



INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

MEMO

To: Ald. Joe Davis, Sr. and Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
From: Leslie Silletti, Legislative Research Analyst
Date: March 20, 2007
Re: **Fireworks Task Force: Summary of 1/11/07 and 2/22/07 Meetings**

This memo summarizes the main points discussed at the 1/11/07 and 2/22/07 Fireworks Task Force meetings. It organizes information presented at those meetings into various categories, and is intended to complement the minutes prepared by the Staff Assistant. Please note these points were derived only from discussions at this meetings; no other sources were considered in compiling this summary. Please contact me with questions relating to any of these points, or for more information relating to the Fireworks Task Force.

Problems Identified:

- Fireworks pose substantial risks to public.
- Fireworks drive pets crazy, and this is often underestimated.
- Fireworks are becoming a lot more dangerous, almost like “mini-explosives.”
- People buy fireworks in neighboring communities and bring them into the city.
- Lack of education – people don’t know that fireworks are illegal.
- Difficult for MPD to testify as to who discharged a firework- very difficult to catch people in the act. A witness must be willing to come forward and make positive identification.
- Fireworks are a part of our culture. We are saying “no,” yet fireworks are set off all around the city.
- There are so many calls to the MPD for service during the 4th of July period, that calls for fireworks (unless in extreme circumstances, like if someone is pointing at a person or car, etc.) will not get answered right away, and sometimes not until the next day. By that time, the perpetrator is gone.

Recommendations:

Education

- Establish relationships with schools: distribute fliers, ask teachers to discuss with classes, give presentations and encourage fireworks viewing at designated parks.
- Send educational materials to persons who receive permits (still need to determine where these records are stored, and if they can be accessed).
- Media blitz during high-risk times.

- More signs at parks.
- Get hospitals, etc., to sponsor billboards, and focus on the health issue.
- Establish relationships with Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA's, etc. to educate kids (same as in schools).
- Ask neighborhood organizations to do a media blitz in their literature.

Establishing Relationships

- Establish relationships with schools, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA's, etc. to educate kids (from education section).
- Establish relationships with other counties. With multiple-county cooperation, at least there will be a level of inconvenience.
- Establish intergovernmental relationships with the County Supervisors.
- Establish relationship with Milwaukee Health Department for education and record keeping.

Multi-county Cooperation

- This is a state issue; a patchwork of municipal policies is ineffective.
- With multiple-county cooperation, at least there will be a level of inconvenience (from establishing relationships section).
- Establish intergovernmental relationships with the County Supervisors (from establishing relationships section).

Using Legal Channels

- Seek an injunction from the state and create criminal liability for a 7-day period around the 4th of July. Demonstrate the need with the number of calls for service in the MPD, fire data from the MFD, fiscal impact and injury data, and determine the overall cost to the city. The result is that during this 7-day period, violations are treated as criminal violations, rather than municipal. This will need to be publicized to the community. DA Chisholm will provide more details on this in further meetings or correspondence.
- Pass an ordinance that requires that fireworks injuries be tracked.
- Use the Block Watch digital cameras to capture evidence (person must be willing to appear in court), so prosecution is more likely (refer to the problem of making positive identification).
- Pass a statewide policy, as a patchwork of municipal policies is ineffective (from multi-county cooperation section).
- Is it possible to require of each jurisdiction to label fireworks products for identifying the distribution point of the products?
- Inquiry about whether the city can sue other jurisdictions for violation of state law if the sale of fireworks affects the city of Milwaukee. Asst. City Attorney Ehrlich stated the city could not sue jurisdictions to make them enforce.
- Suggest changing state law so that persons whose identification proves they live within the city of Milwaukee may not purchase fireworks anywhere. Asst. City Attorney Ehrlich said this would probably not be possible because of equal protection laws.