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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

City to allow Allston DIY Fest at Ringer Park; organizers to address noise, parking issues

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 17, 2013 12:01 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

City officials announced this week they have reversed their previous decision to

deny permits for the Allston DIY Fest to be held at a public park after organizers of the yearly event agreed to make changes to address complaints and concerns over noise, parking, and public safety.

The festival's fourth annual run will be held at its usual spot, the city-owned Ringer Park, on a to-be-determined weekday in late August, said a statement from Jacquelyn Goddard, spokeswoman for the Parks and Recreation Department.

But some aspects of the event will be managed differently "for public safety reasons," the statement said.

The changes, agreed to after months of talks between leaders of the parks department, Boston Police and event organizers, include that the event run shorter than in years past and that it end by 8 p.m., according to the city.

Noise control efforts, including relocating one particular performance stage, will be made in order to provide a buffer between the event and neighbors, the city said.

Parking accommodations for event-goers must also be made; city officials said that organizers have preliminary approval to host a parking site at a nearby school.

And, city officials said that new logistics must be followed for the setup and removal of event-related equipment, including assigning times for when the equipment is picked up and dropped off in an effort to prevent illegal double parking on narrow streets around the park.

Further discussions between city officials and organizers are planned to finalize the festival's date, hours and any other issues, the statement said.

The one-day DIY Fest has been held at Ringer Park each of the [past three summers](#).

The free, all-ages festival describes itself on its [website](#) as an event celebrating do-it-yourself culture, along with "freedom of individual expression, community building and alternative education, promoting a gift economy in place of money and oppressive consumerism"

Do-it-yourself culture, as the name suggests, promotes self-sufficiency – rejecting the practice of buying goods and services from others, it instead encourages people to try doing and making things on their own. A “gift economy” involves giving away goods and services for free without expecting anything in return – not now, not later.

In past years, the festival has featured about two dozen acts performing on stages, workshops, art, games, toys, and a free market, where people can drop off things that they don't want and take things they do want without involving any legal tender.

The festival is arranged at no cost by organizers, who arrange themselves in a non-hierarchical fashion, the festival website says.

The event's website, as it has stated in past years, describes it as a “sober festival” and urges event-goers to: “Please respect the park and respect all the people in it, helping us create a safer space by keeping oppressive language and behavior away. Racism, religious discrimination, sexism, agism, classism, sizeism, ableism, transphobia and homophobia are uncool and unwelcome ... clean up after yourself, and let's continue to build community.”

However, according to the city, “Each year, there have been public safety issues. Police officers responded during the day to complaints about illegally parked cars blocking driveways, roads, and fire hydrants. Officers also visited the park repeatedly to ask that the noise level be reduced.”

After each of the first three festivals city officials said they discussed those problems, which violated permit guidelines, with organizers who responded by assuring city officials that the problems would not be repeated.

But, “following the 2012 DIY Festival, the Boston Parks and Police Departments felt the festival continued to violate public safety guidelines,” the statement from Goddard said.

This past spring, when the event's organizer applied for a permit for the 2013 DIY Fest, the [city denied the request](#).

Organizers, who had been planning this summer's event since last November, applied for permits to hold the festival on July 20, from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., with music and entertainment from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The application, however, only listed an expected crowd of about 100. City officials said that in prior years the event has drawn more than 1,000 people and crowds significantly larger than 100 people would likely attend again this year since 27 bands are scheduled to play.

That discrepancy along with the “illegal parking, noise complaints and other issues in previous years,” led to the permit being denied “on the grounds of public safety concerns, saying that Ringer Park was not suitable as a site,” the city’s statement said.

“During the same conversation, the Boston Parks Department offered to work with the organizers to move the event to a location more suitable to the crowd size attending the festival,” the statement added.

The move prompted fans of the festival to launch an [online petition](#), which gathered 900 signatures, urging the city to reconsider.

“There is a rich history of cultural and community events in Ringer Park. The park was used, during the days of [Mayor] Kevin White’s administration, for cultural events under the ‘Summerthing’ project, which brought Bo Diddley, The Byrds, and Chuck Berry to Ringer Park,” the petition reads. “Allston’s moniker is supposedly ‘Rock City’ – even the Boston Fire Department is currently selling shirts using this nickname as a fundraising tool. Let us continue to uphold the traditions of the neighborhood, by providing free, not-for-profit cultural events through legal channels.”

“If the community can’t use the park, who can – and what is it there for? This is a petition not just for our festival, but for all events in the park,” the petition added.

City officials announced this week that they had reached an agreement with organizers that will allow the festival to happen at Ringer Park this summer, albeit later than originally planned.

The festival’s [Facebook page](#) excitedly announced over the weekend: “It’s happening,” and promised to share more details soon.

To read more about previous Allston DIY Fests, click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

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