

MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Portland Health and Human Services and Public Safety Committee
FROM: Andy Downs, Chief Michael Sauschuck, Jessica Hanscombe, Anne Torregrossa
CC: Jon Jennings, City Manager
DATE: March 15, 2018
RE: Update on Sound Issues

Sound and noise in the City has been a significant concern for both this Committee and staff. We wanted to take an opportunity to update the Committee on steps that have already been taken to address noise concerns in the City, as well as projected goals for addressing noise moving forward.

Steps Taken

Staff has already taken the following steps to help reduce and address noise complaints throughout the City:

- Streamlining the noise complaint process to funnel all complaints through the Police Department. This has allowed a more uniform response to complaints and ensures that proper measurements are taken where appropriate.
- Ensuring that the Sound Oversight Committee reviews all noise complaints, not only those with a high enough reading to trigger an ordinance violation.
- Business Licensing staff is attending the Sound Oversight Committee meetings to answer questions about entertainment licensees and the City's licensing rules.
- The full City Council now receives notification of all entertainment licenses up for renewal to allow a Councilor to request that a particular license be brought back before the Council for review. This has led to the Council review and change one license, as well as changes to a second entertainment license that had been the source of complaints.
- Reducing the number of concerts and the number of back-to-back concerts on public property.
- Installing sound monitoring devices last summer, with phase two of that project planned for this summer.

Additionally, as the summer months approach, staff will be initiating an education campaign regarding outdoor speakers, and the ordinances that limit those speakers. Education will be targeted through NLOC, Sound Oversight Committee, mailings to entertainment license holders, and similar avenues. After that campaign, staff will be stepping up enforcement of existing ordinances (Section 17-17 and Chapter 25) that limit the use of unpermitted outdoor speakers.

Next Steps

There is still much work to be done with the City's sound contractor, Acentech, to digest what their findings might mean for crafting a new and more comprehensive sound ordinance.

Acentech has also sent some documentation (277 pages) on best practices from other municipalities, and staff will also be working to digest those and consider how they might fit into the regulatory scheme in Portland.

In connection with those recommendations, staff anticipates recommending changes to the entertainment licensing structure in Chapter 4 of the City Code. Currently there are approximately 120 entertainment license holders in the City. Some potential thoughts for changes are:

- Reworking available licenses to allow for one class of license for indoor entertainment, and one for outdoor entertainment.
- Subjecting outdoor entertainment to more strict scrutiny, including a requirement to provide a sound mitigation plan to be reviewed by a City representative.
- Alternative funding options for sound mitigation work.

The goal of these changes would be to allow a more thorough review of the sound impacts of any particular venue or event, especially where outdoor amplification will be used, as that seems to generate the most concerns.

Staff looks forward to working with the Committee to create a balance between maintaining the entertainment options that make the City vibrant and addressing the quality of life issues that can come with noise impacts.