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City of Lowell Cancels Summer Youth Recreation Programs

LOWELL – The City of Lowell has cancelled the Department of Recreation’s summer youth recreation programs previously scheduled to begin on July 6. The decision comes following careful review by City officials of the feasibility of safely running the six-week program given continued concerns associated with the transmission of coronavirus and after assessment of new safety requirements for recreational camps released by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health last week.

The enhanced state guidelines impose restrictions on the number of children that a staff member may directly supervise or interact with by requiring that programs be divided into groups of no more than 12 campers and staff members and prohibiting staff from “floating” between groups over the course of the program. Given the scale of Lowell’s summer youth program and the limitations on staffing resources available in its operation, a determination was made that that this condition would significantly reduce the number of participants that could be served by the program.

The regulations require compliance with a host of additional safety measures, including health screening and monitoring and enhanced hygiene practices, and limit activities to those where appropriate social distance can be maintained between participants. The anticipated challenges associated with training staff members to implement these measures in a limited timeframe were an additional factor in the decision to cancel the programs.

“We know that many families in Lowell rely on our summer youth programs and the enriching experience that they provide to their children, making the decision to cancel this year’s programs particularly painful,” **said Department of Recreation Program Director Peter Faticanti.** “Ultimately, the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing public health crisis made it impossible to prepare for the summer ahead in a manner that would fully ensure the safety of participants and staff and that would not unfairly limit participation in the program. While we understand their importance, the state guidelines would also have severely restricted the activities that could be included in our programming.”

The Department of Recreation is actively working to make online recreation resources available and intends to host smaller-scale recreational opportunities at City parks that allow for proper social distancing throughout the summer. The City of Lowell has reopened playgrounds and recreational playing surfaces in all City parks. The City also plans to reopen splashpads under enhanced guidelines and intends to announce a date for their reopening in the coming days.

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