

The Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority received a notice from the City of Howell Friday, July 30, 2021 that we must amend our civic event application to close the Howell Melon Festival Tent by 4pm on Saturday, August 14, 2021 or the entire Howell Melon Festival would be cancelled. This statement and the action from city officials came as surprise to our organization. As an organization we do acknowledge the City of Howell's concerns regarding public safety and we will do our part to ensure our participants and visitors of Howell are safe. We have heard the voices of our community members and local businesses and we 100% understand the importance and economic impact the Melon Festival, like all our community's special events, have on our local businesses. To keep the Melon Festival going this year, the Howell Area Parks and Recreation will be amending our current civic event applications and will be canceling our festival tent alcohol sales completely this year. Though the sales of beer and wine help us raise extra funds to offset the overall cost of the festival each year, we will amend our application. By eliminating the festival tent Saturday night, we would not break even with our current expense due to the unexpected change. Therefore, we will need to make other changes to the 2021 Howell Melon Festival.

The Howell Melon Festival, as we all know, is more than beer and politics. This event is about supporting local businesses and local farmers. This year's Melon Festival was already scaled way down, to the "Mini Melon" and would not be taking place on the traditional stage of Grand River. To help reduce the financial undertaking and loss of the festival tent revenue, we will be condensing to the following times and activities. On Friday, August 13, we will continue to hold the traditional Howell Melon Run starting at 6pm. On Saturday, August 14, we will be hosting the Howell Melon Festival from 12p-6p on the Livingston County Courthouse lawn. Events on Saturday will include live bands, games for the kids, our mom2mom sale and other fun activities that can be found on our website www.howellmelonfestival.com for FREE. We invite everyone to join us downtown to continue this 61-year tradition and do what Howell does best...support our local shops, local restaurants, and farmers.

We understand and acknowledge that other concerns were raised regarding other entertainment choices. We feel we have addressed those concerns for Drag Bingo and it will continue as planned. The event will be indoors for the 21+ older ticket holders as a private event at the Historic Howell Theater from 9:30pm- 11:30pm. This will be a stand-alone event and is paid for by sponsors and ticket sales. This event has been sold out. We will be working with local agencies and doing our part to ensure the safety of participants and visitors.

The Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority stands by our previous statement by wanting to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all who live and visit the Howell Area. We should celebrate our community together and we certainly do not support hate or want to create an environment for hate. We will work with local officials, the HAPRA board, and other community businesses to ensure these values. We look forward to seeing everyone for this year's Howell Melon Festival.

Best Regards,

Tim Church
Executive Director
Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority