

City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: JUNE 2, 2020**

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER RONALDO FIERRO **WARDS: ALL**
COUNCILMEMBER STEVE HEMENWAY
MAYOR RUSTY BAILEY

SUBJECT: RECONSIDERATION OF CANCELLATION OF THE FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS SHOW SCHEDULED FOR JULY 4, 2020 AND APPROVAL OF MODIFIED FIREWORKS SHOW IN LINE WITH FISCAL, HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS.

ISSUE: Reconsideration of previous cancellation of the Fourth of July Fireworks Show in the light of new facts regarding alternative options and possible funding opportunities; approval of modified plan that anticipates and accomodates for public health, safety and fiscal concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Vote to reconsider the cancellation of the Fourth of July Fireworks Show currently scheduled for July 4th, 2020; and
2. Direct staff to move forward with Fourth of July Fireworks Show at La Sierra Park or the Riverside Airport if possible; with the following requirements:
 - a. The anticipated budget, including staff costs, exceeds no more than \$40,000; and
 - b. Pursuant of the Pandemic Roadmap, public viewing spots previously sanctioned by the City to be closed as well as public parking lots in reasonable proximity of the display in order to maintain public health and safety and; and
 - c. Comprehensive outreach and messaging is conducted to inform residents that public gatherings at the park will not be sanctioned and to encourage watching the show from home or from their parked cars.
 - d. City pursues private donations along with utilizing unused Council and Mayor budget appropriations, including travel and office supplies line items to supplement the cost of the Firework Show.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1996, the Fireworks Show has been a staple of Riverside's Fourth of July Celebration, with shows at both La Sierra Park and atop Mt. Rubidoux.

Historically, these roughly 20-25 minute firework displays have been operated by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD), with costs absorbed within the departmental budget. Riverside Police Personnel and Fire Department staff are also integral to the success of the annual firework show and in ensuring the safety of residents and observers of the displays.

In 2019, the cost of the two shows including fireworks, fire permits and PRCSD personnel costs totaled approximately \$75,000. Additional costs include Riverside Police personnel, which totaled \$17,945 for overtime staff assigned to work the firework shows. Fire Department personnel costs were approximately \$14,000.

(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at La Sierra Park	\$20,000
(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at Mt. Rubidoux	\$30,000
PRCSD Personnel/Non-Personnel Cost	\$25,000
Riverside Police Department	\$17,945
Riverside Fire Department	\$14,000
TOTAL	\$106,945

In early 2020, a Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) quickly spread across the globe, nation and state causing the State of California to enter a shelter-in-place period for nearly two months. The effective shutdown and pause on economic activity has wreaked havoc on the local economy, the financial stability of residents and subsequently the city budget.

In response to the economic effects of pandemic, the City implemented a Minimal Staffing Order and is projecting an approximate 10% reduction in revenue or \$28 million , as laid out in the Emergency Budget Presentation for FY2021.

On May 19th, 2020, in light of the pandemic, underlying fiscal concerns and fire safety precautions, the City Council deliberated cancelling the 2020 Fireworks Show and looking at alternative options to celebrate the founding of our nation.

City staff presented the conceptual plan for the 2020 Fireworks Show, stating in the staff report:

“Based on the current 2019 recommendations and COVID-19 Pandemic best practices, the overall production of the firework shows is expected to have a fiscal impact to the General Fund and a concern for public wellbeing. This non-essential event will require substantial investment and commitment of staff and financial resources, including pulling essential staff from Riverside Fire, Police, PRCSD, Traffic, Arts and Cultural Affairs and Code Enforcement. City Departments will be compelled to increase their work volume and reprioritize their COVID-19 commitment and efforts needed to meet the necessary Fourth of July event deadlines within the existing timeframe.”

According to the staff report, The cost of the show as previously planned, including fireworks, fire permits, and staff costs from PRCSD, RPD and RFD is approximately \$123,800, an increase of 15% from the previous year due to increased staff costs in relation to COVID-19 safety concerns.

(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at La Sierra Park	\$25,000
(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at Mt. Rubidoux	\$35,000
PRCSD Personnel/Non-Personnel Cost	\$30,800
Riverside Police Department	\$18,000
Riverside Fire Department	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$123,800

The report also stated that COVID-19 has resulted in a financial strain on revenue generated by PRCSD. Due to COVID19 social distancing requirements, revenue generating activities such as contract classes, aquatics programs and facility rentals have been cancelled. It is unclear when these revenue generating programs will resume. PRCSD generates approximately \$3.5 million a year, with the majority of its revenue generated during the 1st and 4th quarters. Based on prior year revenues an estimated \$1,100,000 will be lost for the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2019/20. FY 2020/21 revenue is predicted to decrease but cannot be estimated at this time as it is subjective to when stay at home measures, social gathering and social distancing measures are lifted. Revenue generated by the department assists in offsetting costs for the show and make it possible to plan and coordinate the event.

To date, surrounding cities/agencies that have either cancelled or postponed their firework shows include Jurupa and City of Redlands. Others that are considering cancelling or providing an alternative show include: Moreno Valley, Perris, Menifee, Corona, Lake Elsinore and Eastvale.

With these factors in mind, the City Council voted 6-1 to cancel the Fireworks Show and pursue alternative options, including a possible virtual celebration or a public gathering on Victoria Avenue.

The decision to cancel the show garnered a large amount of vocal opposition from Riverside residents, many viewing the decision as yet another disappointment during a tough year and a disheartening move during a time when community togetherness and national pride is desired. Residents struggled to understand why a Riverside tradition had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns, but a public gathering down Victoria Avenue would be acceptable. Residents also pointed out that if fiscal concerns were the cause of the show's demise, why not shorten the length of show or cancel the displays at just one of the locations?

On May 26th 2020, the City Council discussed alternative options to the Fourth of July Fireworks Show, including:

- A. Virtual Fireworks Display / Cost: \$5,000
- B. Patriotic City Celebration Week / Cost: \$5,000
- C. Searchlights Display on Mt. Rubidoux / \$30,000
- D. Fourth of July Family Day along Victoria Avenue / \$35,000

In light of these options, the subsequent costs and public advocacy, several City Councilmembers began moving the discussion towards the possibility of pursuing a modified Fireworks display at a lower-cost and compliant with COVID-19 restrictions. However, as the item was not agendaized, the Council was unable to further discuss this or vote on the proposal.

The City Council ultimately decided to move forward with option B, the Patriotic City Celebration Week, with the expectation that a reconsideration of the fireworks show would be discussed at the next City Council meeting.

DISCUSSION:

For the past two months, the lives of Riversiders have radically changed as they have cooperated with health orders, isolating within their homes, not going to public gatherings, visiting family or going out to local restaurants.

This massive community effort to fight the virus and flatten the curve has taken a large toll on the mental, physical and economic health of Riversiders. The loss of life and of community connection since the beginning of this pandemic has been incomprehensible.

As we begin to reopen and recover, it is arguably more important now than ever to preserve any chance to bring our community together and celebrate our triumphs as a Nation, while ensuring public health and safety is our top priority.

Historically the Fourth of July Fireworks Show has been a predominant feature of community celebrations; one that has persevered through many budget cuts and the wriths of the local economy.

The City Council voted to cancel the show largely due to the following factors:

1. *Fiscal Impact:* The \$100,000+ budget for the event seemed fiscally irresponsible during a time when revenue sources have drastically decreased and budget cuts are expected.
2. *Public Health Concerns:* The event has historically been a public gathering, garnering over 100,000 guests, causing concerns for public health and safety and the likelihood that the event would not fit into the Governor's Pandemic Roadmap to Recovery.
3. *Fire Safety:* The display at Mt. Rubidoux historically has caused fire safety concerns, and without CalFire assistance and adequate staffing, the task would be much more difficult.

Recommendations:

With this in mind, the following proposal has made key modifications to the show in order to address the fiscal impact of the event, along with public health and safety concerns.

- Related to Fiscal Concerns:
 - The anticipated budget, including staff costs, should exceed no more than \$40,000; and
 - City pursues private donations along with utilizing unused Council and Mayor budget appropriations, including travel and office supplies line items to supplement the cost of the Firework Show.
- Related to COVID-19 Public Gathering Concerns:
 - Public viewing spots previously sanctioned by the City to be closed, as well as public parking lots in reasonable proximity of La Sierra Park. This will serve to maintain public health and safety. only to be opened if California moves into Stage 4 of the Pandemic Roadmap; and

- Related to Fire Safety:
 - Cancel the Mt. Rubidoux Fireworks Show and consolidate the show at La Sierra Park or the Riverside Municipal Airport.

REASONING FOR BYPASSING SUNSHINE ORDINANCE:

In accordance with Chapter 4.05.050 of the Riverside Municipal Code, this report is excusing Sunshine Ordinance requirements as there is a need to take immediate action on this item which came to the attention on May 26th after the posting of the June 2nd meeting agenda.


Specifically, action is needed immediately to give direction to city staff as the Fireworks Display, if approved, is in a little over a month from now. Traffic, fire safety and public health concerns need to be worked out in advance for the show to be successful.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of this item would be a maximum of \$40,000. There is funds available in the General Fund under Parks, Recreation and Community Services budget in the Recreation Services account 5205000-421040.

Depending on Council action, possible community donations could help supplement this cost and funds may be available in the City Council Office's travel and supplies budget.

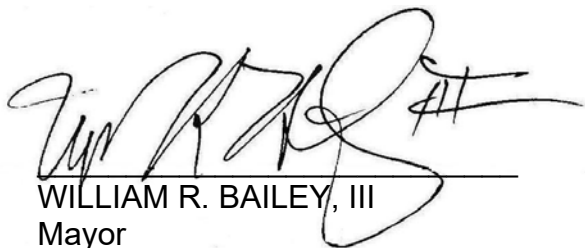
Prepared by:



RONALDO FIERRO
Councilmember, Ward 3



STEVE HEMENWAY
Councilmember, Ward 7



WILLIAM R. BAILEY, III
Mayor