



## PARKS AND RECREATION

### PRESS RELEASE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

##### Parks and Recreation Programs and Facility Updated Guidelines

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – May 1, 2020 – The City of Athens is releasing this update to the Parks and Recreation Department programs and facility guidelines affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and Executive Order 30 by Governor Bill Lee.

Open spaces at all city parks and trails will remain open from 7AM until 9PM. Users must remain in groups of ten or less, with organized groups and activities being prohibited. Registrations and reservations for park facilities will not be taken, nor honored, until further notice. The City encourages citizens to responsibly use the open facilities to stay healthy by walking, biking, and enjoying the outdoors. Restroom facilities will remain closed at this time.

Programs will be affected as follows:

Little League Baseball and youth softball will not be held this spring season. Refunds will be given by check to all registrants. If you have not been contacted about a refund check by May 18, please call the recreation office.

The Veterans Park Brick Ceremony scheduled for May 17 will not be held but will be combined with the fall ceremony. Bricks will be placed in the walkway by May 17 for individual viewing by families.

The Athens Farmers Market will open on May 19 with social distancing enforced. Directions will be sent to vendors and an announcement on times will be sent separate from this release.

Ingleside Pool and the Learn to Swim program will not open on schedule but will open at a later date, provided the CDC and the State of Tennessee deem it safe to do so. In the interim, the facilities will remain closed.

The July 4 Fireworks Display is on hold and a decision will be announced no later than June 1 on the status of this event.

The Skatepark at Ingleside will reopen on May 4. There will be a limit of 10 or less in the park at the same time.

Playgrounds will remain closed indefinitely.

The Soap Box Derby will not be held as scheduled. We will continue our franchise agreement with the All-American and will host a race in 2021.

The Splashpad at Athens Regional Park will remain closed until further notice. As with the pool, we are awaiting guidance from the CDC and the State of Tennessee before opening. The city will be adding a new ultraviolet (UV) filter to the Splashpad to further protect patron's health.

Tennis courts will remain open with some nets being removed to comply with social distancing.

"It has been my privilege to serve as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Athens for 33 years and these are some of the most difficult announcements I have had to make during those times. Difficult times, however, call for responsible leadership and I want to assure everyone that these decisions were not and are not being made without careful consideration for our community. It is imperative that we continue to follow the guidelines of the CDC and the State of Tennessee so that we may get back to normal sooner rather than later. I can assure you that when we do, your park system and the programs we provide will be there for you and the future Little League players, Soap box Derby champions, soccer players and others like them will be better for it. I encourage everyone to enjoy the open spaces, magnificent trails and other facilities we have open, to keep your minds and bodies healthy," said Austin Fesmire, Parks and Recreation Director.

The City of Athens is a full-service municipality nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and has garnered a reputation as the "Friendly City."

For more information, please contact the Office of Parks & Recreation at (423) 744-2700 Ext. 3.

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