



**The City of Lowell Guide to Obtaining  
Permits for  
Special Events and Festivals**

# LOWELL

*Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

## A Word from Lowell City Manager Bernard F. Lynch

The City of Lowell is dedicated to maintaining its desirability as a lifetime destination- a vibrant place to live, work and do business. Lowell's continual growth and development depend, in part, upon the quality and timeliness of the information and services delivered by the City.

This guide has been prepared to assist residents, businesses, and developers in moving through the City's regulatory processes as easily as possible, by removing unnecessary confusion, delays, and costs. This guide is part of the City's ongoing effort to sustain livable neighborhoods and a positive business climate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard F. Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bernard F. Lynch  
City Manager

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## **I. Step-by-step process to obtaining a license for a special event in Lowell**

The application for a Special Event in Lowell is available in the **Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office**. Applications will be reviewed within 2 weeks of receipt. There is a \$25 processing fee that is due when the application is submitted. **Cultural Affairs & Special Events** staff will advise as to which City Departments will need to be contacted and what permission is required. It will be the responsibility of the event contact person to attain all necessary permits required.

### **Notification deadlines:**

Please allow advance notice for all your events:

Block Parties, Road Races, Festivals, Filming require 2 months advance notification to the Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office.

Larger scale events such as major festivals with over 500 attendees should contact the Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office 6 months in advance of the date of the event.

### **Develop a Plan**

This is what will be asked on the application.

Who is the contact person for the event and their information?

What is the date and duration of the event?

Where will the event be held?

What is the expected turnout for the event?

Will alcohol be served?

Will a street closure be needed?

What is the rain date and do you have a rain plan?

Once these questions can be answered, notify the Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office.

## **II. License Commission**

The Lowell License Commission schedules meetings bi-monthly in the City Council Chamber. Refer to the City Hall Calendar for the date and time of meetings. Applicants are advised to file not less than three (3) weeks prior to the scheduled event.

A request for license/permit requires that the responsible individual appear at the meeting to answer questions about the event. Call in advance to reserve time at the meeting.

Prior to appearing before the License Commission, the individual/organization will have the approval of the Cultural Affairs Office, Police Department, Fire Department, Inspectional Services, Health Department, Department of Public Works, and the Board of Parks.

## **A. Alcohol beverages**

Sale and service of alcohol requires that a one-day license be granted and issued by the License Commission. It is illegal in the City of Lowell to sell, serve, and consume alcohol beverages on public property without a license. The outdoor area is to be enclosed by fencing or other barrier set-up for the purpose of restricting the removal of alcoholic beverages by patrons/guests. The applicant is an individual, as the responsible manager for the organization. He or she agrees to control the dispensing of alcohol to persons not under the age of twenty-one (21), and that there is to be no service of alcohol to individuals who are or “appear to be” under the influence alcohol.

## **B. Amplification**

City of Lowell Noise Ordinance allows the License Commission to grant amplification of sound permits for special events. The permit is specific to a special event, not for a family event on private property. The ordinance restricts the hours to the following:

Sunday to Wednesday-	10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Thursday to Saturday -	10 a.m. to 12 midnight

## **C. Insurance**

The individual/organization that has permission to access public property is required to have the City of Lowell co-insured for not less than \$500,000.

## **III. Departments**

### **Board of Parks Department**

The Board of Parks has jurisdiction and authority to act in all instances for the promotion and conduct of recreation, play, sport or other similar acts with regard to the use of playgrounds, parks, stadiums, etc. Contact a month before an event.

### **Fire**

The fire departments needs to be notified 2 weeks prior to the use of propane tanks for cooking or heating and they require a gas permit. Fire detail must be onsite for the duration of the event. Fire extinguishers must be onsite. Anyone using fireworks need to notify 15 days prior to the fireworks arriving and the permit must be until they leave. If a tent is being used that holds 50+ people or it is a heated tent, you must have a firefighter onsite.

## **Health**

The Health Department requires a completed Temporary Food Establishment Permit and an employees log a minimum of 30 days before an event. A vendor without a licensed facility of their own must complete a Licensed Food Establishment Agreement Form. Refer to the General Guide to Temporary Food and Festival Events Information distributed by the Health Department. Please contact the Health Department directly for the necessary forms.

## **Inspectional Services**

The License Commission approves carnival license applications for events occurring on weekdays and Saturday. Carnival license applications for events occurring on Sunday must apply for the Sunday entertainment license. These applications, after receiving the Manager's approval, are sent to the Office of the Commissioner of Public Safety for approval by the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts law requires that mechanical rides at a carnival, and possibly a circus, be approved by the Department of Public Safety of the Commonwealth. Inspectional services require a permit for a tent equal to or greater than 120 feet and 30 inches in height.

A non-profit must request:

- a) Certificate of approval for mechanical rides issued by the Department of Public Safety.
- b) Certificate of Insurance, a minimum of \$1,000,000 in liability, that the organization be co-insured if the carnival is to take place on private property.
- c) Certificate of workers compensation, i.e. certificate of insurance, held by the carnival promoter.
- d) The non-profit organization should check with the Fire Department and Inspectional Services about the penchant for promoters having their workers sleep on the carnival grounds.

## **City Calendar**

Your event may be uploaded to the City calendar at [www.cityoflowellcalendar.org](http://www.cityoflowellcalendar.org). Some restrictions apply and local events (block parties, garage sales), may not be uploaded. Guidelines are available on the site.

## **Parking**

The parking department needs to be notified 2 weeks before a large event in order to staff the garages.

**Police/Traffic**

Some events may require a police detail. This determination will be made by the Special Events Coordinator in partnership with the Lowell Police Department. All expenses are the responsibility of the festival organizer.

**Solid Waste & Recycling**

The Solid Waste & Recycling Office needs to be notified at least 4 weeks before a large event, 3 weeks for medium sized events and 2 weeks for small events. Collection containers for waste and recycling are required and may be available for rent. Coordinate your solid waste plan with the Solid Waste & Recycling Office.

## IV. Frequently Asked Questions

**Who does not need to apply for a special events permit?** If the event does not involve selling food, alcohol, raffle tickets or other goods; the installation of stages and stands; a parade, carnival rides and games; additional electrical hook-ups; closing of streets; amplified music; or police details, you may not be required to apply for a permit.

**What types of special events require permits and licenses from the City?** Walk-a-thons, Block Parties, Road Races, Procession, Festival, Filming and possibly others that require street closure or other permits.

**How far in advance of the event date should the City be contacted?** The Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office needs to be notified of events at least one month in advance. This gives the office plenty of time to review applications and develop solid plan for event. A non-refundable fee of \$25 will be needed at this time. Within 14 days most applications will either be granted or denied.

**What is the first step?** Come up with a detailed plan including date of event, number of people attending, necessary street closures, vending information, food handlers, and anything else that may be helpful to the Special Events Office when determining to/not to allow permit.

**Will this event require a street closure?** Applications requiring the closing of a public way must obtain a "Street Closing Permit" from the Department of Public Works, Lowell Police Department and the City Engineering Department all signing off on such permit. The Special Events Coordinator will determine what is necessary to complete the permit process.

**Who provides traffic control for a road race?** All road race permits will require the use of Lowell Police Officers or the Middlesex County Sheriff's Motorcycle Team in coordination under the supervision of the Lowell Police Department. Contact the Lowell Police Department if you plan on using the Sheriff's Department. The applicant will assume costs for this service.

**Can I use a volunteer sheriff?** Only non-profit organizations may use a volunteer sheriff department or auxiliary police, however the Lowell Police Department must be notified and at least one Patrol Supervisor must be on site.

**Will there be alcohol served at this event?** Applicants planning to dispense any form of alcoholic beverages at a Special Event must obtain a liquor license for said event. Please contact (who).

**What about an event at a park or playground?** Applicants seeking to utilize a park or playground within the City of Lowell must apply to the Parks and Recreation Department. The Board of Parks will act on the application and will notify the applicant of their

requirements prior to issuance of a permit. Upon receipt of the Board of Parks Permit, the applicant is at that time to contact the Special Events Coordinator to determine the services required and any related costs associated with said event.

**When is the balance due for an event?** Any outstanding balances associated with an event must be paid within fourteen (14) days of the event. Any outstanding balances that have not been paid to the City of Lowell will result in forfeiture of not being able to obtain a Special Event Permit from the City of Lowell in the future.

**What about sanitation facilities?** Port-a-johns for the most part are required at most events and the Special Events Coordinator will determine the number required. It shall be the responsibility of the applicant to provide those units at their expense.

**How can the city be notified of an event cancellation?** Contact the Office of Cultural Affairs & Special Events in the event of a cancellation: 978-674-1481 or 978-674-4260.

**Is a special events permit necessary for an event on private land?** No. However a one-day entertainment, vendor or liquor license may be necessary. In case of street closure, a license is necessary.

**What are special requirements regarding the handling of food?** The Health Department requires a completed Temporary Food Establishment Permit and an employees log a minimum of 30 days before an event. A vendor without a licensed facility of their own must complete a Licensed Food Establishment Agreement Form. Refer to the General Guide to Temporary Food and Festival Events Information distributed by the Health Department.

**Is recycling required at all events and festivals?** Yes, it is State Law. Recent updates to Lowell Ordinance (Ch 9) have recycling requirements. By recycling at festivals several requirements will have been met.

**What are the hours of operation for J.F.K. Plaza?** Events scheduled to be held at F.J.K. Plaza are to be conducted no earlier than 7:00 AM and no later than 9:00 PM. Hours of operation at other locations will be determined by the Special Events Coordinator.

**How often does the Lowell License Commission meet?** They have bi-monthly meetings in the City Council Chamber on a Thursday afternoon at 6:30 p.m. that are listed at <http://www.lowellevents.info/cgi-bin/calendar.pl?calendar=city>. Applicants are advised to file more than 1 month prior to scheduled event.

**How often does the Board of Parks meet?** The Board of Parks meets on the last Wednesday of the month at 6:00pm in the Division of Planning and Development's Second Floor Conference Room in the J.F.K Civic Center. Notice of meetings is posted at least two weeks in advance of the meeting on the bulletin board outside of the City Clerk's Office, and on the City of Lowell's online Event Calendar.

**Is there a penalty for leaving signs up after an event?** The city will fine the contact person on the application for the Special Event \$150 per sign left up more than one week following an event.

**When are porta-potties required?** Any event expecting more than 100 people must discuss their plans concerning porta-potties with the Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office when applying for a license for a special event.

## V. Department Contact Information

<b>Cultural Affairs &amp; Special Events</b>	<b>License Commission</b>
JFK Plaza	c/o Law Department
50 Arcand Drive, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	375 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852	3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall
Phone: 978 970-4257	Lowell, MA 01852
	Phone: 978 970-4156
<b>COOL (Cultural Organization of Lowell)</b>	
JFK Plaza	<b>Lowell Police Department</b>
50 Arcand Drive, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	50 Arcand Drive
Lowell, MA 01852	Lowell, MA 01852
Phone: 978-6741483	978 937-3200
<b>Development Services</b>	<b>Parking Services</b>
375 Merrimack Street	75 John Street
Room 55	Lowell, MA 01852
Lowell, MA 01852	Phone: 978 446-7020
Phone: 978 970-4028	
Fax: 978 446-7103	<b>Parks &amp; Recreation</b>
	375 Merrimack St. Basement
<b>Electrical Division</b>	Lowell, MA 01852
1365 Middlesex Street	978 970-3323
Lowell, MA 01852	
Phone: 978 970-3333	<b>Public Works</b>
	1361 Middlesex Street
<b>Fire Department</b>	Lowell, MA 01852
JFK Civic Center	Phone: 978 970-4246
99 Moody Street	Fax: 978 970-4071
Lowell, MA 01852	
978 970-4010	<b>Solid Waste &amp; Recycling</b>
	341 Pine Street
<b>Health Department</b>	Lowell, MA 01851
375 Merrimack Street, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	978 459-5588
Lowell, MA 01851	Phone: 978 970-4010 ext 9-4309
Phone: 978 970-4010	
Fax: 978 970-4011	