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All Future DBA Parades Will Be Both Legal and Safe

Billings, MT – The Downtown Billings Alliance (DBA) is a non-profit organization that operates both the annual Holiday Parade, thrown the Friday after Thanksgiving and the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Celtic Fair hosted the Saturday closest to St. Patrick's Day. Both parades are free to the public.

In order to stage a downtown parade that includes street closures, the DBA must obtain a permit from the City of Billing and show that it complies with all city regulations. Prior to 2018, all DBA parade entry applications have disallowed the throwing of candy or distributing of leaflets. To keep the two parade's compliant with the Billings Municipal Code Sec.24-50,

"...it is unlawful for any persons in a parade to throw, cast, or drop candy, trinkets, or any other articles. A violation of this provision shall result in a one hundred dollar fine for each occurrence."

Unfortunately, after years of this code being habitually disregarded by applicants, the DBA was encouraged by local law enforcement and city officials to look at new ways to address the increasing safety issues that arise during the parades as a result of the parade participants distributing handouts from the parade itself (whether their actions were in compliance with the city code or not).

The safety issues addressed included, but are not limited to:

- A concerning narrowing of the parade route as a result of spectators of all ages entering the road during the parade, often pushing inward in excitement of items being handed or tossed from the floats/parade participants
- Spectators crossing the parade route, during large gaps in the parade created by floats slowing their pace to keep up with their walkers who are distributing items to the crowd

- Lastly, the parade's operate thanks to many volunteer helpers and the amount of litter left in the parade's wake was another growing issue for Downtown Billings businesses.

In March 2018, the DBA decided to make public safety at their parades their top priority moving forward and. All future DBA parade entry applications would include a new rule where distributing, handing, or passing handouts of any kind from the parade route would be prohibited. Those not in compliance with this new "no handout" rule would forfeit future parade participation.

Since enforcing the "no handout" rule, the DBA and Billings Police Department (BPD) have already reported a decreased number of safety problems during the parades. Lindsay Richardson, the DBA Events Director stated: *"The 2018 St. Patrick's Day Parade was a success as the first official parade where there was a collective push from both the DBA and Billings Police Department to enforce that the parade participants abide by the city code. Since, this no handout rule is stricter than city code requires, there was some initial push back. Ultimately, many understood and appreciated that we are putting a priority on the safety of all spectators and participants."*

The September 2018 accidental death of a young boy in Denver, during a local parade only solidified the DBA's decision to maintain their no handout rule for all future parades hosted by the DBA. Katy Easton, the DBA CEO stated: *"These events are valuable and mean to build community. As a non-profit, we absorb most of the expense. Safety is our top priority."*

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