get your mind thinking about how we're going to proceed with the safety aspect. We're going to help you develop these plans.
- 6 **Staff:** Correct me if I'm wrong, my understanding is that we have some baseline requirements that we currently ask of special events in terms of safety requirements. What are venues submitting now? And can we use that as a commonplace to start?
- **Stakeholder:** We've never been asked for one, but as a venue we have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that our corporate management company has for all of their venues that was then customized for our venue. If someone doesn't have that, what resources are available to them to establish that? Is there anything in the International fire code that people need to be aware of when they are establishing those plans that you expect to see on there that may not be on their site plan? How do you want that communicated? Because right now the instructions on how to deliver that information to you is not very clear.
  - **Staff:** This is draft form. This is taken straight out of the Fire code book. The sentences that are written are basically copied from Fire code. We tried to condense everything down to the minimum standard that we can accept. And then the fire code specifically says, "You should develop a plan, and the Fire code official will help you."
  - **Stakeholder:** Help the event organizer to determine their own plan, or are you going to be giving guidance on what is correct given circumstances of that event?
  - **Staff:** Yes; EMS, AFD, and police are ultimately responsible and accountable for whatever response needs to go into your venue, so we certainly have a vested interest like you do. We won't let you create a bad plan. There are things where we'll say "this is up to you" or we may say "you need to have something written down" but for a smaller event that may have 100-200 people, we may not get as granular as
- 7 **Stakeholder:** For the new EMS rule with the information that you want provided after an event, I understand why you would want the EMS and the City impacts of people transported, but I'm curious—why patient evaluation if it's basic dehydration or something like that?



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- **Staff:** There are occasions where there's a first time event and they use a private contractor, and it significantly impacts our 911 operations. And so the next year we require that the promoter to provide Austin-Travis County EMS services for the whole medical support of the event. And we need to have a good idea of how many people they saw that year overall, because we have to provide the right resources.
  - **Stakeholder:** Doesn't that vary based on programming? Just because they have a ton of issues one year doesn't mean they'll have the same ones the next year.
  - **Staff:** And absolutely not. It's not just one thing that would occur, but if they come to us and they want to have an event in August in the middle of the day, weather will continuously play a part. Whereas they have their event early in March and it was really hot that day, we'll probably give them the benefit of the doubt that it's not going to be 95 degrees every March 1<sup>st</sup>. One of the deadlines of the programming is for the programming to be decided on before we sign off on whether you can use an outside EMS provider or you have to use Austin-Travis County EMS.
  - **Stakeholder:** I see the need to give information back to EMS
  - **Staff:** And take into account not only the time of day or type of event, but we also account for location. It's a lot easier for us to support an event inside the core of the city verses if you're doing an event down at Decker Lake. That's a significant transport time that puts our crews down for a long time. We'll treat those events differently.
- 8 **MODERATOR:** I'm hearing you all want more clarity around what our expectations are regarding to the Public Safety Plan. What the guidelines are, what we're recommending. I'm hoping you all can walk us through what happens now with an event. Actually, walk us through a scenario you all went through recently with a major special event, with an emergency or a severe weather event. Can you think of something recently that happened and how you walked through that, how you communicated with event stakeholders, and what things you had in place in advance to help with the communication around that.
- **STAFF:** So with 4<sup>th</sup> of July recently, all of the park events provide a comprehensive safety plan which includes a number of elements that the EMS, the City, and maybe Fire is looking for, but there's a lot of commonality in them. So for 4<sup>th</sup> of July this year we had rain all day so we started scheduling calls with the National Weather Service and our contacts with Symphony and all of the agencies. And we actually had 4 or 5 on the 4<sup>th</sup> to check the status of the rain. And we used that to let people know to not come down before a certain time. We used those processes to make informed decisions. I do think there's a lot of commonality what some of these items may be requesting and I think it's up to the City to help with some basic information to get event stakeholders started, realizing fully that you may need to adapt them in other ways. Because sometimes we go back and forth. We have some work to do to provide a better tool up front.
  - **STAFF:** This happened several years ago, and it was not a small event. There was a new event planner that was organizing it. It was in the spring and there was some weather



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forecasted. I asked him what his weather plan was and his response was and he said “well I guess if it rains we’ll cancel it” and I said “well what if it rains in the middle of your event.” He hadn’t really thought that through and how to communicate that, and all the details of that. I’m in agreement with Jason, may a template with basic information for people who don’t fully think through weather plans.

- **Staff:** I’d just like to point out, if you’re venue has an established Emergency Action Plan, we’re not going to ask you to rewrite that. Y’all have submitted EAPs and for the most part, they cover all the bases. As far as templates, we can give a list of the basic deals. One of the problems with templates, we have events that provide EAPs that are above and beyond, so we don’t want to send the message that we want them to take all that information and put it on a different form just so we can have a certain form. I think it could work better just to have the basic categories and things to consider and as things come up, we’ll talk to the event organizers. The concern is more with first time event organizers.
- 9 **MODERATOR:** So, would it be helpful to consider having language that say “submit this plan, or we can accept your EAP if it includes all of these things?” Basically if you’re doing the same thing and already have the contingency plans that has all of the critical emergency information that is required, would that work for everyone? I’m hearing two different things. I’m hearing that there’s some baseline information that everyone feels like we want to have and there’s a lot of support for a bunch of new templates. So maybe some language that allows for the flexibility for the folks who have been submitting robust plans already. Any concern from staff?
- **Staff:** No problem with that. Would have to check with PD. I look at it as, public safety may not be at your venue while your event is ongoing. Or the presence may be minimal, so it needs to be something that works for your venue and something we can scale up if we have to set units up in the venue. The initial action plan needs to be something that works for your venue based on your business needs.
- 10 **Stakeholder:** Is there any lightning strike indicators at Auditorium Shores, Zilker, or any of those area? If they’re not, that may be something infrastructure-wise the City may need to consider in the future.
- **Staff:** Our priority would probably be to put those in the Youth sports fields first. They run about \$250,000 a piece to install and then considering where the poles would go in the park. Definitely something the budget would need to consider.
- 11 **Stakeholder:** Some of these questions are just for clarification. It’s not something that pertains to me as a venue, but something I think someone else might stumble on. What actually triggers a need for onsite EMS services?
- **Staff:** So we break it down into expected attendance and the type of event that’s going on. So a concert performance, a sporting event, and then another mass gathering. And



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then there is some component of past history in cases where events have occurred and we know they have a higher impact to our 911 system. We will then come back and say in future years, you're going to have to staff and provide Austin-Travis County EMS for at least some of your events.

- 12 **Stakeholder:** Last year, I did an event outside and the law was I could only have 4 10x10 tents next to each other, but the year before I could have 7 10x10 tents next to each other. I'm just curious if we're going to have some concrete answers to some guidelines.
  - **Staff:** There will probably be growing pains as we implement the special events ordinance, particularly those of you who have been doing events for a while in Austin as we move through implementation of the ordinance. Everyone has to abide by the same playbook. So, it's great to have relationships with folks who you have been working with for a really long time. The problem with having a history of doing that is, those agreements don't always pass on. When you're in situation where staff changes, or you have folks who are leading staff, it doesn't set you up for success in the future. So the special events ordinance gives us an opportunity to say "okay, let's look at what we're doing, and let's make sure we give everyone an opportunity to play by the rules the way they were intended". And that's why this public engagement process is so important. I know it can be excruciating at times as we move through this process, but hearing from you is super important so we can explain that yes, maybe it feels like the rules changed on the you but we weren't following the letter of the rules the way we were supposed to be doing. If we make changes moving forward, we want to be better at communicating those changes and why those changes are being made.
  - **Staff:** And that's current, our Fire code changes every three years. For the most part things stay the same, but some things will change. It's going to be our job to make sure we pass that information on to you guys prior to your event.