TO:          HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM:        CITY MANAGER       DEPARTMENT:   CITY MANAGER

DATE:        APRIL 4, 2005       CMR:209:05

SUBJECT:     ELIMINATION OF THE PERMIT FEES FOR BLOCK PARTY APPLICATIONS

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

In July 1996, the City Council approved a proclamation that designated the month of August of that year “Block Party Month” as part of then-Mayor Lanie Wheeler’s Palo Alto Together initiative. The Council suspended the block party permit fees for August as an incentive for more neighborhoods to join together for camaraderie. Staff received requests from residents about suspending permit fees every summer since then.

In a further effort to encourage neighborhood interaction and celebration, in 2003 staff recommended and the Council approved a resolution proclaiming the months of July and September every year as block party months and suspended the permit fees permanently for these two months (see CMR:364:03). July and September were the most popular months for block parties accounting for the majority of all block party permits issued.

DISCUSSION

Staff is currently in the process of streamlining the block party permit process by making the permit available on-line. Allowing residents to file a block party permit on-line makes the permit process much more convenient for residents and reduces staff time to process the permit. Having a mixture of fee and non-fee months for block party permits confuses and sometimes angers residents resulting in more staff time being spent explaining the rational for the fee/no-fee processes. Completely eliminating the permit fee will greatly improve the ease and efficiency of block party permit applications and processing while continuing the encouragement of neighborhoods to join together for camaraderie. While the fees will be eliminated, all block party safety requirements will be strictly enforced.
**RESOURCE IMPACT**

Staff proposes to eliminate the $30 fee associated with block parties as part of the 2005-07 budget process. In the past four years, 228 block party permits have been issued. 152 of these permits were issued in either July or September, leaving just 76 permits that could be charged the $30 permit fee under the current fee structure. These 76 permits would account for $2,280 over the four-year period, an average of only $570 per year. The elimination of the block party permits will have minimal impact on the revenue in the Police Department’s budget.

The processing time of 20-minutes per application will be cut in half by utilizing the new on-line permit process. Staff will be able to handle the workload associated with the permit requests.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This report has no impact on CEQA.

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