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JOHN A. CARLOS II

Revelers listen to music at the annual St. Pat's festival in Five Points in 2019.

St. Pat's in Five Points called off again: 'Looking forward to 2022 at this point'

BY JORDAN LAWRENCE
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After telling Free Times in January about plans to do something in place of its annual block party and music festival — perhaps a streaming concert with limited in-person attendance, probably a virtual version of the traditional running race — Steve Cook, president of the Five Points Association, said this week that the group will host no St. Pat's events this year.

This is the second year in a row that Columbia's largest annual festival has been forced to cancel.

"Obviously, we are taking a big financial hit by not (getting) to have the festival for a second year in a row," Cook said. "In order to do this, we would have absolutely had to not come out of pocket. We needed to make it at least revenue neutral and just couldn't figure out a way to put it together. So I guess looking forward to 2022 at this point, and hoping things are going to be different then."

It's a considerable blow for the merchants association in Columbia's iconic University of South Carolina-adjacent village neighborhood, which depends on revenue from its St. Pat's festival for the bulk of its operating budget. The event regularly attracts crowds exceeding 30,000.

Large gatherings are allowed in South Carolina under the governor's COVID-19 emergency order, but event organizers must get state approval by submitting plans for

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Richland County coroner hires lawmaker ex-husband's brother, a former restaurant operator

BY STEPHEN FASTENAU
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A powerful state lawmaker supported his ex-wife's successful bid to unseat a long-standing Richland County coroner, and now she's hired the legislator's brother.

Newly seated Coroner Naida Rutherford said she violated no ethical rules in hiring Harry "Torr" Rutherford, brother of House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, as a deputy coroner.

She called her former brother-in-law "highly qualified." Harry Rutherford previously operated the Grilled Teriyaki restaurant in Five Points until it closed in 2020.

Todd Rutherford, a Columbia attorney, said his past relationship with the coroner or as a legislator has no bearing on his brother being hired and that the move was only being questioned because he is Black. Naida Rutherford said her ex-husband's campaign support had nothing to do with bringing abroad Harry Rutherford.

She said she is committed to transparency and will soon include a list of employees on its website, but the coroner's office declined to provide Harry Rutherford's resume, a summary of his qualifications or his salary without a formal open-records request to the county, a process that can take weeks.

When initially asked about Harry Rutherford's qualifications, Naida Rutherford said he has leadership experience from working for a police department in the Washington, D.C., area and held a doctorate degree in science. But she did not specify his position with the police agency or the subject of the

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