

Better organized Provincetown Carnival Parade leads to record number of floats

By K.C. Myers

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The competition for best large float was tough this year, but Gabriel's "Game of Thrones" float received 42 percent of the 16,568 votes on Thursday to win the top prize this year. Logan Concierge won best small float and Holiday Shoreline won best walking/self-propelled entry. For more Provincetown Carnival Parade photos see pages A3 and A18. [Photo courtesy Provincetown Business Guild]

PROVINCETOWN — A record number of floats crowded Commercial Street on Thursday, with more than 80 entries in the 41st Provincetown Carnival Parade, compared to 53 last year.

Of the 80 entries, 30 were large floats, which was also a record number, said Bob Sanborn, director of the Provincetown Business Guild, which organizes the event. People went all out, Sanborn said, and not just because of the playful theme, "Enchanted Forest," which inspired a broad spectrum of costumes, including fairy tale characters, woodland creatures and even a troop of openly gay and scantily clad boy scouts. The naughty scouts were perhaps playing on the fact that it was only in 2014 that the Boy Scouts of America ended its ban on gay scouts, and only in 2017 that it stopped blocking transgendered scouts.

The difference between this year's parade and last year's came down to one main factor — organization, said Sanborn. By reaching out to businesses and other participants early, engagement increased, he said.

Police Chief Jim Golden was also satisfied. The chief had warned Sanborn, who took over from the previous business guild executive director Robin Lapidus six months ago, that things had to change this year.

"In my first meeting with town officials, the police chief said he was seriously considering pulling the parade permit, because last year was very disorganized and he was concerned," Sanborn said.

Last year, the parade starting late and there were gaps in the flow of floats, which confused revelers into believing the parade was over before it actually was. Spectators swarmed into the street, then had to be corralled back to the sidewalks in order for the parade to move again, Sanborn said.

This year, he added, "We started precisely at 3 p.m."

The first floats ended on Franklin Street precisely at 5 p.m., Sanborn said, noting that he was sure of this because one of the three grand marshals, Lea DeLaria, had to catch a plane out of Provincetown at 5:45 p.m. She finished the parade and made her plane. Golden agreed that the 2019 parade was better organized.

Police monitor the floats by verifying registration and insurance for the vehicles. Police also require each large float to have four "wranglers" who keep spectators on the sidewalks. This keeps the parade flowing and also protects pedestrians from having their feet run over by floats.

"The police department spent \$36,000 in staffing and preparation for the parade, money that is transferred from the town's tourism fund, Golden added.

It's not possible to accurately estimate the number of spectators at this or any parade, Sanborn said. For years, townspeople have been saying that there were about 100,000 people on the streets during Carnival, but there is no way of knowing that for sure, Sanborn said.

The police staff thought there were fewer spectators this year, Golden said. No one was arrested, but four people were taken into protective custody on Thursday because they were "incapacitated by alcohol," he added. Next year's theme is: "The Holidays."

Game of Thrones (pic) attached was the big winner by Gabriel's Guest House to celebrate 40 years in business.