

# Clemson officials planning viewing party downtown for game Saturday

BY GREG OLIVER  
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CLEMSON — Clemson Police Chief Jorge Campos told the city's Police Advisory Board last week a viewing party on College Avenue for Saturday's Clemson-Georgia football game is in the planning stages.

"We've reached out to a handful of state and local agencies to help us staff that," Campos said. "We'll have several officers coming in from other departments to help us with that event, so it will be pretty busy."

## DETAILS

College Avenue will be



partially closed between Keith Street and S.C. Highway 93 starting at 4:30 p.m. — three hours

before kickoff — and reopen approximately one hour after the game. The open container law will be suspended in that stretch of College Avenue between 6:30 p.m. and midnight. Clemson hosted its first viewing party for the Clemson-Al-

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FILE

Clemson football fans cheer during a downtown viewing party for the Tigers' January 2019 win over Alabama in the national championship game. The city is planning a similar event for Saturday's Clemson-Georgia season opener.

## PARTY: Tigers kick off season Saturday

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Alabama national championship game in 2017 and has hosted two more since.

City administrative assistant Lindsey Newton said the Clemson-Georgia game was selected because the contest is being played at a neutral site in Charlotte, N.C., rather than at Clemson or in Athens, Ga.

"It's an attempt to get people downtown and help the businesses downtown and create a festive atmosphere since we're losing a home game and have one less home game," Newton said.

Although council approved the partial closure and suspension of open container laws, the decision was far from unanimous. Council voted 4-3, with Councilwomen Alesia Smith and Catherine Watt and Councilman Fran McGuire opposed based on concerns about the spread of COVID-19.

"Sept. 4 is not that far away, and Labor Day, if we're talking about the delta variant, I'm not sure that

would be good," Smith said.

But Councilman John Fulmer argued a large gathering will take place for Clemson home football games, starting with the Tigers' Sept. 11 home opener.

"You're going to be dealing with it again and again," Fulmer said.

When Smith countered the city would not be hosting an event and closing off downtown during home football Saturdays, Fulmer responded by saying, "But we do close off downtown after the ball games. We are basically hosting all these fans for the home games starting Sept. 11, and there are thousands of them downtown."

## CHANCE TO REVISIT

In its narrow vote, council agreed to revisit the event if COVID-19 numbers continue to rise. While the event remains a go for now, city administrator Andy Blondeau said downtown business owners would be properly notified if a cancellation became necessary.

Blondeau said he didn't know how long the city would be able to

wait to make a decision, but said officials "will give as much notice as possible."

Mayor Robert Halfacre said Saturday's event will piggyback four other downtown Clemson events held during the summer to bring people downtown and visit businesses and restaurants financially impacted since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restaurants will follow their normal ID process with a wristband, provided by the city, required to carry beer out of the establishment. Portable toilets will be on site to accommodate the extra volume of people downtown, and more trash containers will be provided to help maintain the event site and expedite cleanup afterward.

Campos also told the Police Advisory Board plans for Clemson's first home football game the following Saturday are also happening.

"We are in the throes of planning for that and making sure we're coordinating with the university for all these upcoming events," he said.