

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Bandera City Council approves temporary park closure, new restrictions on essential businesses

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi Goode
The Bandera Prophet

Effective today, the Bandera City Park will be temporarily closed for all activities, including walking.

In a unanimous vote on Monday, Bandera City Council members made the historic decision to close the park as a protective measure. Many people annually visit the park over Easter weekend, and the burden of enforcing group limits and social distancing would be too great, council said.

“It’s going to be a nightmare for our Marshal’s Office,” Councilmember Glenn Clark said.

Council’s original vote included April 11 and 12 only, however the closure was extended to April 10 until Monday, April 13, at 6 a.m.

Limited capacity

Council unanimously approved limiting businesses that remain open to 25 percent of capacity as allowed by their certificates of occupation. Businesses without a valid certificate of occupation will have their occupancy set by the city administrator. Further, all businesses are required to have six-foot markers in place so customers can maintain the CDC-recommended distance from each other.

Curbside service

Council approved requiring all restaurants to provide take-out, curbside, drive-thru and delivery service only.

“I’m seeing people going into restaurants, ordering and waiting for food,” Councilmember Rebeca Gibson said. “That can be easily avoided by going curbside only.”

The ordinance, which excludes establishments that provide other services than just prepared foods, will be in effect through April 30. Council discussed the risks of implementing too many edicts on essential businesses, which could threaten their survival.

“We’re in the middle of the storm, and we’re going to hit them with more regulations,” Clark said. “You put a big enough burden on them and they’ll voluntarily shut down.”

“It’s their cost of doing business,” Gibson said. “That’s the expense they have to endure to protect the community and be in business.”

Councilmember Lynn Palmer said she felt all of the local businesses were “doing their part to protect the citizens of Bandera.”

“The biggest inconvenience is to have to close,” Councilmember Jerry Russe said. “They’re allowed to stay open. I think they will comply if we give them some direction.”

Interim council member appointed

Former Bandera Mayor Don Clark was appointed to council to fill the unexpired term left vacant by Brice Cavanaugh. Clark was one of three who submitted an application - the other two were Darcy Hasty and former Councilmember Tom McEachin.

“The other two candidates are very good candidates, but Don Clark has been involved with the City of Bandera since he moved here,” Palmer said, adding Clark has held the positions of city administrator, mayor, council member and served on the EDC. “To have somebody like him to come in to serve the remaining seven months is somebody I think would be an asset to the city.”

Clark said he was concerned about returning to “the old ways of doing things with temporary fixes.”

“My problem is I don’t want to go back to the way we used to do things,” Clark said. “There was no forward thinking in the past. We have

big problems that were never addressed. They were talked to death, but we just never went anywhere, we never progressed.”

Gibson said she would support either Hasty or McEachin over Clark.

“I know that Darcy is planning on running in the future [for city council],” Gibson said. “Tom came has served most recently and came in very close in the last election.”

Council’s vote locked in a two-to-two vote - Russe and Palmer for, Clark and Gibson against; Mayor Suzanne Schauman broke the tie with a yay vote.

EDC

Gibson recommended authorizing the Economic Development Corporation to create a program that may help Bandera businesses hurt by the recent and indefinite closures.

Gibson said part of the federal stimulus package is being pushed through economic development corporations for the purpose of providing grants, lines of credit or other financial assistance to business owners.

“It’s not sales tax dollars,” Gibson said. “It’s money the EDC can apply for as a block grant.”