
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 18, 2007
File No.: 8100-20
To: City Manager
From: Sport & Recreation Manager
Subject: Wakefest Event

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT City Council receives the report from the Sport & Recreation Manager regarding Wakefest dated September 18, 2007, as information.

BACKGROUND:

The 2006 and 2007 Wakefest has raised serious concerns for public safety, protection of municipal property and protection of private property. This report is intended to provide City Council with additional background on the Wakefest event, challenges associated with the event, and direction from the Outdoor Events Committee. Inspector Curtain, RCMP, is also expected to be in attendance for this report.

The Wakefest event has been a significant summer event in Kelowna for the last six summers taking place typically the weekend following Canada Day. The event has experienced annual growth in attendance with sell outs in 2006 and 2007.

The event has two organizing bodies including World Sport and Entertainment, which organizes the Wakeboard competition (the only Canadian stop for the Pro Wakeboard Tour), and IMG, which organizes the festival component which includes site, logistics and entertainment. The City's Outdoor Event Permit and primary communications for this event is with IMG.

Through 2006 and 2007 there has been significant growth in event attendance as well as added challenges within the City during Wakefest weekend. At the conclusion of the 2006 Wakefest, numerous meetings took place to evaluate and develop changes that would improve the management of the event, both inside and outside the venue. Changes made and implemented for the 2007 Wakefest event included:

- Increased police presence and agreement from \$20,840 in 2006 to \$52,029 in 2007.
- Focus of the police presence was moved to outside the site as compared to a large police presence inside the venue. Inside the venue was left for the security firm working for the event organizer to manage.
- Capacity reduction in liquor licensed area for Friday and Saturday night concerts from 6,000 to 1,600.
- Flood lights on Rhapsody Plaza after Friday and Saturday concerts to encourage crowd dispersement.

- Shuttle bus service available after Friday and Saturday concerts to assist with crowd dispersement.
- Closure of east side of Water Street to facilitate an emergency access lane.

The 2007 Wakefest Event brought similar challenges as in 2006. As a result of these challenges a further review of the event and approval for a permit for its continuation has been complete. Numerous meetings and discussions have taken place that has included the RCMP, Liquor Control and Licensing Branch, Outdoor Events Committee and various City staff.

Challenges regarding the impact of the event have been outlined below. While some challenges may be relatively easy to address a number of the challenges are more complex and present significant safety concerns for person and property.

- Site at capacity. The combination of a sold out venue (6,000 capacity) and highly commercialized vendor village has created a very congested site which has become challenging for emergency vehicular access.
- Based on the approved security plan, there was insufficient security personnel provided during the event to manage inside the venue. RCMP was required to compensate for this which took them away from their primary focus which was outside the venue.
- The event is promoted as the "Hottest Event of the Summer" with the perception that more attention is given to the party and alcohol consumption rather than the wakeboard competition.
- The success and popularity of Wakefest has had a domino effect that has had a negative impact outside the venue and primarily in the downtown area. Specifically, Wakefest weekend has become known as the weekend to come to Kelowna and party. The developing conditions and general atmosphere has been compared to the Regatta riots of the 80's.
- While many Wakefest participants come to Kelowna to respectfully enjoy Wakefest activities, there are a large number that bring an element of disorderly conduct. This is evidenced by the volume of open drinking throughout the downtown area.
- The RCMP resources are challenged with securing enough members and having enough infrastructure to manage the demand associated with the Wakefest weekend. Should the event continue, the RCMP will be required to source staff from other centres as well as source additional infrastructure, i.e. holding cells.
- People come to Kelowna without having purchased Wakefest tickets or making accommodation arrangements. With Wakefest sold out and hotels at or near capacity, the end result are large volumes of people wandering around the City and sleeping in public spaces.
- Significant challenges occur outside the venue immediately after the Friday and Saturday night concerts especially as this crowd begins to integrate with the already present downtown crowd. The challenges are compounded when the night clubs are already at capacity. In 2007, the RCMP was forced to put a road closure in place on Leon (from Abbott to Water) which also required Bylaw to manage the closure.
- The increasing risk associated with transferring the City's Liquor Primary Licence.

- The general influx in visitation to Kelowna also taxed the Fire and Ambulance service. An example is that available Ambulances from the surrounding area were brought into Kelowna to deal with the volume of calls leaving the outlying areas with limited resources.
- General congestion in the downtown core made emergency vehicular movement difficult.
- External media coverage for Kelowna was negative and focused on the party, beer drinking and near riot conditions.

With the changes made after the 2006 event and given the continued challenges outlined above, any changes made for 2008 may have little impact given the success of past marketing campaigns and visitor influx into Kelowna over that weekend. The general feeling is that a continuation of Wakefest at the same time and similar program format would attract crowds and atmosphere that may be detrimental to Kelowna. Even if Wakefest discontinues for 2008 there are concerns that there will still be a significant visitor influx and similar challenges in Kelowna on the typical Wakefest weekend as a residual from past Wakefest events.

Through the enactment of Bylaw #8358, A Bylaw to Regulate Outdoor Events Within the City of Kelowna, City Council has delegated the regulatory approval authority to the Outdoor Events Committee. The general direction from the Outdoor Events Committee is as follows:

1. Advise IMG that an Outdoor Event Permit will not be issued for the 2008 Wakefest.
2. Advise IMG that an Outdoor Event Permit may be considered for 2009 based on continued discussions with City staff, submission of an application and review through the Outdoor Events Committee.
3. The dates usually occupied by the Wakefest Event (the weekend following Canada Day) will remain vacated for 2008 and not allowed to fill with another request.
4. City staff will develop general guidelines through the Outdoor Events Committee which consider the approval and growth of large spectator based outdoor sport and entertainment events within the summer period.

This direction provides for a one year reprieve from the event and related challenges plus provides the opportunity for continued discussions with IMG to redevelop the Wakefest program.

This direction has been reviewed and supported by the Outdoor Events Committee and RCMP.

IMG has been briefed on the direction from the Outdoor Events Committee. During this discussion, IMG advised the City that it would be difficult to maintain event sponsors during a year break and would likely look for an alternate location for 2008. It would be their intent to look for a long term location.

INTERNAL CIRCULATION TO: Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, Outdoor Events Coordinator and Committee, RCMP.

EXISTING POLICY: Outdoor Events Bylaw #8358

FINANCIAL/BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS: Park rental fee and transfer of liquor primary license fee of ~\$13,000 (2007) would be lost revenue in the Outdoor Events base budget.

EXTERNAL AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENTS: Feedback from the Hotel Association is that a permit should not be issued for the Wakefest event. A letter to this effect is attached to the report. The Tourism Advisory Committee has made a similar recommendation but have not forwarded a letter prior to the submission of this report.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS: The 2006 and 2007 Wakefest event has put significant strain on emergency service resources in Kelowna including RCMP, Fire and Ambulance.

Considerations that were not applicable to this report:

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS: N/A

LEGAL/STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

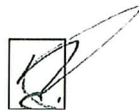
LEGAL/STATUTORY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION:

Submitted by:



J. Gabriel, Sport & Recreation Manager



Approved for Inclusion:

Cc: Director of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services
Outdoor Events Coordinator
Inspector Randy Curtain, RCMP



September 21, 2007

Mayor Sharon Shepherd
CITY OF KELOWNA
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, BC
V1Y 1J4

Dear Mayor Shepherd:

RE: WAKEFEST

In our recent monthly meeting held on September 6, 2007, the members of the Kelowna Hotel Motel Association discussed the events of WakeFest held in July 2007.

In summary, it was felt by our members that this event is detrimental to the image that the businesses in Kelowna are trying to portray. Many hotels and motels suffered damages from the patrons attending the event and the properties had numerous complaints from our other clientele. Though businesses may experience a temporary shortfall, we are confident that by avoiding this event in the future, we can rebuild our reputation as a "family city" and will continue to fill this weekend to the benefit of all tourism businesses and the city of Kelowna in general.

Consequently, the Kelowna Hotel Motel Association is not in favour of supporting this event and has passed a resolution to that effect.

Should you have any questions regarding the above, please contact me directly at 979-6901. Thank you so much for your ongoing support of the tourism industry.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Paterson
President
Kelowna Hotel Motel Association

cc. Superintendent Bill McKinnon, RCMP
Jim Gabriel, City of Kelowna Sport & Recreation Manager
Nancy Cameron, Tourism Kelowna