

Lodge 351's 2019 Annual Summer Picnic Cancelled

We are sorry to announce that the Detroit Zora Lodge 351 Annual Summer Picnic, scheduled for June 15, 2019 has been cancelled. Although this event has always been a member favorite, the Lodge officers were forced to make this decision as we have lost money (or barely broke even) at the last several picnics.

We have no idea how many people to plan for or how much food to prepare. Expenses continue to rise, including music and rent, although we have tried our best to manage these. We kept the entry fee at \$3 per adult for about 20 years until 2017, when we raised the entry fee to \$5 per adult. Members might be surprised at the number of people who turned around at the gates due to the admission charge – even when it was \$3.

A small number of people do the work to make the picnic happen. Despite asking for additional volunteers every year, very few responded. Those that did work are happy to do so; however, when the final numbers came in and the picnic was once again not financially successful, it was very discouraging. We realize that when you keep doing things the same way expecting different results yet getting the same disappointing totals, we were meeting the definition of insanity. We need to re-think the traditional annual event.

We cannot, as a lodge that has to operate as a business to maintain our hall, continue to lose money on a failing event. There is no way to plan for graduation parties, wedding conflicts or bad weather. Our costs stay the same no matter how many people pay at the gate. It is all about attendance and expenses. We must cover our expenses no matter how many attended the event. The cost of food and beverages minimally must cover itself. Music and rental fees have to be covered by the entrance fee or we have to charge more for food and drink. Simple!

If 300 people adults attended at \$5 per person, that would equal \$1,500. There are few tambura bands that charge less than \$1,500 for a five hour job. Will the members support doubling the entry fee to cover the music, rental and licensing expenses? Will membership respond if we require pre-orders on lamb, pork and chickens? Will they pre-pay for their orders to make sure we don't lose money if we have a rainy day? How can we guarantee we don't lose money on the cost of music and grounds rental if enough people do not show up to pay the entrance fee?

These are some of the questions we have to answer or gamble on each year and the Lodge 351 Board has now decided we must have answers for. We will not be able to maintain our hall for the next generation, let alone those to follow, if we continue to sponsor money-losing events.

We welcome all members' suggestions. Please email your Lodge officers, or better yet, attend a monthly Lodge meeting (usually the 1st Thursday of each month at 7pm) and offer any ideas or words of support. We have already received some criticism for this decision on the picnic, but have also heard encouragement and support, once understanding the reasons. Please know that conversation is already in the works to make changes and we are committed to keeping the 'good times rolling' with Lodge 351.

Fraternally,

Robert S. Novosel

President – Zora Lodge 351