

To: Members of Dublin City Council
From: Dana L. McDaniel, City Manager
Date: April 24, 2020
Initiated By: Matt Earman, Parks and Recreation Director
Alison LeRoy, Community Events Director
Re: Future Event Considerations/Summer 2020

Background

The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has been devastating to the event and festival industry across the country. Many experts including those from the CDC have suggested that mass gathering should be the last part of our economy to reopen, possibly not until there is a vaccine in place. Currently, every major event in Central Ohio has been cancelled or postponed through June and many have indicated that they are considering cancelling events in July.

Below, please find staff's current assessment of forthcoming events over the next several months. Obviously, key to our decision making process is the safety of our public and our employees. Franklin County Public Health, the City's public health agency, and the State of Ohio, through the guidelines and orders provided under this emergency declaration, will guide the City's decision process on the conduct of these events. As you know, this is an evolving situation and decisions/suggested decisions are subject to change.

Summary

Memorial Day

Staff has discussed this event with the event organizer. Given the proximity of Memorial Day events, the current Governor's Orders and the time needed to finalize plans, it is necessary to alter this event from its traditional format. There should not be a procession as this draws spectators similar to a parade. It is not feasible to conduct a community lunch in the traditional fashion. Therefore, this should be cancelled. A ceremony is feasible if limited to only those conducting the ceremony. The City will videotape the ceremony and show it on social media and the City's web site. Staff will also create videos to be shown before the ceremony and will develop messaging to both educate the public on Memorial Day and encourage people to celebrate the day in their own way at home.

Independence Day

Under current and anticipated Governor's Orders, it is highly likely the City will cancel the Community Parade, Fishing Derby and evening concert at Coffman High School because of the inability to enforce social/physical distancing due to the large concentration of guests. The ability to provide a fireworks display is less certain. Should the Governor's orders allow, the City may provide a fireworks display at a location to be determined. If permitted, staff would choose the location that would allow the most number of residents to view the fireworks from home while also having a large number of parking spots that residents could drive to and stay in their cars to view and exercise social/physical distancing.

Staff is also developing other ideas (mini neighborhood parades, decorating contests, patriotic videos, etc.) that may enable celebration without gathering.

While not the reason for cancelling these events, doing so would result in a net cost reduction of \$250,000. These reductions include operating budget and staffing costs and lost revenue.

Another aspect to consider is that communities in Central Ohio work together and/or staff monitor the decisions of other communities regarding Independence Day celebrations and related activities to ensure Dublin (and others) is not overwhelmed because we are one of a few doing so.

The City must make a decision regarding the conduct of Independence Day activities by May 15.

Dublin Irish Festival

The City must make a decision by June 1, if not sooner, as to the status of the Dublin Irish Festival. We have many entertainers from overseas and vendors from 25 states that are likely going to be affected by travel limitations. To date, six overseas entertainers have decided not to travel this year and their offers have been extended to 2021. In addition, the Milwaukee Irish Festival, the largest in the US and held 2-weeks after our event, has cancelled. Staff is exploring the possibility of bringing some of the Festival to residents/guests (i.e. a virtual 5K, online or recorded messages and/or streaming music/programs by our scheduled bands and cultural presenters). The feasibility and cost of this is to be determined.

Cancelling the Irish Festival would still have a net cost of \$100,000. This includes reduction in operating (but some expenses have already been incurred) and staff costs and lost revenue. Holding the Festival or continuing to plan the Festival and cancel later in the year would cost the City significantly more. Doing so would put a significant strain on the Bed Tax Fund, which is projected to suffer substantial losses in revenue this year.

Recommendation

In order to insure the safety of the public and city staff, comply with the current Governor's orders, and provide the needed time for planning and notice to the public, staff recommends:

1. Memorial Day - Adjust the traditional Memorial Day events as presented above.
2. Independence Day - Staff will engage with and monitor other communities' decisions, as well as, any adjustments to the Governor's Orders. If the Governor does not adjust his orders to allow for increased gathering by May 15, staff recommends the City cancel the Community Parade, Fishing Derby and evening concert at Coffman High School. Staff will continue to assess the feasibility of providing the fireworks display and other optional celebration activities. Staff will closely monitor the Governor's orders and will consult with Franklin County Public Health to ensure all planned activities are appropriate.
3. Irish Festival - Staff also recommends making an announcement about the status of the Irish Festival no later than June 1.
4. Staff seeks Council's direction as to how to pursue the decision process regarding the Independence Day celebration and the Irish Festival:
 - a. Staff will make recommendations to Council as a whole, or

- b. Council refers the decision process to Council's Public Services Committee for discussion with staff and recommendation to City Council.
5. Possible future event. Staff recommends assessing the possibility of a September-October event more reflective of the City's St. Patrick's Day festivities (parade, street party, Dublin Link celebration, other?) should health guidelines/conditions allow. The City can discuss the possibility of such an event with Council in the mid to late July timeframe.

Please contact me with any questions you may have.