**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

(August 2, 2021) – Howell City staff and officials believe it is paramount that we work as one with the Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority (HAPRA) to ensure that the 2021 Howell Melon Festival is a positive and fun experience for all. It is only through community collaboration, not division, that we can guarantee such an outcome.

Howell City Council approved a resolution which requests that HAPRA agrees by 5 p.m. Wednesday August 4, 2021 to close the festival’s beer tent by 4 p.m. on Saturday August 14, 2021. Should HAPRA choose not to make the change, then the approval of the Civic Event application submitted by HAPRA will be rescinded. Separately, Council has also approved suspension of the Howell Social District on Saturday August 14, 2021. These measures are to make sure we create a safe and fun environment for all. Programs to replace the beer tent are already underway.

Unfortunately, continual attacking on social media and the spread of misinformation has created division and emotions from all sides. This division and these emotions have been displayed in online communications and public comments at City Council and HAPRA board meetings. Additionally, these emotions continually get fanned by antagonistic posts from each view, which only creates more division and is overshadowing the actual Melon Festival.

While City staff and leadership understand the complexity of the issue, the hope is that the sponsoring organization and the community can understand the concern for maintaining the public’s safety. The City of Howell chose to take decisive action to limit the potential for any negative outcome that may result when large crowds, high emotions and alcohol are involved.

The City believes this proactive approach, combined with working with public safety officials and HAPRA leadership, can allow the 2021 Melon Festival to continue safely and successfully. This 60-year tradition is an integral part of our community and in making memories that last a lifetime.