

City Council Meeting: April 14, 2026

Santa Monica, California

RESOLUTION NUMBER _____ (CCS)

(City Council Series)

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
SANTA MONICA ADOPTING CERTAIN MUNICIPAL CODE WAIVERS DURING THE
2026 GOLDENVOICE MUSIC AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

WHEREAS, over the next several years, the Los Angeles region will become a global stage for some of the world's most watched sporting and cultural events, drawing millions of visitors, international media attention, and significant economic activity across the region; and

WHEREAS, Santa Monica's coastline, public spaces, and established reputation as a world-class destination create a rare opportunity for the City to participate and help shape this regional movement on the global stage; and

WHEREAS, Santa Monica is preparing to host several high-profile sporting and cultural events that are expected to draw significant regional, national, and international attention; and

WHEREAS, event activations include hosting international delegations, brands, and production agencies expressing interest in temporary installations, hospitality houses, and broadcast centers; and

WHEREAS, these events will bring global audiences, international exposure, cultural festivals, and hospitality activations throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, these events will result in increased foot traffic and visitor activity for the Pier, Promenade, and other retail spaces, economic benefits for nearby hotels, restaurants, and small business; and

WHEREAS, with its iconic beachfront, strong transit connectivity, and established global reputation, Santa Monica is well positioned to engage in regional coordination and pursue strategic partnerships that maximize the benefits of this heightened period of visibility; and

WHEREAS, the upcoming major event cycle will include the 2026 Goldenvoice Music and Cultural Festival (the “Festival”); and

WHEREAS, the Festival will be a large-scale outdoor activation tailored to Santa Monica’s coastal setting and urban environment, with regional draw, coordinated site planning, temporary infrastructure, and a significant operational footprint; and

WHEREAS, the Festival is intended to build on Santa Monica’s cultural identity and create an event that attracts visitors, generates media interest, and contributes to the local economy; and

WHEREAS, the inaugural concept envisions a two-day Festival featuring musical artists, curated food and beverage offerings, festival and artist merchandise, art installations, partnership activations, and guest amenities; and

WHEREAS, the Festival footprint would utilize the Sandbox, the Santa Monica Pier Parking Deck, and portions of adjacent beach parking lots; and

WHEREAS, Goldenvoice is developing the Festival in coordination with City staff to ensure that public safety, mobility, sound mitigation, accessibility, sustainability, and coastal compliance are addressed as the concept advances; and

WHEREAS, the Festival is anticipated to support Santa Monica's identity as a cultural and entertainment destination and to generate economic activity for hotels, restaurants, and other local businesses; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Festival itself, Goldenvoice has identified a range of potential community benefits that would be incorporated into the License Agreement, including youth-focused public programming, workforce and career exposure opportunities, collaboration with Pier and Downtown partners, support for local business participation, and marketing efforts intended to increase visitor activity in Santa Monica before, during, and after the Festival; and

WHEREAS, the proposal also contemplates reasonable efforts to utilize Santa Monica hotels, restaurants, vendors, artists, workforce and other businesses where feasible, with particular attention to Pier and beach-adjacent businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Festival also presents an opportunity to broaden Santa Monica's event portfolio with a major cultural activation that complements the City's sports-related opportunities and helps sustain momentum into the 2027 and 2028 event cycle; and

WHEREAS, the Festival's License Agreement includes provisions addressing community engagement, public safety, mobility, sound mitigation, sustainability, accessibility, local business coordination, and post-event restoration; and

WHEREAS, with this event, the City's objective is to secure a well-managed activation that supports local economic development while protecting public assets and minimizing impacts; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager's Office Major Events Division and a cross-departmental working group have been planning for the operational, logistical, and community impacts associated with this large-scale activation in the City; and

WHEREAS, the Festival foresees active uses of event space, including amplified sound and visible branding necessary for economic viability; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with approval of the Festival and other events, on April 14, 2026, City Council introduced for first reading an ordinance to, among other things amend to Santa Monica Municipal Code Section 4.68.210, which allows Council, by resolution, to exempt certain special events from discrete Municipal Code requirements, or to authorize the City Manager to make exemptions, if the following findings are met: (1) Strict application of the Municipal Code would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships, which would frustrate the purposes of the event; (2) The requested exemption is limited to the event period and is otherwise temporary in nature; (3) The premises at which the event will be held will be restored to the original conditions in place prior to the requested exemption; (4) The proposed event is of extraordinary scope and will provide a significant benefit to the community, including, but not limited to, events that (a) generate significant indirect economic and community benefits; (b) attract both residents and visitors; and (c) promote Santa Monica on a regional, national, and global stage; and (5) The permittee or licensee has agreed to implement best practices and provide adequate procedures to minimize and respond to event impacts; and

WHEREAS, in order to effectuate the Festival, targeted exemptions to the Santa Monica Municipal Code are required to better accommodate this major special event (the “Major Special Events Ordinance”); and

WHEREAS, the exemptions are intended to provide operational flexibility and allow the City to support the Festival; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has identified this large upcoming event as extraordinary or unique in scope, scale, or benefit, and the Council deems the below ordinance exemptions necessary to facilitate these major events.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA DOES RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The City Council hereby exempts the Festival from provisions of the Santa Monica Municipal Code as set forth below based upon the following findings:

(A) Strict application of the Santa Monica Municipal Code would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships, which would frustrate the purposes of the event

i. SMMC Section 4.12.110 (Restrictions on demolition, excavation, grading, spray painting, construction, maintenance or repair of buildings):

The Festival and temporary events on the Santa Monica Pier and Santa Monica Beach include construction of temporary structures. Timeline/schedule for Festival load in and load out activities will require working outside of normal construction hours established in SMMC Section 4.12.110. Working within normal construction hours would extend the overall schedule for load in and load out. Working within normal construction hours would conflict with some of the operational parameters in place for vehicle access

to the Pier that have been designed to maintain Pier business operations and visitor experience. Festival load in and load out activity on the beach and adjacent Santa Monica Pier Deck will be conducted in accordance with City service needs, ongoing Pier Bridge replacement project construction, and Pier operational requirements. Event teams will be required to work with City's interdepartmental team to establish a construction management plan to minimize impacts to public access to the Pier, beach, and surrounding neighborhood, and to ensure safe circulation and construction operations.

ii. Provisions in Santa Monica Municipal Chapter 4.12, Noise, including, but not limited to, Sections 4.12.025, 4.12.030, 4.12.040, 4.12.050, 4.12.060, 4.12.080, 4.12.100, 4.12.105, 4.12.110

The premise and goal of the Festival is to convey world-class live music to a large audience in an iconic setting via the most up-to-date audio technology available and is simply not feasible without a temporary waiver of the City's existing noise provisions.

Pursuant to the License Agreement between Goldenvoice and the City, the Festival will not be an electronic dance music-focused or bass-focused event.

Goldenvoice will also be required to implement best audio practices in the live music industry, including: directing speakers inward towards festival attendees and rotating the stage as far as possible to the south-south-west (while complying with all Coastal Commission requirements) to focus sound inside the festival perimeter and minimize noise bleed outside of the Festival perimeter; minimizing the use of the Main Stage public address system and implementing three rows of delays to prevent echo; and using a state-of-the-art L2 sound system in cardioid mode to reduce rear radiated energy.

iii. Provisions in Santa Monica Municipal Code Chapters 4.68, Community Event, and Chapter 9.61, Signs, including but not limited to Sections 4.68.130, 9.61.140, and 9.61.230

In line with the goals of the world-class live music and art festival, and to adequately promote the large-scale event in a short period of time, Goldenvoice is seeking the ability to add creative special events signage at up to two nearby City intersections and on three mural walls to be located at mutually agreeable public locations to be determined by the City Manager. To ensure appropriate site management and pedestrian and traffic safety, Goldenvoice will also need additional flexibility to provide wayfinding signage at various City locations to be determined by the City Manager.

(B) The premises at which the Community Event will be held will be restored to the original conditions in place prior to the requested exemption.

Pursuant to the License Agreement between Goldenvoice and the City, Goldenvoice shall restore the premises and return them to the City in the same condition in which it was prior to Goldenvoice's use of the premises, including a full clean-up, removal of all litter, equipment and personal property, etc.

(C) The requested exemptions are limited to the event period and are otherwise temporary in nature.

The Festival is a limited-duration multi-genre festival, featuring a variety of performers over two days (weekend) in September 2026. Pursuant to the License Agreement, the live music performances are scheduled between the hours of 12:00 pm

— 11:00 pm on the first festival day and 12:00 pm — 10:00 pm on the second festival day.

(D) The proposed event is of extraordinary scope and will provide a significant benefit to the community.

The Festival will attract local residents, national visitors and potentially international visitors alike, will generate significant indirect economic and community benefits, and will promote Santa Monica on a national and global stage.

Event Background

Goldenvoice is looking to use several parking lots, a portion of Santa Monica Beach, and the Santa Monica Pier Deck (“Licensed Area”) to host the Festival, which will take place over two week-end days in September. Festival capacity will be limited to 35,000 paid ticketed attendees per day, for a total of 70,000 attendees for the entire event.

Proposed Impact Metrics

The City of Santa Monica will experience the following types of economic benefits from the event:

1. General Economic Benefits

- Direct jobs, labor income, and economic output within the city associated with event setup and takedown, including some jobs and labor income that may accrue to Santa Monica residents.
- Indirect economic impacts resulting from event setup and takedown that involve supply chain purchases of goods and services from Santa Monica businesses.

- Induced economic impacts associated with household spending by directly and indirectly impacted Santa Monica workers associated with the event.
- Similar direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts associated with event operations and economic activity generated by out-of-town visitor spending at the event and elsewhere in the city, some of which may accrue to Santa Monica residents and businesses. Promotion of Santa Monica as a tourism destination via the event sponsor's advertising.

2. Tax Revenue Benefits

- Business License Tax revenue from all business activity occurring within the License Area related to setup, takedown, and operation of the event.
- Additional sales of food, beverages, and merchandise within the License Area resulting in additional sales tax revenue.
- Incidental spending by employees associated with event setup, takedown, and operations resulting in additional sales tax revenue and Business License Tax revenue for businesses where spending occurs.
- Incidental spending by out-of-town visitors within the Downtown area and elsewhere in the city for food, beverage, and retail shopping resulting in additional sales tax revenue and Business License Tax revenue for businesses where spending occurs. Using the City's typical visitor shares of daytrip and overnight visitors, as well as average spending of \$47 per person per day, indicates about \$3.3M in total sales in the city across the full two-day event (assuming the maximum per day attendance of 35,000 people).

- Incremental Transient Occupancy Tax revenue generated from overnight stays by employees involved in event setup and takedown.
- Incremental Transient Occupancy Tax revenue associated with out-of-town overnight guests attending the event. Since 2023, the average hotel room rate in the month of June in Santa Monica has been \$363.
- Parking Tax revenues associated with net additional paid parking within the City.
- Incremental traffic fine revenue associated with event personnel and out-of-town event visitors.
- Ticket fee revenues paid by the Licensee to the City associated with an additional per paid ticket fee (\$2 for each single ticket sold; \$4 for each two-day ticket sold) for a potential total of \$140,000.

(E) Goldenvoice has agreed to implement best practices and adequate procedures to minimize noise levels and other impacts from the Festival.

Goldenvoice has agreed to implement best practices and adequate procedures to minimize and respond to impacts from the festival. With respect to noise, Goldenvoice's best practices and procedures include, but are not limited to, proposed siting and design of the Festival shall reduce noise levels based upon best practices in the music industry for outdoor events. Goldenvoice will be required to implement best audio practices in the live music industry, including:

- 1) Electronic steering of sound away from sensitive locations;

2) Utilization of numerous smaller sound sources rather than fewer large sound sources to reduce long distance propagation of audio energy;

3) Utilizing 3D prediction software in order to optimize sound system locations, heights, and coverage;

4) Implementation of physical festival infrastructure and aesthetics to block and reduce sound from radiating off site when feasible;

5) Implementing a sound limit for the sound at various locations; and

6) Monitoring the sound level at various locations and actively altering sound system parameters to mitigate issues if they arise.

With years of festival experience across many settings, Goldenvoice and its public address (PA) provider are able to optimize on-site sound quality while minimizing off-site sound energy.

SECTION 2. This Resolution shall become effective subject to and upon the effectiveness of the Major Special Events Ordinance introduced for first reading concurrently herewith.

SECTION 3. City Manager is hereby authorized to approve additional exemptions from the Municipal Code to meet operational needs of the event where the City Manager has determined made the findings set forth in Santa Monica Municipal Code Section 4.68.210(E).

SECTION 4. The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution, and thenceforth and thereafter the same shall be in full force and effect.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

HEIDI VON TONGELN
City Attorney