

Letters to the Editor (State Port Pilot)

I would like to address the suggestion made to choose alternate locations for the Market and Festivals. I realize that if someone has never organized and managed a Market or Festival, it would be difficult to understand the challenges and issues. It isn't a simple process. The Waterfront Market (now the Summer Market) was held on the Garrison Lawn, from 2007-2018 and moved to Franklin Square Park in 2019. The Winter Craft Festival was held on the Garrison Lawn from 2007-2017 and moved to Franklin Square Park in 2018. Yes, there were reasons that these two events were moved, and lessons were learned that we don't intend to repeat. These two events were moved to Franklin Square Park after permission was given to Downtown Southport Inc. (DSI) by the City Officials. The Issues that were encountered by having these two events on the Garrison Lawn were: Inadequate parking for vendors, citizens, and guests as well as merchants on Moore Street; Inadequate loading/unloading space for vendors; Inadequate access to the Community Building and Ft. Johnston Museum and Visitor Center. By relocating to Franklin Square Park, the events drew the visitors to a more centralized location within our Business District and created a more spacious environment for our events. The Community Building, Ft. Johnston Museum and Visitor Center, and NC Maritime Museum at Southport would also not be encumbered. Any alternate location in the Bay and Moore Street areas would have the same issues. In appreciation for the use of Franklin Square Park, Downtown Southport, Inc. (DSI) donated over

\$12,500 to the Department of Parks and Recreation for the upkeep and maintenance of Franklin Square Park and Garrison Lawn. The Summer Market, Winter Craft Festival and Spring Festival occupy only 23 days out of 365 days. According to Scott Len, Southport Forestry Committee: "If you add up all the hours of the markets, concerts, fairs, seasonal events etc., it only accounts for about 2.5% of the hours in a year; if you do days instead of hours, it's about 9.8% of the days of the year that events are held – That park is not overused by any measure". We are eager for the City to receive the report from Bartlett Tree Experts. That report will be a tool to

guide the City Officials to move forward with the future health and welfare of Franklin Square Park. We are hopeful that we will be able to continue with our community events such as the Summer Market, Winter Craft Festival, Spring Festival and Concerts in the Park but that will depend on the report from Bartlett Tree Experts and the City Officials.

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