



**To:** Mayor and City Council Members  
**From:** Keith Abraham, Parks and Recreation Director  
**Date:** April 13, 2021  
**Subject:** Parks and Recreation Programs and Non-City Activities on City Property

On May 12, 2020, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, City Council approved the following motions related to City programs, facilities, and activities:

- To allow the Parks and Recreation staff to use the evaluation criteria outlined in the staff report to make decisions in regards to Parks and Recreation programs for the summer session.
- To discuss the Farmers Market separately, and otherwise approve of staff's decision-making process as lined out in the staff report regarding events on City property.
- To allow staff discretion to determine when the Ice Rink opens and in what capacity.

As staff is preparing for the summer season of programs and taking requests from non-City groups for use of park space for events, it is important to review what has been done over the last year and what is being planned for the upcoming months.

#### **EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

The evaluation criteria (shown below) used to make decisions as referenced in the motions shown above has been a good tool for staff to follow when making decisions related to what should and can be offered. Staff uses these criteria when discussing internal programs and facilities and is shared with event organizers when requests are made.

#### **Re-Opening Criteria for City Programs:**

- Is the program allowed under the Governor's emergency proclamations?
- Is the program allowed to occur under guidance from credentialing organizations?
- How many participants are expected, and how densely crowded are they?
- Do program operators have equipment/supplies needed for increased hygiene?
- Are facilities sufficiently staffed to support face-to-face customer interactions?
- Are sufficient protections in place for employees and participants?
- Is there sufficient public interest in participating to justify the expenses associated with providing the City Recreation program?

### Re-Opening Criteria for City Facilities and Offices:

- Is opening the facility or office allowed under the Governor's emergency proclamations?
- Is the facility allowed to operate under guidance from credentialing organizations?
- Are sufficient physical protections in place for employees and customers to conduct face-to-face business?
- Are facilities sufficiently staffed to support face-to-face customer interactions?
- How many customers are expected to visit the facility, and how densely crowded are they?
- In which areas of a facility can contamination incidents be kept isolated and be handled quickly?

### Re-Opening Criteria for Non-City Events on City Right-Of-Way or in City Parks:

- Is the event allowed under the Governor's emergency proclamations?
- How many attendees are expected, and how densely crowded are they?
- Do event organizers have a plan and equipment/supplies needed for increased hygiene?
- Is there sufficient staffing by event organizers to maintain social distancing among participants?
- Is there an increased risk that the event will require City staff to be in close contact with participants or organizers for an extended period of time?

Currently, there are few restrictions on social gatherings, yet social distancing and mask wearing (per City ordinance) are encouraged and/or required. Staff has observed good compliance regarding any requirements in place for individuals visiting a facility and/or participating in a program.

### **PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS:**

City Council has allowed staff to determine when to offer programs and staff has been doing that throughout the pandemic. Below is a summary of what is being planned moving forward.

**Recreation Programs** – Since early in the pandemic, staff has been offering programs in a virtual and/or in-person format. At this time, the only criterion that has prevented programs from being offered is lack of public interest; however, that is changing. As an example, spring 2021 soccer registrations were almost three times higher than fall 2020. It is staff's intention to continue to offer in-person and virtual programs and if registrations are low, the class would be cancelled.

**Municipal Band Concerts** – No concerts were held in 2020 but planning has begun to bring them back in 2021. Municipal Band members are being surveyed and early indications are that there is enough interest in performing this upcoming summer.

### **PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES:**

Except for the Furman Aquatic Center and the Brookside Wading Pool, all facilities have been open since May, June, or July of 2020. Operational changes have

continually been evaluated and implemented to allow more participants into facilities. That is a continued focus as we move through the pandemic. **Plans are being made to have all facilities operational this summer!**

**Furman Aquatic Center (FAC)** – Staff is hiring lifeguards, cashiers, and shift leaders and is planning on opening FAC this summer. There may be limits as to how many swimmers are allowed in the facility at one time, but the final decision has yet to be made. Opening day is slated for May 29.

**Brookside Wading Pool** – This pool will open June 5 through August 15.

**Shelter Reservations** – Reservations are being accepted at 100% capacity for 2021.

#### **NON-CITY ACTIVITIES ON CITY PROPERTY:**

The following event organizers are aware that all rules and regulations in place on the date of their event by local, state, and national governing bodies must be followed. Organizers are also aware that approvals may be revoked based on current conditions related to the pandemic.

**Ames Triathlon** – The Parks & Recreation Commission has approved this event at Ada Hayden Heritage Park for Sunday, June 27.

**Iowa Games** – These are scheduled for July 24-25 and July 31-August 1. Arrangements have been made for use of City facilities for multiple events.

**Roosevelt Summer Sunday Concert Series** – The concert committee is planning on having concerts June 6 – August 29 (excluding July 4).

**Ames Cyclone Aquatics Club (ACAC) Rock the Blocks Swim Meet** – The Parks and Recreation Commission has approved this event at FAC for June 4 (3:00-9:30 PM), 5 (6:30 AM-1:00 PM), and 6 (6:30 AM-1:00 PM). ACAC will have the entire facility during these times using the 50 M pool for events, the Lazy River for warm-ups and cool-downs, and the Splash Pool being closed.

**Great Ames Adventure Race (GAAR)** – This event will be held at Ada Hayden Heritage Park on Sunday, September 12.

**Ames Jaycees Ames on the Half Shell (AOTHS)** – The Jaycees are planning on holding AOTHS on four Fridays in July rather than June which is what has been done in the past. The dates for these events have been approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Waiver of enforcement of the prohibition on alcohol in Bandshell Park will be brought before City Council at a future meeting.

**Events at Ada Hayden Heritage Park and Brookside Park** – These are generally running events and held throughout the spring, summer, and fall. One event scheduled for April 10 was cancelled due to low registrations. This may or may not be the case with other events but will be up to the organizers to cancel due to low interest.

#### **STAFF COMMENTS:**

Staff has been diligent over the past year in offering programs and having facilities open while keeping participants and staff safe. A lot has been learned during this process and Department protocols continue to be adjusted depending on the guidance from multiple organizations. Although some individuals disagreed with the Department's approach at times, many more participants expressed appreciation for how programs and facilities were managed during the pandemic.

At its March 25 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission discussed programs, facilities, and non-City events and what should be done. The general feeling was to get things opened up and offered and do what is necessary to keep people safe. The Commission did pass a motion to support Staff in making decisions to open facilities and activities to their greatest potential.

**If Council agrees with City staff's approach to the offering of programs and the opening of facilities, no action is required.** Staff will continue to use the aforementioned criteria for determining what should be offered, until further direction is received from City Council.

**On the other hand, if Council wishes to provide alternative direction to City staff regarding these decisions, the City Council can place this topic on a future agenda for further discussion.**