

Celebrate July 4th with the National Cherry Festival

In a collaboration with the Fourth of July committee, the National Cherry Festival has been asked to coordinate the planning by the holiday committee—which runs the Independence Day celebration every year.

Over the years, the Traverse City Fourth of July celebration has drawn thousands to the downtown area. Five years ago, a Fourth of July celebration committee was formed to handle logistics by mayor Margaret Dodd. Jack O'Malley—morning host and operations manager at 103.5 WTCM-FM—is the chairman.

They found over the years there was much duplication of effort going into planning the holiday events, because the Fourth randomly fell inside and outside the Cherry Festival dates.

The Fourth of July committee came to a consensus after a few years, that handing over the Fourth celebration planning to the Cherry Festival made more sense. The committee made a presentation to the city commission in February, requesting the National Cherry Festival be responsible for coordinating the logistics of the celebration. The last few months have been spent working out specifics.

“We feel it makes sense that the Cherry Festival oversees the celebration,” O'Malley said. Being an event inside of an event, the Cherry Festival has the infrastructure, and the know how to make it work, O'Malley said. “It just makes the most sense to have the party planners planning the party.”

“Instead of having two groups trying to get things done, having one would make things run smoother,” said Tom Kern, executive director of Cherry Festival.

This year, the Fourth of July committee is working with the Cherry Festival to ensure that the focus will be on Independence Day, with patriotic themed activities.

“Our mission is to get the Fourth of July back into public consciousness,” O'Malley said.

The Fourth of July committee would be disbanded after this year.

Funding for the Fourth of July festivities has been declining over the past few years. The various companies and organizations that contributed money are pulling out, leaving the public to carry the weight if they wish the Independence Day festivities to continue.

The annual costs for putting on the event are already absorbed by the Cherry Festival to some extent, according to Kern.

“Things like stage setup, insurance, porta-



junctions and logistics are already handled by the festival, so there would be no major additional cost,” Kern said.

The Fourth of July Veterans parade will not take place this year. There are already

three parades, said O'Malley. This is not ruling out the parade indefinitely—just this year. Instead, there will be a patriotic themed concert and fireworks.

103.5 WTCM-FM is sponsoring the



Encore Society performance, and will be simulcasting the show as they are playing the 1812 Overture during the fireworks.

O'Malley said they are looking for more community support in the coming years.

People tend to think, “Oh, they will take care of it—well, “they” is us,” O'Malley said. This year civic groups will be walking the beaches collecting donations for the fireworks fund.

“Future years could be in jeopardy if the community doesn't get behind the celebration,” O'Malley said.

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