

Annual 4th of July celebration is canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions

May 1, 2020



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Crescent City/Del Norte Chamber of Commerce made “the extremely difficult” decision to cancel its 4th of July celebrations.

Melodee Mitchell, Chair of the 4th of July Committee, said, “it was a heartbreaking decision for the committee to make.

“We realize the ramifications to canceling the 4th of July celebration. However, we feel a responsibility to keep our community safe and to follow the mandated social distancing guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” Mitchell said.

Cindy Vosburg, Executive Director of the Crescent City/Del Norte Chamber of Commerce, said the 4th of July committee had been meeting since February, planning this year’s event, which traditionally included a fireworks show, a deck party, parade and Beachfront Park festivities.

“We were right on track for another year of outstanding family fun for our traditional Del Norte County American celebration. Then we got hit with the COVID-19 Pandemic,” Vosburg said.

Once Gov. Gavin Newsom’s executive order banned large gatherings, it created a cancelation-domino effect, that started with the chamber’s annual Economic Summit. Vosburg said it takes about four months to pull together the 4th of July celebration and one of the biggest decisions against proceeding was committing to the fireworks show.

“We were actually past deadline for the \$30,000 deposit for the fireworks show,” Vosberg said, adding the deposit was non-refundable and the committee would have been out that much money had the social distancing guidelines still not been lifted.

“Our research and discussions with city, county and health officials, everything we read, it sounds like to us we will not have any large gatherings in California until the earliest of September or October, or even into 2021,” Vosberg added.

She counted all the celebration’s other events that would not fall under social distancing guidelines — the deck party? No, it’s a large party in a small space. The parade? It draws way too many to Crescent City’s streets.

“We talked with Dr. Warren Reywaldt (Del Norte County Health Officer). He determined if we were to do a parade, who enforces the 6-foot distance rule? The parade draws hundreds that pack the streets,” Vosberg said.

She said the agonizing part is much of the celebration is usually funded by local businesses that come up with more than \$40,000 in sponsorship money.

“But you need to be open and having services to pull it off,” Vosberg said.

The last segment of discussions was fireworks. Vosberg said the committee members asked themselves, “Why can’t we still have it and have people stay in cars and watch from their windows?”

Vosberg explained the firework displays were getting lost in the sky due to the coastal marine air. So, the chamber had been purchasing more ground-based fireworks and less aerial rockets.

“So, people staying in their cars and watching from windows wouldn’t be able to see as much, anyway,” she said.

Vosberg said the chamber has already received correspondence from frustrated community members, actually accusing the chamber of not caring. She feels their pain.

“I had a Zoom call with my kids. My son is so upset with this. He said more people die in car crashes. We make people wear seatbelts, require airbags, minimize what we can when there is a car crash. I don’t know what is right/wrong. We as the chamber, have no say in the matter. We just put our faith in elected politicians,” Vosberg said.

Vosberg said her research turned up that town after town are also canceling their 4th of July celebrations. And if the social-distancing mandate continues, she worries for the future of other upcoming events including the Relay for Life, county fairs and the chamber’s own Sea Cruise car show in October.

Luckily, she said, Sea Cruise can get really close before the chamber has to make a cancellation decision.

Larry Timpe, President of the Crescent City/Del Norte Chamber of Commerce and manager of Bicoastal Media, remains optimistic.

“We are already working on other events that the chamber traditionally brings to the community, such as Sea Cruise. The Crescent City/Del Norte Chamber of Commerce is here and working for you,” he said.

For more information on the current state social distancing guidelines, go to www.cdph.ca.gov/ or for Del Norte County specific guidelines, go to www.preparedelnorte.com/novel-coronavirus.