

Report to Council

Report Title: Special Events Exemption from Outdoor Vending/Refreshment Vehicle Licencing By-Law 2021-085

Prepared By: Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services

Department: Recreation

Date: March 24, 2026

Report Number: REC2026-08

File Number: C11REC

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number REC2026-08 - Special Events Exemption From Outdoor Vending Licensing By-Law 2021-085, prepared by Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services and in doing so allows a one-time exemption from the vendor licensing fees under the Municipality's Outdoor Vending/Refreshment Vehicle Licensing By-Law 2021-085 for food vendors participating in the following two major special events in Walkerton during Summer 2026:

- Ribfest 2026 (three-day event)
- 2026 Walkerton Homecoming

Report:

Background:

The Municipality's Outdoor Vending/Refreshment Vehicle Licensing By-Law 2021-085 currently requires vendors operating within the Municipality to obtain a licence and pay applicable fees, which if applied to Ribfest and Walkerton Homecoming special events would result in a per-vendor, per-day charge.

Two major community events are scheduled to occur in Walkerton this summer:

- **Ribfest 2026:** A three-day event, with the organizer estimating approximately 20 food vendors.
- **2026 Walkerton Homecoming:** A multi-day event that relies on a consistent and varied onsite food vendor presence daily to meet visitor and community needs throughout the event period.

These events are important signature special events for Brockton, providing opportunities for community engagement, enhanced tourism, and economic spin-off for the downtown core.

Analysis:

Applying vendor licensing fees to each food vendor participating in these two events would create a significant added cost burden and may negatively impact:

- the willingness of vendors to attend
- the variety of food options available to residents and visitors
- overall attendance and visitor experience
- the events' ability to proceed and/or remain in Brockton in future years

Food vendors accept substantial financial risk in attending special events. Sales and profitability are highly dependent on variables outside their control, including weather and unexpected circumstances that can materially reduce attendance. When vendor costs increase, the threshold for "breaking even" becomes more difficult, and vendors may opt out reducing event quality and jeopardizing the event itself.

Food vendors often incur upfront costs including staffing, travel, fuel, product, equipment, permits, and waste management. Attendance can fluctuate sharply due to weather or other unforeseen factors. A mandatory vendor fee adds fixed cost exposure that vendors must absorb regardless of actual sales.

For Ribfest specifically, application of the Municipality's Outdoor Vending/Refreshment Vehicle Licensing By-Law 2021-085, as written, would require each vendor to pay \$52.50 per day for three days (\$157.50 total), plus all the associated event organizer's fees - which could be up to an estimated \$1,200 per vendor. For vendors who experience low sales due to poor weather or reduced attendance, this fee can contribute to a net loss and discourages participation in smaller-market events.

The Ribfest organizer has communicated that they would not host in Brockton if vendor fees were charged. Staff believe this is a significant risk and could result in:

- loss of tourism and regional draw.
- reduced visibility and "spotlight" on Walkerton and Brockton.
- decreased economic activity for local businesses, particularly in the downtown and lost opportunity to build Brockton's reputation as an event-supportive municipality.

Ribfest operators typically schedule multiple municipal events across the summer. Based on organizer feedback and staff consultation with other surrounding area municipalities that are hosting same event this summer, they are not charging per-vendor licensing fees for these events and instead apply costs such as park rentals, equipment charges, and related operational fees. Brockton being the only municipality to impose per-vendor fees in addition to the park rental, equipment and other related operational fees, creates a competitive disadvantage and may lead organizers to select alternate host communities.

2026 Walkerton Homecoming is a multi-day event that depends on a consistent supply of onsite food vendors to serve visitors and community members throughout the event duration. Imposing daily vendor licensing fees risks reducing vendor participation, resulting in fewer options, longer lines, and a poorer visitor experience. Reduced vendor variety also affects event atmosphere and can diminish overall attendance and visitor satisfaction.

Staff acknowledge the concerns raised through this matter reflect the need to ensure the Vendor Licensing By-law appropriately addresses modern special event operations and associated economic development objectives.

The Clerk's Department is currently working on an updated Vendor Licensing By-law, in consultation with various Departments, and the update is expected to include provisions that address these types of concerns (including how vendor licensing and fees should apply to major special events). However, the updated by-law is not ready for Council consideration at this time, and event organizers require clarity immediately to finalize plans, vendor commitments, and operational details for Summer 2026.

Accordingly, staff are bringing this report forward now to seek Council direction and provide timely certainty for these two major events while the broader by-law review proceeds.

Brockton's Community Goals:

The content and recommendations in this report support advancing the priorities to **Build a Better Brockton** in one or more of the following areas: **Heritage, Culture, and Community, Quality of Life, Municipal Governance, Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment, and/or Economic Development.**

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Staff recommended exemption is specific to vendor licensing fees only. Event-related charges and cost recovery measures that are typically addressed through event logistics including park rentals, equipment charges, and related operational fees are separate from the vendor licensing fee and would continue to apply as appropriate, consistent with how similar events are commonly managed in other municipalities.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer