



Milford Parade Cancelled

A Letter from the Chairperson, Charles Gray to the Milford Community:

Dear Neighbor,

On the eve of Delmarva's largest night-time event, the Milford Parade Committee cancelled the parade scheduled for the following day. The conclusion to cancel came after reviewing a week's worth forecasts, and different sources of information available as the time drew closer. The decision to cancel does not come lightly to the Chairperson or Committee. Ultimately, as organizers of the event, it is our utmost responsibility to keep everyone from volunteers, participants and spectator's safety as the leading factor in any decision.

The Milford Community Parade has always demonstrated to participants and spectators the intention of marching in the shine of the moon or rain. Therefore, we do not "schedule" a rain date. This year, we were approached with a different kind of weather pattern, one that involved a thunderstorm threat (one week out from the parade date) to high winds, (three days before the parade date), for parade day. How does a band determine if they participate? Potential rain, they do not participate. How does a group decide if they participate? Potential rain, their excitement leads them to a group decision to participate or not to participate because of factors like children in group, elderly in group, or their float is not waterproof. I remember several years where we had no bands; however, many of the floats and their groups participated. As I said, we were not just dealing with rain in this weather system as it came closer to the area. Winds of 20-30 mph forecasted Tuesday morning for parade day/evening, with the winds getting higher in speed as the sun set. And, we could experience gusts up to 40mph. Does a float designer prepare for a wind event? The answer is no. What could we expect to witness during a wind event? The weather service suggested tying loose items down like lawn furniture. What would everyone sit on to watch the parade? Lawn furniture is the popular choice. Floats have loose items, or items held together by duct tape, simple nails and include cardboard props. As the organizer, we must take in consideration the safety of all. This means a wind event could cause damage to property and to individuals partaking in and viewing the parade.

Since the parade marches in the shine of the moon or rain, it not necessary to have a rain date. Entries decide on their own if they choose to participate upon learning of the conditions. We do not have the luxury of deciding for just ourselves, we must think of everyone. How do you reschedule? Just pick another date? Not so easy. This event is driven by volunteers. Volunteers love the parade, love the Milford community and love participating in one of the largest family-friendly events that is free. With that being said, their passion to volunteer means they use a vacation day or three to help out. They leave work early, find babysitters, etc. Most would not offer to take one or three more vacation days and so on. How about band transportation, reserve the bus for two days means you pay for two days in most cases, or sports events are held on the alternative date and they would not be able to participate. Law enforcement would have to be ready for two separate days in planning which means either loss of scheduling and pay on the alternative date if not used, or the departments manpower is stretched in

scheduling because of trying to accommodate an alternative date. How about road closures, public transportation on standby to be diverted to a different date, causing scheduling or work challenges because the transportation has changed all of a sudden. How about the wagons and equipment groups use for their floats? Farmers need their equipment back, rental companies will charge you double for two dates. And finally, insurance is purchased, for what two days? Our costs would double and would have to have it on hand immediately. Something the committee does not have the opportunity to have available. Do you think the insurance company will just take our money and apply to a second date, not a chance. The Parade Committee raises funds through fundraisers held throughout the year with its partners. It does not cost to watch or enter the parade.

Milford Community Parade is thankful for the sponsors and contributors supporting this event annually and the many businesses and parents that supported float building and designing. Our 2019 sponsors will continue to be recognized on our website throughout the year and will become sponsors of the 2020 event. We will request the community to support the parade again in 2020 and maybe additional sponsors will come aboard that did not have a chance in 2019.

Each year we select a theme and sometimes it is selected before the current year's parade is held. We notify current participants of the next year's date and theme to give them time to mark their calendars and start planning. This year was no different. Our parade themes are designed to allow the participant to interpret the theme towards their group and message. The 2019 theme, "Comic Books Come To Life" came to us as the author/creator of some of the finest comic books, Stan Lee, had passed away last year. We were very excited to hear about the floats everyone was working on. The date and theme for 2020 is Wednesday, October 21, 2020, "It's A Retro Halloween". What could you do for a float or song idea if you were a band? You could do a past parade theme....like the 2019 theme. You could do a disco era theme or song like Stayin' Alive. How about a 17th or 18th century theme? How about costumes? Super heroes, favorite movie characters from Hocus Pocus, or buzz lightyear. How about an 80's theme or the rock band KISS, they wore makeup and were a favorite Halloween costume for years. The concept is to be creative, use recycled materials, add lights and maybe sound. The parade is meant to be fun for those involved and those viewing the parade.

In the coming months, the Committee will discuss potential procedures to have in place if an unordinary weather system causes us to not march. This would not include rain as we will continue to march in rain. This would include high wind events such as gusts potential, and natural disaster components. Marching in the rain would halt during a threat of lightening within a thunderstorm making its way through Milford specifically.

Milford Community Parade will march on and will be supported by the thousands of families that have lined the parade route and by the groups and individuals that have participated or volunteered annually. It is my hope that further explanation described here will assist individuals to better understand the making of a parade. And, the decisions organizers must consider annually to create a successful parade year after year. The parade committee is always looking for individuals to volunteer the night of the parade to assist in lining up entries, reporting at reviewing stands, etc. Individuals interested in volunteering can reach out to the committee by emailing milfordparade@aol.com. Keep in touch with our fundraisers and special recognitions by visiting www.milfordparade.com through out the year. Until 2020, thank you for your time, and your support.

Sincerely,

Charles Gray

Parade Chairperson