

June 1, 2021

Michael Sylvia
Whaling City Festival, Inc.
13 Edward Street
New Bedford, MA 02744

Via Regular Mail and email to: president@whalingcityfestival.org

Re: Request for Board of Health Approval of Special Event Plan

Dear Mr. Sylvia:

I have reviewed your special permit application and am writing in reply to your request for Board of Health approval to host the “Whaling City Festival” on July 8th, 9^t, 10th, and 11th at Buttonwood Park in New Bedford.

The City’s Board of Health and Health Department have been working throughout the COVID-19 virus pandemic to protect the public health by implementing measures to reduce viral transmission amongst the population and more recently by leading a robust vaccination program. Unfortunately, despite the diligent efforts of the public health community, New Bedford continues to hold a higher-than-average COVID-19 infection rate. At present, the City’s infection rate remains one of the highest in the state of Massachusetts. The City’s heightened infection rate coupled with its relatively low vaccination rate of approximately 40% are concerning when juxtaposed with your proposal to host a large gathering of 25,000 persons in the coming weeks.

Historically, the Whaling City Festival has indeed drawn tens of thousands of visitors to the festival footprint and the crowd of attendees has swelled to the greatest extent in the evening hours. The Board of Health is concerned with the present ongoing Covid status within the city and has significant reservations regarding the risks associated with such a large event at this time. Unfortunately, the announcement regarding the festival moving forward was made prior to the completion of the entire permitting process. As a concession, in lieu of cancelling the entire event, the Board of Health will allow the event to proceed with conditions. Therefore, to reduce the likelihood of transmission of the COVID-19 virus amongst attendees by discouraging excessive crowds within the festival footprint during the known hours of peak attendance, the Board of Health hereby grants conditional approval of your request provided that the hours of attendance at the Whaling City Festival on July 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th are limited to 11:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M.

Please contact the New Bedford Health Department as soon as possible to arrange for inspections of food vendors and payment of necessary fees. Finally, please connect with each of the city's public safety departments to complete the permitting process, to have your security plans reviewed and approved.

Very truly your
Dr. Patricia Andrade,
Chair of the New Bedford Board of Health