



# TOWN COUNCIL – AGENDA REQUEST FORM

THIS FORM WILL BECOME PART OF THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION USED BY THE COUNCIL AND PUBLIC

Please submit Agenda Request Form, **including back up information**, 8 days prior to the requested meeting date. **Public Hearing requests must be submitted 20 days prior to requested meeting date to meet publication deadlines** (exceptions may be authorized by the Town Manager, Chairman/Vice Chair).

## MEETING INFORMATION

Date Submitted: October 15, 2020  
Submitted by: Matthew Casparius  
Department: Parks & Recreation  
Speakers: Matthew Casparius

Date of Meeting: October 29, 2020  
Time Required: 15 minutes  
Background Info. Supplied: Yes:  No:

## CATEGORY OF BUSINESS (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Appointment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognition/Resignation/Retirement:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Public Hearing:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Old Business:	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Business:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consent Agenda:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nonpublic:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

## TITLE OF ITEM

Discussion on the Holiday Happenings Events related to COVID-19

## DESCRIPTION OF ITEM

To discuss the Parks & Recreation Department's proposed plans related to the Annual Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting any other events that may take place in accordance with COVID-19 Guidelines.

## REFERENCE (IF KNOWN)

RSA:	Warrant Article:	_____
Charter Article:	Town Meeting:	_____
Other:	N/A	

## EQUIPMENT REQUIRED (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Projector:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant Requirements:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easel:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint Meeting:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special Seating:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laptop:	<input type="checkbox"/>	None:	<input type="checkbox"/>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Name:	<u>Matt Casparius</u>	Address	<u>116 Naticook Road</u>
Phone Number	<u>603-420-1661</u>	Email Address	<u>mcasparius@merrimacknh.gov</u>

## APPROVAL

Town Manager: Yes  No:  Chair/Vice Chair: Yes  No:   
 Hold for Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# TOWN OF MERRIMACK

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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## MEMO

TO: Eileen Cabanel, Town Manager

FROM: Matt Casparius, Director of Parks & Recreation

DATE: October 15, 2020

SUBJECT: December Special Events

Now that the Fall Season is here, we are starting to plan our Winter Community Special Events. Before we fully commit to running these events; I want to make sure that you and the Town Council are on board with our plans. There are a lot of changes that will need to be made to comply with the Governor's guidelines for Festivals & Public Events.

At the end of the Summer; the Governor issued two relevant pieces of guidance related to community special events, which I have attached to this memo. The first guidance document is on managing Fairs & Festivals. Essentially in this document there are extensive requirements to maintaining social distancing, requirements for cleaning and hand sanitizing, monitoring staff and volunteers for COVID-19 related symptoms but most importantly there is a requirement to limit attendance for daily & hourly capacities.

The second document is Emergency Order #63 – Requiring Face Coverings for gatherings over 100 people which was issued by the Governor on August 11<sup>th</sup>. This emergency order states that face coverings shall be required for all persons who attend or are otherwise present at the following activities that take place in the State of New Hampshire:

Scheduled gatherings of 100 people or more for social, spiritual, and recreational activities, including but not limited to, community, civic, public, private, leisure, faith based, political, or sporting events; parades; concerts, festivals, conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities; where individuals are gathered in the same place at the same time. The guidance puts the event organizers in charge of ensuring compliance with the masks.

### **Holiday Happenings:**

The Annual Holiday Happenings Event is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> and typically consists of the Annual Holiday Parade, the Candy Cane Hunt at Twin Bridge Park and the Tree Lighting in Abbie Griffin Park.

For the annual holiday parade; I do not feel that we can safely hold the holiday parade while being in compliance with the Governor's Festival & Event guidelines and Executive Order on masks. We have the same problems that we did back in July when we cancelled the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade except that we are now in cold and flu season and there is a greater risk of spread. We would have to require not only the parade participants to wear masks and practice social distancing but as well as the spectators along the parade route; which would be impossible to enforce. At this point in time, my recommendation is to cancel the holiday parade for this year.

The Candy Cane Hunt drew over 750 attendees last year to Twin Bridge Park for the event that last 2 hours. At this point, we do not feel safe trying to hold this event.

We don't want to cancel the holiday events completely and we are still looking o hold the Annual Holiday Tree Lighting at Abbie Griffin Park. In a normal year, this event typically draws 500 – 600 people to the event when combined with the Annual Holiday Parade and the Candy Cane Hunt. The feeling is that if we cancel those other two events and scale back the activities at the tree lighting, then we will have a much smaller crowd at the tree lighting which will be easier to manage social distancing and the enforcement of the mask requirements.

We looked into the idea of moving the event over to Watson Park this year to allow for greater social distancing but Watson Park has its own challenges. The biggest issue is that we're limited to only 40 parking spaces at Watson Park; which means most people would have to park up at the high school or Town Hall and walk down to the Park. The parking lot would be further restricted as the Rotary Club has historically held their Annual Christmas Tree Sales there each winter and we are happy to allow them to continue that annual tradition.

For the tree lighting, we obviously will not be doing photos with Santa as we normally would; and we have talked to the High School Band who typically performs in both the Parade and at the Tree Lighting about having a smaller portion of the band attend this year. The full band currently required 160 yards of distance in order to comply with social distancing requirements; which would fill the park by itself.

The reason I'm here tonight is that we must decide now about an event in December now is that Santa & Mrs. Claus are busy individuals and to guarantee their availability; we have to book their services in advance. I also need to know that the Town Council is in agreement to cancel the holiday parade.

We are also looking to add a new event in December with a Drive Thru Food Collection Drive with Santa & Mrs. Claus where children will also be able to drop off letters to Santa at the event. We have not finalized the time yet, but are tentatively looking at Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. I'm told that a food collection drive used to be a regular occurrence at the Tree lighting.

Thank You