

# Neighborhood festivals threatened by budget bludgeon

*By Alexis Maislen*

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**Broke Story before two major dailies got it**

Due to the state budget deficit, the city of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation issued notices to all planned city street festivals that it could not afford to pay city employees weekend overtime for electrical and set-up assistance. Furthermore, the city announced it will no longer pick up trash in commercial districts on weekends.

The North Center Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored Ribfest this past weekend, said they were left only a week of lead time to hire outside companies for electrical assistance and set-up of the main stage. Because of expenses, Ribfest will go way over budget.

"This all happened on Monday morning. Rather than say from this event forward, they cut it immediately," said Melissa Klein, director of the North Center Chamber.

North Center Chamber fronts all the money, roughly \$55,000 for their annual Ribfest event. Street festivals help neighborhood Chambers of Commerce raise money for local community groups.

The Department of Streets and Sanitation and the Mayor's Office of Special Events were asked about their June 10 decision to withdraw city employee support for the summer street festivals but both were unavailable for comment.

Ald. Gene Schuler (47th) worked from his family vacation in Denver to make sure Ribfest went off smoothly. Schuler's administrative assistant Dan Luna said that the city offered for the stage to be delivered and set-up Friday.

However, Ribfest's city permit specified that Lincoln Ave. be closed and barricaded beginning Saturday, June 15, at 12:01 a.m., so the offer was not a solution. The North Center Chamber was forced to hire a private contractor at the last minute to deliver and set up the stage on Saturday morning without city workers.

When private companies are hired at the last minute it is always more expensive. There is no time to put out Request for Proposals and the non-profit organization must accept the price of any company that will work within the event's time frame.

Ald. Bernie Hansen (44th) said that the organizations in charge of the remaining Lake View festivals know who they had to contact to pull off their events.

"We are discouraging new festivals because of this situation," Hansen said. "People know who they have to hire to supplement the city support. We are making sure all the festivals know who to hire and have back up support for setting up barricades and clean up."