

Stop Illegal Fireworks (SIF) Meeting Notes and Updates

July 8, 5pm Zoom Fourth of July Debrief Meeting

GOAL OF SIF: Get a critical mass of the community concerned about the harms caused by illegal fireworks and motivate the city to act

ATTENDING: 18 people, including residents, representatives of Richmond Police Department (RPD) and Councilmember Soheila Bana

SUMMARY:

- Most people agreed that the lead up to and days after July 4th were quieter than past years; July 4th was worse than usual.
- There were 23 police officers on the streets on the night of the 4th and into the morning of the 5th.
- The police drone was the “first responder”; Lt. Decious could see in real time what was happening. The police went out in large groups to ensure their safety and the effectiveness of their mission
- 19 people were cited -- some were previously wanted criminals so were arrested – a good number for the first year
- \$8,000 of fireworks and three firearms were confiscated
- How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time, said Captain Lopez; for the first year, this was a success
- Gratitude was expressed for the efforts of RPD, Councilmember Bana, the SIF volunteers and for [RPD's post-July 4th FB video](#)

KEY POINTS

	Topic	Action Item
1)	Police Department	The RPD representatives (Lopez, Decious, Patchin, Milam) all felt this was a very good beginning. The signs got people thinking about the issue and may have delivered the message that “things are different this year.” They gave the 23 officers a briefing, a mission and a directive: keep cameras on, use the drone. All officers scheduled to work on the holiday were present. The cost of the signs was \$5,300 including the fees to expedite the printing. The funding came out of Michelle’s crime prevention budget. They are

		reusable and coated. People should be encouraged to keep them for New Years or next July 4.
2)	Council member Soheila Bana	Asked how many incidents were recorded; PD will get an answer; she will not introduce a social host ordinance without support from community, RPD and RFD (her previous effort went nowhere)
3)	Terri Hinte	Reported on the work of Residents Against Illegal Fireworks; they are a state coalition that includes Sacramento, San Jose and other cities. Some of them have social host and spectator ordinances, much higher and stackable fines and use reporting apps. Their public education campaigns include radio spots, signs on bus shelters, flyers, billboards and PSA videos. One of the coalition leaders is a lobbyist for TNT, the company that sells safe and sane fireworks in CA

DECISIONS:

- Let people know they can drop off their signs at City Hall (Michelle will arrange this) or keep them; collecting the signs – the juice is not worth it
- Start earlier next year – 6-8 weeks in advance
- Develop a calendar of events – Michelle will work with SIF on this
- The City Council needs to hear about what was accomplished; Captain Lopez said a report is being prepared and should be put on the website and shared with the public
- Give the city a better idea of where we want signs placed
- Need to develop a message about why the signs are important and proactively address fears of retribution for posting signs
- Need more signs in Spanish
- Lt. Decious will get data on calls received by RPD that night
- Need signs around city offices, including libraries, City Hall etc.
- Sue and Terri will work with Councilmember Claudia Jimenez to have her publicly take a stand against illegal fireworks
- There should be outreach to schools and churches
- Try to get RNCC involved with sign distribution and other SIF initiatives
- Explore free radio space that addresses the Spanish speaking community
- Social media accounts for SIF

- Have another meeting to explore what strategies should be used going forward: double fines, spectator and host ordinances, reporting systems (to prevent callers from getting a busy signal when calling in fireworks), new background picture for city app, billboards, radio spots, drug sniffing dogs at ports in California, getting upstream to address the broader picture, i.e., interstate compact between NV and CA.