

July 3 Events on Amphitheater Grounds Are Canceled

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
May 14 2020 5:02 PM



ALTON - Alton Amphitheater Commission Chairman Robert Stephan announced today the commission has voted unanimously to cancel July 3 events held on the Amphitheater grounds, which include the annual Fireworks on the Mississippi.

Stephan said hope remains the fireworks could be rescheduled during the Alton Expo in September. The Air Force Band and Alton Municipal Band were also scheduled to perform on July 3 at the Amphitheater.

The commissioners voted on Wednesday, May 13, about the fate of the July 3 celebration in Alton.

The Commission continues to plan for events in August, September and October of 2020, including the Food Truck Festival, Alton Expo, Jazz and Wine Festival and other events and will continue to monitor public health guidance throughout the summer.

This decision is based on multiple factors including legalities, safety, timing and finances.

Chairman Stephan made these statements about the cancellation:

LEGAL

"At this time, current public health guidance prevents gatherings of tens of thousands of people. The legal advice we have received is that the recent Madison County Board of Health vote to 're-open' is not legally valid. Therefore, we are still under the guidance of the Illinois Department of Public Health, which as of today does not allow for such large gatherings by July 3."

SAFETY

"The July 3 events in Alton attract thousands of people throughout the Amphitheater proper, as well as tens of thousands throughout the Downtown, Hunterstown and Middletown neighborhoods. Outside of St. Louis, it is the largest Independence Day celebration event in the region. While we all want to enjoy our traditions of gathering for this event, we must weigh the risks associated with a crowd of this size. We have received no guidance from a public health entity indicating a crowd of this size is safe.

Additionally, the crowd size requires nearly all officers from the Alton Police Department, additional staff from the Fire Department, Public Works, and the Park and Recreation Departments.

We must consider their safety, as well as the safety of all vendors, volunteers, performers and patrons. Adding an event with tens of thousands of guests would place Alton Police Officers and Firefighters at additional risk, at a time when they are already dealing with additional risk for exposure, as well as increased calls for service, due to COVID-19."

FINANCES

"The Alton Amphitheater budget is driven mostly by sponsors, who are local businesses. When the Covid-19 "Stay at Home" orders started in March, it was immediately clear businesses would have their hands full keeping staff employed and their business operational. For that reason, we simply did not think it was proper to ask these sponsors for their sponsorship commitment. Thankfully, a handful of sponsors have stepped forward to support events at the Amphitheater this year. Additionally, the funding we receive through the tourism tax has essentially dried up. All of this requires us to watch our budget closely. With this factor in mind, it would not be fiscally responsible to move forward with an event with such day to day uncertainty."

TIMING

"The longer we wait, the more financial obligations we have, even if we cancel. Food and drinks must be ordered, equipment rented, staff and volunteers scheduled, and vendor deposits made.

This was not a decision the Commission made lightly. These Alton events are the last to be canceled of the major Independence Day celebration events in the St. Louis region. We waited as long as we possibly could before reaching this conclusion, because we know how important July 4th is to all Altonians.

The City of Alton staff and the Amphitheater Commission are accustomed to dealing with adversity. We remain hopeful we will be able to host events in the late summer and fall and will continue working with this goal in mind."