



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: APRIL 13, 2021**

FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND FIRE DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT UPDATE; DISCUSSION OF THE 2021 FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORK SHOWS; OPTION ONE – SHOW AT LA SIERRA PARK OR OPTION TWO – SHOW AT LA SIERRA PARK AND RYAN BONAMINIO PARK

ISSUE:

Approve one of two options for the 2021 Fourth of July firework shows and provide any recommendations deemed necessary to the Fireworks Task Force.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Receive an update on fireworks enforcement;
2. Approve one of two options for the 2021 Fourth of July firework shows; and
3. Provide any recommendations deemed necessary to the Fireworks Task Force.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On March 17, 2021, the Safety, Wellness and Youth Committee with Chair Perry and Committee Members Conder and Melendrez present, unanimously recommend the City Council: (1) proceed with the 2021 firework show, and (2) directed Staff to research and provide alternative locations to provide a second firework show this Fourth of July and to provide a total cost.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1996, the firework shows have been a staple of Riverside’s Fourth of July celebration, with shows at both La Sierra Park and atop Mt. Rubidoux. Over the years, the firework shows have drawn more than 100,000 families each year from all over the Inland Empire.

In early 2020, a Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) quickly spread across the globe, nation and

state causing the State of California to shelter-in-place. The effective shutdown and pause on economic activity wreaked havoc on City operations, causing annual Fourth of July celebrations, as well as many other celebrations, to be cancelled throughout 2020 and into 2021.

On May 19, 2020, in light of the pandemic, underlying fiscal concerns, and for fire safety precautions, City Council deliberated and moved to (1) cancel the 2020 Fourth of July firework shows; (2) direct staff to return with more information on alternative celebration options including Victoria Avenue closure with possible second locations and a virtual show proposal; and (3) request staff return to City Council in January 2021 with a discussion for future firework shows.

On January 8, 2021, the Financial Performance and Budget Committee received a report to address the General Fund structural deficit and the potential impacts of the pandemic on City finances. The Committee received the report and provided input on the baseline General Fund and Measure Z Budgets, budget development strategies, and potential balancing measures to be incorporated into development of the City's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22 budget.

The FY 2020/21 preliminary budget for the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) does not include funding for the Fourth of July celebration. Some additional impacts to consider in discussing the options include the following:

1. The Department's revenue has been significantly impacted by the pandemic.
2. Rising costs for operations and services.
3. While all department full-time and benefitted staff have returned to work, the majority of part-time support staff have not; this process will resume slowly.
4. Ongoing, unknown, and everchanging operational impacts caused by the pandemic response.

In addition to the firework shows, the Fire and Police Departments have increased outreach efforts to make certain that Riverside residents understand fireworks are illegal in the City of Riverside. When most residents think of fireworks, they think of large bottle rockets, roman candles, and firecrackers; however, the ban also includes sparklers, as they can reach up to 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit. Illegal fireworks are the cause of multiple structure, vehicle, and wildland fires annually. Those responsible for the use of fireworks can be held liable for damages as well as fire suppression costs.

DISCUSSION:

Summary of Illegal Fireworks Activity

During the 2020 Fourth of July season, the Fire and Police Departments received 1,156 calls for service due to reported firework activity. 2020's call volume increased by 463 calls for service compared to 2019. The Fire Department responded to 18 fire service calls. One medical aid call was determined to be fireworks related.

The Fireworks Task Force, which includes staff members from Fire, Police and Code Enforcement, issued 108 Administrative Citations and made various warnings to those in violation throughout the City. Approximately 893 pounds of fireworks were confiscated and dropped off at local fire stations for proper disposal.

The fine for the use of illegal fireworks within the City is currently \$1,000. The current collection on the \$1,000 citation has proven difficult to collect. For this reason, the Riverside Fire Department (RFD) does not recommend increasing the fine amounts.

Year	Calls for Service	Fires	Injuries	Citations	Patrol Contacts	Fireworks Confiscated
2018	599	10	0	70	337	630 pounds
2019	693	16	0	131	314	3,856 pounds
2020	1,156	18	1	108	295	893 pounds

Through the Fireworks Task Force, the City continues to educate the public on the dangers of fireworks. The task force will participate in the following outreach efforts in 2021:

1. Press Conference: Prior to the holiday, the Fireworks Task Force will participate in a press conference regarding the City’s stance on fireworks.
2. Enforcement Activities: Riverside Police Department (RPD) and Fire will send out and hand deliver warning letters to persons known of utilizing fireworks to advise that fireworks are illegal and there will be a \$1,000 fine if caught using, selling and/or possessing them.
3. Marketing and Outreach: RFD, RPD, Code Enforcement (Code), and Riverside TV developed new fireworks Public Safety Announcements (PSA's) in addition to airing previously used PSA's. "Fireworks are Illegal" flyers and posters, in both English and Spanish, will be displayed at fire stations and operating local businesses. Electronic billboards will also be showcased on major thoroughfares. City of Riverside, RFD and RPD’s social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and the City’s website will all have the PSA’s.
4. Mobile Application: The 3-1-1 application will continue to be promoted as an additional method for residents to report illegal firework activity not attributed to immediate threats to life or property. The app also allows end users to obtain reports, statistics, pictures, and map development. Additionally, an email tree group will be created for afterhours so task forces could attempt to respond to specific addresses using illegal fireworks.
5. Staffing: RFD, RPD and Code will have dedicated personnel on duty at various times during the holiday season. These personnel will be specifically committed to enforcing the fireworks ordinance.

Fourth of July Event Staff Resources

Currently, PRCSD is operating under the City’s Flexible Workplace Staffing Order. In addition, the County of Riverside is in the Substantial (‘Red’) Tier, which prohibits large social gatherings, requires social distancing, and other measures that would negatively affect a live firework show.

The firework shows include multiple departments combining their efforts to deliver successful shows. This non-essential event will require substantial investment and commitment of staff and financial resources, including pulling essential staff from Fire and Police, PRCSD, Traffic Engineering, 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.

The following coordination efforts are needed to produce this year's firework shows:

1. Traffic Plan for each Site – The Traffic Plan is completed by the Traffic Engineering Division usually 3 months in advance. A bid per the traffic plan for road closures signs and barricades must be completed prior to shows, usually two months in advance. RPD assists in directing traffic, road closure coordination, resident notifications, parking, etc.
2. Permits – Special Events, Fire Permits, and pyrotechnics staff list must be submitted 30 days prior to the event.
3. Agreement – Award fireworks bid, route, and execute legal agreement with Pyro Company, procure porta potties, traffic road needs, fencing company and firework Purchase Orders two months prior to shows.
4. Fire Safety Plan and Implementation – Clear fallout zone and weed abatement near and around. Coordination and completion from PRCSD. RFD must survey area and report any findings which need to be completed by PRCSD prior to shows. PRCSD coordinates maintenance with the contractor which takes a three-week scheduling notice. RFD will also be tasked with developing an Event Action Plan to support public safety efforts for the event.
5. Coordination – Coordination of emergency services and response times with RPD for parks and surrounding areas. Meetings are held with RPD Area Commanders to discuss high traffic flow areas, traffic flow and exit zones for emergency services a minimum of two months prior to shows.
6. Location – In 2020, consideration was given to exploring relocating a Fireworks Show to the Riverside Municipal Airport. This location was removed from the list of possible locations due to FAA restrictions, traffic concerns, and many logistical challenges.

Fourth of July Event Fiscal Resources

COVID-19 has resulted in a financial strain on revenue generated by the PRCSD. Due to COVID-19 best practices, revenue generating activities such as aquatics programs and facility rentals have been cancelled. PRCSD generates approximately \$3.5 million a year, with most of its revenue generated during the 1st and 4th quarters. To date, PRCSD has recorded approximately \$468,000 in revenue for FY 2020/21.

It is important to note in 2017, funding in the amount of \$73,657 for the Firework Shows was removed from PRCSD's budget. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Department used salary savings to pay for the shows. Due to the pandemic, the Department expects to save in excess of \$1 million in personnel costs in FY 2020/21 related to temporary and part-time personnel that were not hired because of the suspension of PRCSD activities. The Department would utilize salary savings to produce this year's Fourth of July shows.

Event Options

Option 1: Host a show ONLY at La Sierra Park

The first option is for the Fourth of July firework show to continue only at La Sierra Park. This option would require funding in the amount \$25,500 in non-personnel expenses, part-time staff, and overtime costs and \$25,000 for the pyro expenses, for a total estimated cost of \$50,500.

This event is not currently included in the City’s FY 2020/21 budget. PRCSD would utilize salary savings to fund the event.

La Sierra Park was part of the original RFP No. 7817; the bid has already been approved and company is able to proceed once approved by Council.

(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at La Sierra Park	\$25,000
PRCSD Personnel/Non-Personnel Cost	\$9,000
Riverside Police Department	~\$9,000
Riverside Fire Department	~\$7,500
TOTAL COSTS	~\$50,500

Option 2: Host Shows at La Sierra Park and Ryan Bonaminio Park

For the safety of residents and visitors, having two locations with firework shows will aid with congestion and large gatherings.

The second option for the 2021 Fourth of July firework show is to provide two shows. A show at La Sierra Park and a second at Ryan Bonaminio Park. Ryan Bonaminio Park has pre-existing traffic plans from previous years’ special events; it is at the opposite end of the City from La Sierra Park, and it has adequate open space for the fireworks’ fall-out zone.

Having fireworks at Ryan Bonaminio Park (or any other additional site) will require the City to post a new Request for Proposal (RFP), as the original RFP only indicated La Sierra Park and Mt. Rubidoux as sites. The RFP would need to post for a few days, receive bids, review the bids, and proceed if appropriate. This option would require additional funding in the estimated amount of \$25,500 in non-personnel expenses, part-time staff, and overtime costs and \$25,000 for the pyro expenses, plus the costs for fencing at Ryan Bonaminio Park. An exact cost will only be available once the bids are received.

Fourth of July Event – Mt. Rubidoux

Although a fireworks show is not recommended at Mt. Rubidoux, it is a continuously requested site. The approximate costs of a 2021 Fourth of July show at Mt. Rubidoux, including fireworks, fire permits, and PRCSD, RFD and RPD costs is as much as \$74,500. The cost to PRCSD is approximately \$58,000.

(PRCSD Cost) Fireworks at Mt. Rubidoux	\$35,000
PRCSD Personnel/Non-Personnel Cost	\$23,000
Riverside Police Department	~\$9,000
Riverside Fire Department	~\$7,500
TOTAL COSTS	~\$74,500

For the safety of City residents (physical distancing regulations), additional resources must include an increase in safety personnel (RFD, RPD and PRCSO staff), modifications to traffic plans, evaluation of emergency service priorities and response times, evaluation of “large social gatherings,” and coordination of Mt. Rubidoux fire safety plan. The RFD and Parks Division must survey the area and coordinate the required maintenance/weed abatement to prepare the fallout zone and deem it safe.

The ideal area of weed abatement on Mt. Rubidoux is 22 acres. In 2019, the Parks Division was able to clear 19 acres with a total of 990 hours of staff time. Pre-COVID-19, PRCSO would contract with Cal Fire and California Conservation Corps for much of this work. These two agencies were not providing support services in 2020 due to COVID-19. Currently, these agencies are still not providing services due to COVID-19 and it is unclear when they would be able to assist.

In addition, Riverside Fire and Police Departments recommend cancelling the Mt. Rubidoux firework show due to overcrowding on the streets surrounding the event, the inability to evacuate the area in a timely fashion, and potential delays with the request for additional emergency resources if needed.

Until such time in the future that the COVID-19 Pandemic is behind us and the vast fire mitigation issues can be effectively resolved, we do not support a firework show at Mt. Rubidoux.

Fourth of July Event – Future Years

Agreements, traffic plans, and logistical needs make Tier One, Tier Two and Tier Three locations extremely challenging to accomplish for 2021. Sites have not been fully assessed; further evaluations will be conducted before bringing forward as potential sites for future Fourth of July event sites.

Tier One - Facility operated by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department.

These sites include:

- Orange Terrace Park
- Arlington Heights Sports Park
- Hunter Hobby Park

Tier Two - Facility owned or operated by the City of Riverside.

These sites include:

- City Hall – Grier Pavilion
- New Downtown Library - Rooftop
- Ab Brown Soccer Complex
- Riverside Municipal Airport

Tier Three – Facility is privately owned; open to the community.

These sites include:

- University of California Riverside, Men’s Baseball Field
- Ramona High School, Football Stadium
- Sherman High School, Football Field

- Riverside Community College, Football Stadium
- Evergreen Memorial Historic Cemetery
- County of Riverside location/partnership

The Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department has not contacted these agencies.

The City of Riverside is currently facing existing and future budget challenges. It has been suggested to create a fundraising campaign to raise funds for the firework shows. Administrative Manual Policy 06.001.00, Minor Donation Acceptance Policy, and the Corporate Partnership Policy (both attached) have the potential of generating funds. The time and effort needed to properly market, receive donations, and accept the funds takes months to complete. Although donations would be a great option to offset the high cost in providing firework shows, this strategy was attempted in 2017 with poor results, with less than \$600 received from the public. PRCSD does not recommend this strategy, as it requires extensive staff effort and has not proven to be effective. Council may choose to direct staff to begin a private sponsorship campaign to assist with funding for future Fireworks Show.

Fourth of July Event

The Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department surveyed 15 Inland Empire cities who traditionally host firework shows; as of March 30, 2021, four cities have indicated they will have a show, one city has indicated they will not be providing a show, and all others have yet to decide.

Regardless of which option is chosen, the Fireworks Task Force, which consists of members from Fire, Police and Code Enforcement, are committed to patrolling all areas of the city to educate and enforce the City ordinance on the illegal use of fireworks within City limits.

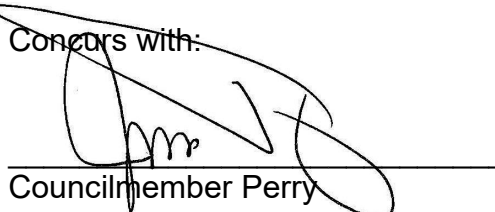
The Police Chief Larry Gonzales, Fire Chief Michael Moore, and General Services Director Carl Carey all concur with the recommendations in this report.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total fiscal impact to the General Fund will vary based on the option selected. Funds are not budgeted and would require use of departmental salary savings or supplemental appropriation from fund balance by City Council.

Prepared by: Adolfo Cruz, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director
Prepared by: Michael Moore, Riverside Fire Chief
Certified as to
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Kristi J. Smith, Interim City Attorney

Concurs with:



Councilmember Perry

Attachments:

1. Minor Donation Acceptance Policy
2. Corporate Partnership Policy
3. Presentation