



March 30, 2020

For Immediate Release Concerning GFPB and COVID-19:

The public private partnership between the City of Pine Bluff and Go Forward Pine Bluff (GFPB) is working to navigate the uncertain times associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At this date, we can only estimate the extent to which the virus will negatively impact the revenues needed to accomplish the 2020 goals outlined in the budget narrative. No matter the economic downturn, we remain committed to implementing the plan that was campaigned around government infrastructure, quality of life, economic development and education.

The Delta Celebration Series of Festivals and Events is a significant component within the quality of life pillar. As with years past, we continue to whether conditions beyond our control. Forward Fest Blues, Batter, and Brew was initially scheduled for April 24 and 25, 2020. The Forward Fest committee has been monitoring the COVID-19 public health guidelines, and to align with federal, state, and local authorities, the committee has restructured and rescheduled Forward Fest 2020 Blues, Batter and Brew.

All ticket purchases and vendor fees for the April 24-25 weekend will be 100% refunded. iTickets, which is the ticket provider, will contact each purchaser and issue a refund within 30 days. For more information, please contact the Pine Bluff Convention Center at 870-536-7600. Vendors can obtain a refund by also contacting the Pine Bluff Convention Center.

The original format of Forward Fest 2020 is restructured, whereby the two-day event will be separated. The committee is working to identify a date to host Forward Fest. Ideally, this will take place by summer's end, yet it will only consist of the outdoor concert at Saracen Landing. This new date will depend on our community's ability to reduce or eliminate the spread of COVID-19 through current social distancing practices and other proposed remedies.

The Frankie Beverly ft. Maze concert will be held Friday, October 16, 2020, during the week of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's Homecoming at the Pine Bluff Convention Center. Bigg Robb and Keke Wyatt remain as opening acts for the show. The committee has worked to amend specific contracts and secure initial deposits so that the highly anticipated concert can become a reality. Tickets will go on sale in July of 2020. Again, we must work to reduce the spread of COVID-19, so the reality or perception of contagion will be non-existent.

While uncertainty looms and challenges exist, Pine Bluff must see this through and Move Forward!

Ryan Watley, Ph.D.
CEO, GFPB Inc.