



January 14, 2021

Mayor Bill Mutz
City Of Lakeland
228 S. Massachusetts Ave
Lakeland, FL 33801

Dear Mayor Mutz,

I write this to inform you and your fellow city commissioners in advance of your Friday, January 15, 2021, Agenda Study Meeting that LDDA will cancel the February, Mardi Gras themed and the March, Foodie Fest themed First Friday events. Though First Fridays are outdoor events - which is much safer than indoor events - the crowds can be large because of the short three-hour event time frame.

In light of the data shared by healthcare experts at your special called city commission meeting on January 11, 2021, about urgent care visits up 80% over this time last year, COVID hospitalizations and positivity rates at high levels, along with their pleas for the community to refocus on slowing the spread, I feel cancelling these two social events is appropriate.

The Farmers Curb Market will remain open. The Market is different from First Friday in several ways. Though it occupies essentially the same outdoor footprint, the Market's purpose, time frame and customer base are different. The Farmers Curb Market provides the opportunity for purchases of essential items like eggs, produce, cheese, breads, etc. Because the Market participates in the Fresh Access Bucks Program, SNAP recipients and those who received the Pandemic EBT card are able to double their benefits, increasing their buying power of Florida grown fruits, vegetables and edible plants.

The Market's hours of operation (8am to 2pm) mean customers come and go, not stay the full duration like at a First Friday. And compliance with mask wearing, in my observation, is much higher at the Farmers Curb Market than at First Friday.

It is our hope that we can all work together in the next few months to follow CDC guidelines more closely, reduce the stress on our healthcare system and workers by slowing the spread, and hopefully fully vaccinate the residents in our community quickly.

Sincerely,

Julie O. Townsend
Executive Director, LDDA

Cc: Shawn Sherrouse, City Manager
Cc: LDDA Board of Directors

