

SPECIAL EVENTS SAFETY PLANS

At the Venice City Council meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 24, the City announced a suspension of the issuance of special event permits pending a reduction in the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. The suspension was based on statistics reporting the increasing rates of contagion and positivity rates for the Delta variant of the virus. Under the circumstances, the prospects of attracting large groups of people to a confined area increases the risk of infection.

Following the Council meeting, City staff met with Venice MainStreet to discuss conditions that would allow scheduled events to go forward. Venice MainStreet, the sponsor of numerous special events, including a downtown craft festival scheduled for the first weekend in September, produced a safety protocol previously used for a similar event in June.

City staff contacted the office of Chuck Henry, County Health Officer, for advice and guidance on the development of safety protocols for a public event. Mr. Henry offered the services of his office to review any special event safety plans, and indicated that he had provided similar services to other communities in the past. We agreed to work with Venice MainStreet, to add a suitable COVID safety plan for the craft festival and submit the plan to Mr. Henry's office for input. Today (8/27), the City received a positive review from the County Health Officer indicating that the plan was complete, and looked very good. They suggested one minor change - to reduce the patron maximum capacity by a small margin.

Accordingly, the staff has endorsed the application and forwarded it to the Mayor for execution. The Mayor has indicated he will execute the contract.

For the upcoming craft festival, the addition of defined safety protocols adds a significant risk reduction to patrons and workers. We are appreciative of the collaboration of Venice MainStreet and CEO Kara Morgan to codify the safety plan. Based on the conversations with the County Health Officer and experience of the special event coordinators, like Venice MainStreet, the City has a safety protocol template to apply to future event applicants and will use a similar review process for future special event applications. As special events vary significantly in size and dimension, the necessary safety protocols can be scaled to match the appropriate level of health and safety standards.

Also under review for September is a special events road race application. Although smaller in scale, the applicant has included a very well-developed and protective safety plan for participants and workers.

For future events, based on discussions with event coordinators, incorporating elements of former successful special event safety plans, and adopting the recommendations of the County Health Officer, the City has models that can be used in consort with special event applicants to design a safe and protective event venue.

Venice City Manager Ed Lavallee