

## COVID-19 cancels Brighten the Night parade for 2020

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By Chris Drost

After 19 years coordinating the popular Brighten the Night parade in Maynooth, the decision to cancel this year's event because of COVID-19, was a difficult one. Under the Maynooth and Hastings Highlands Business Association, the parade was a daytime event for three years and a night time event for 16 very successful years. Prior to that, the parade was organized by the now defunct Maynooth Lion's Club.

The organizing sub-committee, Bob van Balen Walter and Joey Shulman, met and agreed that with information from their partner, the Municipality of Hastings Highlands, that they could not find a way to pull-off a safe event.

"We couldn't use Emond Hall for the Winter Market, the Old Community Centre is closed, and with COVID-19 restrictions, it just would not be allowed," says Shulman on behalf of the organizing sub-committee.

Shulman and van Balen Walter also considered whether it would be worth it to have people viewing the parade from their cars. Then there is the concern about people building floats together. "We usually have a number of businesses coming together to build the floats, so how could this be done safely," says Shulman.

Then there is the question of the safety of children and of course, the jolly old elf himself. "How could it be safe for Santa to have 200 children sit on his knee this year," adds Shulman.

While the parade will be taking a hiatus in 2020, Shulman says that it is an annual event and all things being well, he and van Balen Walter, who together have organized the parade for each of those 19 years, hope it will be able to return safely in 2021.