



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Councilmembers

FROM: Leslie Herman, Director of Parks and Recreation

Date: October 10, 2023

Subject: Scheduling of the 2024 Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks Display

The Parks and Recreation Department seeks guidance from Town Council to select a date for the 2024 Independence Day celebration and fireworks display. The Town has a budget of \$30,000 for a fireworks display. Vienna Little League has verbally approved use of Yeonas Park for the event regardless of the date, as long as sufficient notice is given.

Decision 1

What date does Council want to celebrate Independence Day and have a fireworks display?

- a) July 2, 2024 – the Town can contract with Garden State Fireworks using their renewable contract for the fireworks display at a cost of \$30,000 (budgeted amount). Garden State Fireworks shot the 2023 fireworks display for the Town. Town staff and the Fairfax County Fire Marshal were pleased with their professionalism and quality of display.
- b) July 4, 2024 - the Town will have to go out to bid a contractor to shoot the show. Please note that if the Town does not receive a proposal for July 4, the Town cannot revert to the Garden State Fireworks' proposal that was submitted for the 2023 fireworks display with the renewable contract. The Town would have to go out to bid again for a date of July 2 through July 6 in order to provide optional dates to hold the fireworks display.

Decision 2

If Council decides to schedule fireworks on July 4, does Council want to increase the budget for the July 4, 2024 fireworks display? Staff recommends increasing the budget not to exceed \$40,000 to attract and secure a fireworks company to provide a fireworks display on July 4, given that the Town did not receive any proposals this past year to shoot fireworks on July 4 with a \$30,000 budget.

In 2023, Leesburg and Herndon both shot their display on July 4 at a cost range of \$20K to \$40K. They shoot larger shells than the Town does. Falls Church and Fairfax City were unable to secure a contractor for July 4 and instead shot on July 2 at a cost range of \$23K to \$37K. Fairfax City shoots larger shells than the Town does. See attachment #3 "Northern Virginia Parks – Fireworks Analysis".

Town of Vienna Fireworks Display 2022 and 2023

In 2022, the Town received notification from the contracted fireworks company, Zambelli Fireworks, that they were cancelling the Town's July 4 fireworks display due to a shortage of pyrotechnicians. After staff exhausted efforts to identify a pyrotechnic company able to shoot the fireworks on July 4, the Town was able to reschedule the fireworks with Zambelli Fireworks to July 1, 2022. The Town was pleased with Zambelli's professionalism and quality of the fireworks show.

In 2023, the Town went out to bid for a July 4 fireworks display and received only two bids. Neither of the two bids were to shoot the display on July 4. Instead, the two vendors provided alternate dates. The Town selected Garden State Fireworks to shoot on July 2. Garden State Fireworks offered a renewable contract with the Town to provide a fireworks display on July 2 (rain date July 3) for the next 4 years (2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027) at one year increments for \$30,000 each year. The Town was pleased with Garden State Fireworks' professionalism and quality of the fireworks show.

Industry Challenges to Firework Companies

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020, firework companies did not shoot firework displays in 2020. Firework companies were faced with many challenges when large-scale events and local government jurisdictions were finally ready to bring back firework displays including:

- Lack of licensed pyrotechnicians – many professionals left the business
- Lack of CDL drivers to transport fireworks
- Shipping costs from China surged during the pandemic, some increased costs by 500 percent.
- Supply chain management delays, as containers of fireworks on shipping docks waited to be delivered.
- Many firework companies went out of business. They were too small to absorb higher prices and could not meet client demands.

History of Town of Vienna Firework Locations

Up until 2007, the Independence Day Fireworks Display and Celebration was held at Waters/Caffi Field. Per the State and Fairfax County Fire Prevention Codes, the Town was able to shoot fireworks no larger than 4-inch shells and maintain the fallout zone requirements. At the time, a minimum fallout area of 70 feet per inch of shell was required. A fallout zone is needed to keep the audience a safe distance from the location where the fireworks are fired. In 2007, a "cakebox" firework discharged into the crowd during the fireworks show, injuring a number of people.

In 2008, the Town did not have a fireworks display but instead held a laser light show to celebrate Independence Day at Waters/Caffi Field. The Town chose to return to a fireworks celebration the following year but at a new location.

Since 2009, the Independence Day Fireworks Display and Celebration has been held at Southside Park (firing location) and Yeonas Park (spectator seating). Currently, the Town is able to shoot fireworks no larger than 3-inch shells and maintain a safe fallout zone for spectators. The State and Fairfax County Fire Prevention Code increased the minimum distance required for fallout zones. The minimum fallout area of 70 feet per inch of shell was increased to 100 feet per inch of shell. See attachment #4 - "July 4 Fireworks Southside Site Photo".

There was an effort by staff in 2016 to relocate the fireworks display to James Madison High School. While the clearance for a fallout zone with 3-inch shells could be achieved keeping spectators outside the fallout zone, Fairfax County Public Schools were not comfortable with the proximity of the fallout zone to the structural building of JMHS and denied the Town's request to relocate the fireworks.

Staff has done exhaustive research to explore other options inside Town limits with the space available for the necessary fallout zone, spectator seating, and public parking and has not identified another viable location for the Independence Day celebration and fireworks display.