

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, May 5, 2026

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIAL EVENTS BY-LAW
RECOMMENDATIONS**

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

Staff are seeking Council’s approval to amend the Special Events By-law to improve the special event permitting process, enhance public safety and risk management and address operational challenges identified through recent reviews and consultation with other City of Vaughan (the City) departments and community partners. These amendments enable a more consistent, transparent and efficient approach to special event management, improve public safety and risk mitigation and ensure the By-law remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Report Highlights

- After reviewing feedback from City staff and external stakeholders, staff identified several amendments to the Special Events By-law 045-2018, including an update to definitions, removal of restrictions on length and frequency of special events, clarification of references to permits issued by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, clarification of the scope of authority of the Director and Chief Licensing Officer with respect to special event permit conditions, and other minor house-keeping amendments.

Recommendations

1. That Council authorize the by-law amendments to Special Events By-law 045-2018, as amended, and Fees and Charges By-law 051-2026, substantially in accordance with Attachment 1, in a form satisfactory to the Office of the City Solicitor.

Background

In line with the By-law Strategy, all by-laws are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain clear, relevant, and transparent. When improvements are identified, BCLPS staff will recommend amendments or propose new by-laws that reflect evolving community needs and standards.

The Special Events By-law regulates special events held in the City and is enforced by the Licensing and Special Enforcement team of BCLPS Enforcement Services Unit.

Special events enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors in Vaughan.

In 2025, BCLPS issued 108 special event permits for a variety of events including cultural events, children's entertainment, food festivals and religious gatherings. Attendance at events ranged from a few dozen to over 1,000 people and attracted residents and visitors from the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area and beyond. Special events provide a wide range of benefits to the community; they boost the local economy by attracting visitors and supporting nearby businesses, while also showcasing cultural traditions that promote awareness and inclusivity. Events strengthen community pride and social connection by bringing people together towards enhancing the City's overall vibrancy, helping to build strong partnerships among community groups, nonprofits, and businesses.

Municipalities regulate special events to ensure they are safe, well-organized and compatible with the surrounding community.

Regulating special events, through the provisions of the Special Events By-law, helps the City manage traffic, noise, and public space use; protect public safety through proper planning and emergency access; and ensure events comply with zoning, licensing and insurance requirements. The provisions of the by-law also enable the City to coordinate resources, impose conditions on events to minimize disruptions to residents and businesses, promote public health and safety and maintain fairness and consistency in how events are approved and delivered.

Various City departments and external agencies are involved in the special event permit approval process.

All special event permit applications are circulated to relevant City departments, Vaughan Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS), York Region Public Health, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and York Regional Police (YRP). This is to ensure that all stakeholders who may have an interest are aware of event details and are provided with an opportunity to make comments or recommendations for the event in support of health and safety for participants and nuisance prevention for the community at large. For example, VFRS may identify deficiencies on an event's emergency plan to be rectified by the event organizer, or YRP may identify the need and require a certain

number of paid-duty officers at an event. Typically, special event permits are not issued until feedback is received from all stakeholders who have an identified interest in the event, and any recommendations they provide may either be required prior to the issue of a permit or be incorporated as conditions on the permit itself.

Previous Reports/Authority

- [Special Events By-law 045-2018](#) (approved by Council on February 21, 2018);
- [Council-approved By-law Strategy](#), Item 3, Report No. 3 of the Priorities and Key Initiatives Committee, (adopted by City Council on June 24, 2014)

Analysis and Options

A number of recommendations have resulted from staff's review of the Special Events By-law.

BCLPS staff have reviewed the current Special Events By-law, along with concerns and suggestions from relevant departments, external agencies, and event organizers, and are recommending the following amendments to the Special Events By-law:

- Amending the definition of “Car Rally to remove the word “exhibition” to clarify intent of by-law provisions;
- Amending the definition of “Charitable Event” to include groups that are endorsed by a registered charity;
- Removing restrictions on special event frequency, duration and the number of event permits a special event organizer may obtain in a year and granting authority to the Director and Chief Licensing Officer of BCLPS to approve or modify event length and frequency in line with the best interest of the community;
- Revising references to permits issued by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) to ensure the wording is general and applicable to all relevant AGCO-issued, alcohol-related permit types;
- Clarifying the authorities of the Director and Chief Licensing Officer, including the discretion to limit the length and frequency of an event; and
- Undertaking minor technical corrections and reference updates to ensure consistency with other City by-laws.

All the abovementioned amendments, including current state analysis of the issues, specific recommendations on Special Events By-law amendments, and the rationale for these changes, are described in Attachment 1 to this Report.

The proposed amendments strengthen the City's special event permitting process.

The proposed amendments will streamline processes, reduce reliance on Council exemptions and support a wider range of high-quality events. For organizers, the amendments provide clarity on regulatory requirements, greater flexibility and a more predictable permitting process, leading to an overall improvement in coordination between event organizers and the City.

Financial Impact

There are no material financial impacts associated with the recommendations in this report.

Operational Impact

The proposed amendments will enhance operational efficiency by creating a clearer, more predictable special event permitting process. Updated definitions support more accurate applications. Removing outdated limits on event duration and frequency reduces the number of applications requiring Council exemptions, and clarifying staff authority enables timely, consistent decision-making. Together, these changes streamline workflow, reduce administrative burdens and support safer, well-coordinated events for the community.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Although the administration, approval, and enforcement of special event permits are primarily undertaken by BCLPS staff, several other departments and external agencies play key roles in the review process. These partners often establish conditions to ensure public safety, including YRP and the Emergency Planning Unit of VFRS. There are no other broader regional impacts or considerations, beyond those identified in this section, as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Conclusion

Special events are an important part of the City's cultural and recreational landscape. They enhance quality of life for residents, support tourism and educational opportunities and advance the City of Vaughan's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community. Staff will continue to work collaboratively with internal

partners and external agencies to support event organizers and maintain well-coordinated, safe, and successful events across the city.

To support the implementation of the amendments, staff will communicate directly with Special Event Permit applicants from 2025 to advise of the changes. Staff are also developing a comprehensive guide to support event organizers, and will continue to offer one-on-one meetings between staff and Special Event applicants to assist with the permit process. The recommendations in this report are in line with Council's Term of Council priority of Community Safety and Well-being.

For more information, please contact: Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Director and Chief Licensing Officer (Acting), By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, ext. 8782.

Attachments

1. Amendments to the Special Events By-law Recommendations

Prepared by

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