

Chocolate

From A1

Jan Ludtke, executive director of the Burlington Area Chamber of Commerce, said it is the biggest event in Burlington each year.

She said organizers have spread the wealth by involving many area nonprofit groups and sharing the festival's proceeds, helping those nonprofits to continue their work in the community.

"It was very beneficial to everyone," Ludtke said.

Ludtke said she has heard many people wondering about the festival's future, especially since the city took steps to change its "Chocolate City U.S.A." slogan. Although organizers have not made an announcement yet, Ludtke said she suspects ChocolateFest is done, which she expects will be a disappointment to many people.

"It was really good exposure for our entire community," she said. "It did showcase us in a positive way."

What about a Jamboree?

The festival organizing group on Tuesday submitted

"We're going out not in a blaze of glory, but a whimper. The momentum is just fading."

Bill Scherrer, president of the group that organizes ChocolateFest

an application to the city for a permit for "Burlington Jamboree," an event scheduled for May 27-31, the same dates ChocolateFest would have been celebrated.

Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing, City Administrator Carina Walters said the permit will be reviewed to determine what safeguards are needed to protect the



Walters

crowds from the contagious upper respiratory infection.

"We are happy to collaborate on this new adventure, and want this to be a success," Walters said.

Energy sapped

City officials have always supported ChocolateFest, too, Walters said. The hard work of Scherrer and his team, she said, has created a

festival whose success is not reliant on the city's slogan.

"The name ChocolateFest has already made its brand," she said.

The festival last year was canceled because of the disruption of COVID-19 and the need for people to avoid crowds where the virus could spread. At the time, organizers hoped to rebound in 2021.

However, Scherrer said the pandemic is making it difficult to revive ChocolateFest because some vendors are struggling to stay in business.

Meanwhile, volunteers have failed to commit; other past supporters seem unenthused.

"We're going out not in a blaze of glory, but a whimper," he said. "The momentum is just fading."

Without specifically addressing the proposed new "Burlington Jamboree," Scherrer said he was considering trying to re-

place ChocolateFest with another event.

After a long battle to contain COVID-19 by avoiding crowds and events, he said, "People are itching to get out."

The permit for the new event will require approval from the Burlington City Council.

Alderman Jon Schultz, president of the city council, said



Schultz

he would be disappointed to see ChocolateFest canceled permanently. Schultz said the volun-

teer-run festival brings in money from outside visitors to support local nonprofits.

Schultz said he also realizes, however, the amount of work needed from Scherrer and his group to pull the festival together.

"It would be a shame to see ChocolateFest close down," he said. "But that's ultimately up to the numerous volunteers behind the scenes that make it happen."