



# Administrative Report

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N.1., File # 25-0317

Meeting Date: 3/11/2025

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**To: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**From: ELIZABETH HAUSE, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR**

## **TITLE**

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE CITY'S 2025 FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS DISPLAY

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As part of the Midyear Budget review process, the City Council considered options for a Fourth of July fireworks display. The Council voted to tentatively proceed with a display, pending further research into landside location options and final costs.

Following the February 18 Council discussion, staff met with the fireworks vendor to evaluate potential alternative launch sites. Unfortunately, due to buffer zone and fire safety requirements, and high school scheduling conflicts, no viable landside launch options are currently available for the 2025 fireworks display.

As such, a barge-launched fireworks display remains the only option, as it ensures there are no buildings or active businesses within the fallout zone and allows the Seaside Lagoon to remain open for residents and visitors to safely enjoy the show. However, as has been noted, barge-related costs have increased significantly, and the original barge estimate for this year's show is cost prohibitive. To offset the increased barge cost, staff engaged waterfront businesses and hotel operators, who benefit from the show, and requested donations for the 2025 event. Staff is happy to report that several organizations expressed a willingness to contribute to this year's show and that preliminarily the City has received pledges totaling approximately \$50,000.

The original cost estimate for the 2025 fireworks display-including fireworks, barge rental, moorings, and NPDES permitting-was \$200,000. With pledged contributions from the business community, the City's share of the cost would be \$150,000. It should be noted, that staff continue to pursue alternative barge providers and are hoping to secure a barge for the 2025 show at a reduced cost. Initial discussions with one vendor, in particular, look positive and may result in significant savings. The final results of these discussions will be provided at the City Council meeting or circulated through supplemental "Blue Folder" material before the meeting, if possible.

Staff is seeking direction on whether the Council wishes to proceed with the 2025 fireworks display. If so, staff will return with a 4/5ths budget resolution to appropriate the necessary General Funds.

## **BACKGROUND**

Traditionally, the City has held a barge-based firework show from King Harbor with the exception of the 2021 and 2023 fourth of July holidays. In 2021, the City’s fireworks display was discharged from land, resulting in the full-day closure of Seaside Lagoon on the typically busy holiday. This was required in order to adhere to safety protocols outlined in the California Fire Code, which requires a clearance zone of 500 feet in diameter from the launch site as soon as fireworks arrive on site.

More recently, in 2023, the City held a drone light show to replace the originally planned barge-based fireworks show. This change was the result of the establishment of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board’s (Board) newly instated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit (Permit) and the additional guidelines that it required. The Permit was successfully obtained for the subsequent 2024 event and the fireworks display resumed for the annual holiday celebration, utilizing the services of Garden State Fireworks (GSF) to produce the show.

In preparation for a potential 2025 event, staff has confirmed that GSF is available and ready to coordinate a fourth of July fireworks display. To ensure the City secured the best pricing for the show, staff also attained a quote from Zambelli Fireworks, and, for similar pricing, could only offer 1,010 shells compared to GSF’s 16,627 shells. While the cost for the GSF fireworks display is comparable to 2024 prices, the cost for barge services - provided by a third-party contractor - has significantly increased for 2025. The table below shows the comparison of 2024 prices with those received for a potential 2025 event:

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Fireworks Display</b>	\$65,000	\$65,000
<b>Barge/Tug Services</b>	\$38,171	\$126,810
<b>Moorings</b>	\$4,862	\$5,000
<b>NPDES Permitting Assistance</b>	\$7,500	\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$115,533</b>	<b>\$199,810</b>

Staff and GSF both pursued many avenues to identify alternate providers for barge services, but have had difficulty finding one that is available and certified. There is one barge provider that may be available to provide services at a lower rate, but this will be confirmed after agenda posting. Council will be updated via Blue Folder.

Considering the high cost of a water-based display, and in preparation for the Council’s Midyear Budget discussion, staff considered landside locations for a fireworks display. Unfortunately, identifying a location that could support a safe launch site for the fireworks, provide ample seating for visitor viewing area(s), and support effective traffic control and mitigation plan to affected roadways, is incredibly challenging. A number of parks and public spaces were considered including Redondo Union High School (RBUHS), Seaside Lagoon, Dominguez Park, Alta Vista Park, and the Redondo Performing Arts Center (RBPAC).

Redondo Union High School

The preferred location reviewed by staff is the baseball field at RUHS. However, School District administrators have confirmed that the site is unavailable as the event would conflict with their summer camp schedule.

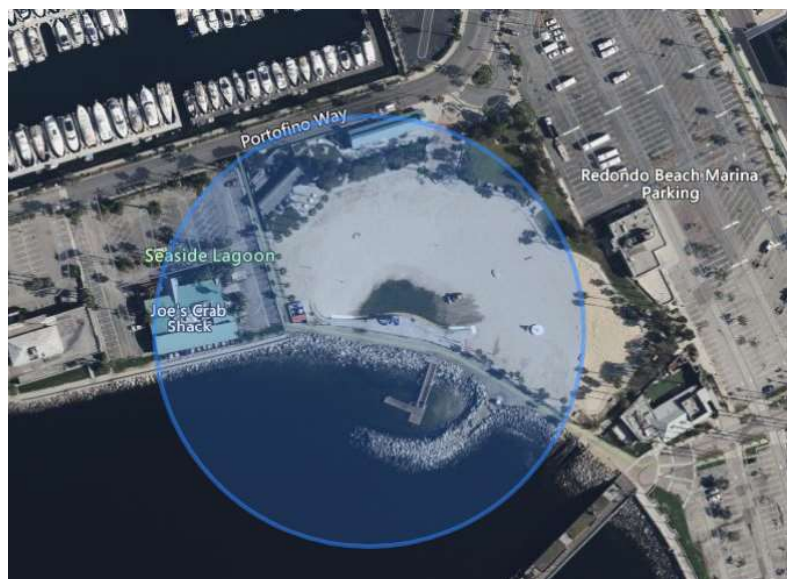
### Area West of Seaside Lagoon

In 2021, the City hosted a fireworks display just west of Seaside Lagoon. While this location remains available for a 2025 show, it would necessitate closing the Lagoon on a traditionally busy holiday, resulting in an estimated \$10,000 revenue loss. Additionally, the California Surf Club, located within the clearance area, would have to close, and metered parking revenue within the zone would also be lost.

Further costs include securing the area with temporary fencing, allocating staff for post-event cleanup, and contracting Pi Environmental for NPDES Permit reporting due to the site's proximity to the ocean.

On February 27, 2025, Fire Department and Community Services personnel met with the GSF team to evaluate potential locations for a landside fireworks display. After assessing safety requirements, radius constraints, and shell size options, only one viable waterfront location remained. This alternative, positioned further northwest from the 2021 launch site, would require a 300-foot fallout radius, closure of Seaside Lagoon, and temporary relocation of several boats, though it would not impact the California Surf Club.

However, this option is not recommended, as the required Lagoon closure-combined with the smaller scale of the display-would significantly limit the number of spectators able to enjoy the show. Additionally, logistical challenges such as relocating nearby boats, the Joe's Crab Shack building within the fallout zone, securing enough space for launching shells, and the closure of Portofino Way further complicate hosting the event at this landside site.



### Dominguez Park

While Dominguez Park would provide enough open space to safely support the clearance zone without impacting roadways, traffic control, and parking, spectator viewing area(s) would be a challenge. Additionally, staff reached out to Southern California Edison (SCE), which hold the license agreements needed to use the areas under SCE power lines, to determine whether there would be any concerns related to a potential fireworks display. Following its review, SCE responded that

smoke and embers from the fireworks fallout would pose an immediate risk to the Bulk Power Transmission equipment in the park. Therefore, it does not approve of this event taking place at this location under the terms of the current license agreement.

#### Alta Vista Park

Alta Vista Park was another location considered, but it was determined to be ill-suited to host the event as the resulting parking and traffic issues would be too difficult to overcome. The shape and topography of the park would mean the majority of the site would be designated as part of the clearance zone, eliminating any viewing areas for spectators. Additionally, pedestrian and traffic control would be difficult given the residential areas surrounding the park.

#### RBPAC

The parking lot of the RBPAC was also reviewed. Unfortunately, the parking lot is not large enough to support the required clearance zone without having to overlap with Aviation Boulevard in order to maintain a safe distance from the RBPAC. This would require full closure of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on this busy roadway and would be very impactful on a traditionally busy holiday, likely causing major traffic delays. Additionally, there would need to be coordination with the City of Manhattan Beach for closure of those sections of the road that are owned by the neighboring city.

#### Event Funding

Historically, funding for the City's 4th of July fireworks/drone show has been supported by the Harbor Enterprise Funds. However, over the past two years, City Council has invested significant enterprise funding into much needed waterfront improvements and infrastructure projects, inclusive of dredging, construction of two new sewer pump stations, studies for a new boat launch, seismic upgrades to parking structures, and beautification improvements to the International Boardwalk. Though recent years have shown favorable growth, the enterprise funding sources continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there is not sufficient funding to support the 2025 4th of July fireworks show in the waterfront. Therefore, any event would be reliant on the use of General Fund resources.

Staff is seeking direction on whether the Council wishes to proceed with the fireworks display. If so, staff will return with a 4/5ths budget resolution to appropriate the necessary resources from the General Fund.

#### **COORDINATION**

The Community Services Department coordinated with the City Manager's Office and the Fire, Police, and Public Works Departments to develop this report.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Should the City Council choose to move forward with the barge-based show, a General Fund (net) expense in an amount of \$150,000 (or less) would be required, depending on the final cost estimates from the alternative barge provider.

#### **APPROVED BY:**

*Mike Witzansky, City Manager*