**Memo**

To: City Managers’ Office

From: Christopher K Orlea, PhD – Director of Parks and Recreation

CC: Carry Capers – Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation

Date: June 15, 2020

Re: Gatherings During the COVID-19 Pandemic

**In consideration of the following information, dates are currently not assigned to reinstate rental opportunities or special event permits assigned by the Parks & Recreation Department, for the City of Pearland.** Active disease data is monitored daily as presented by the South East Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC), local health authorities, as well as the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), to determine completion of a prescribed culmination of two consecutive gaiting periods. That will be demonstrated by a 30-day period of steady decline of disease, and at day 30 the infection rate of the disease being below .3, a measurement used by state and national organizations to measure infection rates.

Since March of 2020, the Parks & Recreation Department has made several decisions to operate under modified structures to continue providing services that enhance the quality of life for Pearland residents, when safe to do so. As the scientific community learns more about SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the ability for leadership at all levels to make informed decisions to protect the welfare of communities evolves as well. A significant component of monitoring the outcome of these decisions is the quality, and implied condition that all decisions are dynamic, as they are made with the best available information, and that information does evolve.

Beginning in mid-May, it was determined by Governor Abbott’s Office, and published via the OpenTexas Handbook that many areas within Texas could begin to resume activities that had been suspended. Texas is a large state, and is subdivided in to several districts, or regions, when pertaining to matters of Public Health. The Houston-Galveston Area is known as Region 6/5 South in this instance. As the State of Texas has entered in to the ultimate stages of reopening, and lifting restrictions, there have been *some* areas within the jurisdiction that have several contributing factors that have continued the downward trajectory of case counts, hospitalization, and fatalities. This is a terrific, and better than expected result for these areas, but it is unfortunately *not* indicative of the scenarios unfolding in our own Region 6/5 South: the Houston-Galveston area.

Restrictions on social distancing and other contact limiting measures were lifted on May 18, 2020. As points to consider in the decisions made by the Parks & Recreation department to offer and operate services and facilities in a safe and responsible manner, the following data points are presented reflecting case counts immediately following relaxation of sequestering measures on May 19, 2020 and their growth outside of distancing requirements on June 14, 2020:

* New Daily Case Counts 189 🡪 525\* (nearly tripled)
* Daily Fatalities 2 🡪 7\*
* Daily Hospitalizations for Complications of Confirmed COVID-19 188 🡪 523\*

\*These numbers include only jurisdictions within TDSHS Region 6/5S that directly affect Pearland: Brazoria, Harris, and Ft Bend Counties. Actual numbers are higher and provide situational awareness of a larger area.

Reopening strategies presented by other states, as well as the Federal Government, rely on what are known as ‘Gaiting Periods’. Within these periods that are typically defined as 14-days, the scientific community can monitor the outcome or consequence of an action, as it allows for the incubation and symptomatic presentation of a new case of the disease. The Federal Plan, commonly known as ‘Opening Up America Again’, utilizes two gaiting periods between large changes to ensure the sound science behind the presumed trajectory of the disease as it is measured, and then a cautious foray in to the proposed direction.

Proven successful as a strategy and demonstrated by regions that are using the gaiting principle, seeing continuing decline of disease case load, and collateral complications thereof, this methodology has gained international praise as cautiously moving forward, and getting predictable results. As the reopening strategies are occurring at a rate that continues to define the pandemic stage of the Houston-Metro as acceleration, we are pragmatically looking to areas experiencing safer, and more responsible tactics. Regions within Texas, as well as other states, have added the Houston-Galveston Area to lists of locations with active travel advisories, discouraging visits.

Services or assemblies of persons that serve a governmental or purpose serving the greater-good of the community (defined by requests provided and justified by partners) will be researched and resulted on an individual case basis, and per the statutes set forth by the Office of the Governor of the State of Texas, can receive notification of approval by the Mayor of the City of Pearland.