



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

KIMBERLY M. WELLS
CITY CLERK

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable City Council
From: Kimberly M. Wells, City Clerk
Date: December 12, 2024
Re: Block Party Process Update

The City Clerk appeared before this Council's Committee on Legislative Matters on October 15, 2024 to discuss item #24-1269, a resolution requesting the creation of a simplified and shortened block party approval process. The Council subsequently approved item #24-1510, an order that, effective January 1, 2025, the City Council shall no longer review and approve applications for block parties, and that the City Clerk shall assume responsibility for final approval of applications for block parties.

To fulfill this directive, the Clerk's team has designed a new application process specifically for block parties that will reduce the time it takes to review them from the current status of 4-6 weeks down to approximately 2 weeks. The process to redesign this application began with the premise that block party applications are more likely than not to be approved, and therefore do not require the same level of scrutiny as larger public events like parades and road races. To make this more efficient, the department consulted with the city staff who review these applications, and a common theme emerged: under the current public event designation and application format, simple block parties are considered in the same way as the more complex public events. Reviewers across all departments indicated that their ability to quickly review and approve block party applications would be improved if: (1) block parties were readily identifiable when the application is received and (2) block party applications themselves requested specific information that would allow for quick and efficient review.

In response, we have separated block party applications from public event license applications in Citizenserve, attaching the prefix "BPL" to make them easy to identify, and drafted an entirely new application that requests only the information reviewers deemed essential to their evaluations. Draft instructions for applicants to submit their applications via Citizenserve and a model application are attached to this memorandum for your reference. Note that there are no restrictions as to the traffic volume of a street for block party license applications, but if a busier street is requested, a more in-depth review will likely become necessary.



Although the application may appear long, most of the questions are simply answered with “yes” or “no,” and any corresponding follow up questions are intended to provide the reviewer with the information they need to make a quick decision. Having the necessary information ready when the application is submitted is the key component to faster review and stands in contrast to the current process, where reviewers frequently need to contact applicants to request additional information or documents. As such, when constituents inquire about hosting block parties, it is important that they know that they will need all relevant information before they can submit their application, including information such as whether food will be served or if structures like tents will be included.

This process is ready for implementation on January 1, 2025. Draft communications to residents are also attached, which highlight the easier, more accessible application process. Please note that we will work with the Communications Department on all official communications; these are intended only as examples and should not yet be distributed.

BLOCK PARTY LICENSE APPLICATION
City of Somerville, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Application #: BPL 25-000001
File #: 25-101010

What is the name of your block party? Pleasant Times on Pleasant Ave

What is your name? Tammy Somerville

What is your contact phone number? (This will be publicly available so you can be reached for emergencies while your block party is taking place.) (617) 625-5555

What is your contact email address? somerville@gmail.com

Make sure to provide an email address that you can access and check regularly so that we may reach you if we have questions or need additional information. Please re-enter your contact email address here to ensure accuracy: somerville@gmail.com

Are there any other businesses or organizations associated with this block party? YES

If yes, list them here, including a representative's name and contact phone number and email: Fundraiser for SHS athletics. Contact Tammy Somerville, (617) 625-5555, somerville@gmail.com

What is the proposed date for your block party? January 1, 2025

Select dates and times from the following drop-down menus. For time, select the time you will begin setting up your block party and the time cleaning up after your block party will conclude:

Do you have a proposed rain date for your block party? NO

If yes, select dates and times from the following drop-down menus. For time, select the time you will begin setting up your block party and the time cleaning up after your block party will conclude:

Would you like to request additional dates for block parties at this location? NO

If yes, select dates and times from the following drop-down menus. For time, select the time you will begin setting up your block

party and the time cleaning up after your block party will conclude:

Will you be blocking any streets for your block party? (Yes/No) YES

If yes:

State the street you are proposing to close: Pleasant Ave

State the cross street the closure will begin: Vinal Ave

State the cross street the closure will end: Walnut Ave

Confirm that the street closure beginning and ending locations are clearly identified on the map you submit with this application. (Yes/No) YES

If no, you may not need to submit this application. Please contact licensing@somervillema.gov with questions.

Will you be using any sidewalks for your block party? (Yes/No) YES

If yes, confirm the locations are clearly identified on the map you submit with this application. (Yes/No) YES

If yes, confirm that at least four (4) feet will be kept clear for wheelchair accessibility. (Yes/No) YES

Describe your proposed block party in detail: This will be a joyous celebration with my lovely neighbors!

How many people will attend your block party? 30

Describe your efforts to inform and obtain the consent of your neighbors and abutters for your block party, including your placement and distribution of flyers or other materials: I posted flyers on the phone poles on our street, and also sent an email to our neighborhood email list

Will your block party include food? (Yes/No) YES

If yes, how will the food be provided: (Select from: Potluck; Professionally Catered; Food Truck) POTLUCK

If your block party will be professionally catered, confirm that you understand N/A

that a food license must be obtained from ISD, and that you have or will reach out to them to coordinate at isd@somervillema.gov. (Yes/No)

If your block party will feature a food truck, confirm that they are properly licensed by the city. (Yes/No) N/A

Will your block party feature open grilling? (Yes/No) YES

If yes, describe the type of grill you will be using: It is a coal fire grill, the only choice!

If yes, confirm that the grill will not be located within ten (10) feet of any structures or combustible materials. (Yes/No) YES

If yes, confirm that a fire extinguisher will be near any grilling or open cooking surface. (Yes/No) YES

If yes, confirm that you have identified the grill's location on the map you submit with this application. (Yes/No) YES

Will your block party have any structures? Structures include, but are not limited to, tents and bouncy houses. (Yes/No) YES

If yes, describe the structure(s): We will have three large tents in case it rains

If yes, confirm that you have identified the structure's location on the map you submit with this application. (Yes/No) YES

Will there be any amplified music of any kind at your block party? (Yes/No) YES

If yes, what type of music will be played? (Select all that apply: Small Bluetooth speaker/Large powered speakers/Live band with powered speakers) Large powered speakers

If yes, confirm that you have read and understand the city's Noise Control Ordinance, located at: https://library.municode.com/ma/somerville/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH9OFMIPR_ARTVIOFAGPUPE_DIV2NOCOR. (Yes/No) YES

Will you be providing portable toilets for your block party?	YES
If yes, will these toilets be accessible to participants with mobility restrictions? (Yes/No)	YES
If yes, state the dates and times the toilet will be installed and removed:	Installed 12/31/24 and removed 1/2/25
Will your block party require the closure of any public parking spaces? (Yes/No)	YES
If yes, are these metered spaces? (Yes/No)	YES
If yes, are these handicapped accessible parking spaces? (Yes/No)	YES
If yes, what are your plans to provide alternative accessible parking?	We have spoken to Somerville Parking to temporarily relocate these spaces
Confirm that you understand that you are responsible for cleaning up after your block party, and that if you fail to do so, your application for future block parties may be rejected. (Yes/No)	YES
Confirm that you understand that alcohol cannot be sold or consumed outside on public property, including on any sidewalks or streets included in your block party application. (Yes/No)	YES
Confirm that you understand that private vehicles of any kind cannot be used to block, close, or otherwise impede the flow of traffic on any public street. Violations may result in any future block party applications being denied. Police take notice. (Yes/No)	YES
Confirm that you understand that this is a request to use public space, and that means that any member of the public can attend your block party. (Yes/No)	YES
Confirm that you understand that you cannot block access to streets or sidewalks during your block party for emergency vehicles, neighbors and abutters in vehicles or on foot, persons with disabilities, or commercial delivery vehicles (including Amazon, UPS, etc). (Yes/No)	YES
Attach a map containing the information requested above here: (Upload link)	Attached

Attach proof of residency or affiliation with proposed block party street location: (Upload link)

Attached

Attach any flyers, brochures, or other explanatory material you posted to notify neighbors and abutters of your proposed block party. (Upload link)

Attached

Approved by:

Somerville Block Party Application Process



Host your own block party this summer with Somerville's new block party license application process!

What we need to know to review your application:

- Your name and contact information
- Block party location
- What fun events will take place during your block party?
- Will you serve food?
- Will you have a grill?
- Live music?
- Structures like tents or bouncy houses?
- Will you need to use metered parking spaces?
- Will your block party be accessible?
- Let us know so we can make sure your party is fun and safe for everyone!

What is permitted at a Somerville block party?

- Fun (this is mandatory!)
- Grills
- Bouncy houses
- Games
- Music
- Smiles with friends and family!

What is NOT permitted at a Somerville block party?

- Alcohol
- Blocking streets with private vehicles
- Excessive noise
- Fireworks



ATTENTION SOMERVILLE: HOST A BLOCK PARTY THIS SUMMER!

With the city's new block party license application process, **it has never been easier to host a block party** and have a great time with family, friends, and neighbors!

Just go to <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/city-clerk> to learn more!