

UB2. Extinguishing Consumer Fireworks

At the reconvened Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on October 24, 2019, the Committee concluded hearing from speakers and referred discussion and decision of the above-noted item to the Regular Council meeting on November 5, 2019, as Unfinished Business.

MOVED by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Fireworks are dangerous explosive items that can burn up to 1000 degrees Celsius and create loud noises in the range of 150db. Safety guidelines published by Natural Resources Canada requires a minimum 30m x 30m (100' x 100') clear space be used when setting off fireworks. The typical Vancouver lot is only 10 m wide;
2. Consumer fireworks are a popular form of fireworks used for recreation, they include noisemakers, ground spinners, sparklers and aerial fireworks. Display Fireworks are fireworks designed to be used by professionals;¹
3. Each year, Vancouver Police Department calls for service dramatically increase during the five days leading up to October 31st. In a 2018 memo, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services compiled damages and cost over the last 12 years and found that the average fire loss per year due to the use of consumer fireworks is \$379,000.00;
4. Vancouver is one of the only local cities that allow the sale and use of consumer fireworks. Nearby cities that have banned fireworks due to excessive property damage, injuries and costs to the communities include North Vancouver, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Richmond, Delta, Surrey, Langley, Langley Township, Abbotsford, Mission, Victoria, and Seattle WA;
5. In 2007 Council approved amendments to the Fire By-law to restrict the purchase and discharge of fireworks to individuals holding a permit issued by the Fire Chief. The City of Vancouver fire bylaw currently restricts the sale of fireworks except between October 25th and October 31st of each calendar year. Permit holders must be 19 years of age or older and successfully complete the fire department (on line) education and test regarding handling of fireworks;
6. Fireworks set off in urban areas have demonstrable and significant adverse effect on wild animals.² Research studies show that the noise from fireworks causes a great amount of fear, stress and anxiety in wild animals. Other documented effects include nesting birds and other small mammal parents abandoning their nests leaving their defenseless babies behind. The panic can sometimes cause so much disorientation that wildlife parents cannot locate their nests and their babies die. Panic and

disorientation from fireworks noise has also resulted in birds flying into windows and buildings, or too far out to sea to escape the noise;³

7. Fireworks set off in urban areas have demonstrable and significant adverse effect on many domestic animals. In 2016 a mixed breed dog named Maggie was killed ⁴ when spooked by fireworks she ran onto SkyTrain tracks. Each year the BCSPCA issue warnings to public to protect and calm pets traumatized by fireworks. Animal shelters typically see an increase in lost animals during fireworks sessions and Veterinary Associations caution many animals injure themselves in panicked attempts to escape the blasts;
8. Fireworks have environmental impacts through the release of poisonous chemicals and airborne particles, including colourants and propellants like copper, strontium, lithium, barium, aluminum, potassium and perchlorates. Research has found that fireworks sourced airborne particulates have been found to deplete lung defences more than pollution from traffic sources. Spent fireworks particles and detritus make their way into our waterways, atmosphere and environment;^{5 6}
9. Fireworks can trigger PTSD for survivors of gun violence, war refugees, and veterans;^{7 8}
10. Fireworks-related injuries disproportionately impact children and youth. In 2017, eight people died and over 12,000 were injured badly enough to require medical treatment in the United States, 50% of those casualties were to children and youth under twenty;⁹

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to work with Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services and the Vancouver Police Department to report back in 2020 on a plan to ban the retail sale of consumer fireworks to the public by 2021. Considerations should include:

- i. How to address enforcement and compliance with a ban on consumer fireworks;
- ii. Exemptions for how display fireworks can still be used as part of large public events (Celebration of Light, New Year's Eve etc.) and cultural/religious occasions (Diwali etc.);
- iii. An authorized Fire permit from the City of Vancouver to ignite, explode, set off or detonate display fireworks within the guidelines and conditions of the permit, Vancouver Fire Bylaw, and the Canadian Explosives Regulations;
- iv. Necessary amendments to the Fire By-law in order to facilitate a ban on consumer fireworks.

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1. <http://www.nationalfireworks.ca/>
2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2015/12/31/birds-flee-en-mass-from-new-years-eve-fireworks/#b9dd8b378505>
3. https://www.westsoundwildlife.org/wildlife/Coexisting/CO_Fireworks.html
4. <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/dog-spooked-by-fireworks-killed-on-skytrain-tracks-1.3139826>
5. <http://theconversation.com/our-prettiest-pollutant-just-how-bad-are-fireworks-for-the-environment-52451>
6. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es1016284>
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jul/04/fireworks-ptsd-fourth-of-july-veterans-shooting-survivors>
8. <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-prepares-refugees-for-new-year-fireworks-over-trauma-concerns/a-18949967>
9. <https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/summer/fireworks>

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