
TO: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**DATE:** 2016 January 04**FROM:** FIRE CHIEF**SUBJECT: FIREWORKS****PURPOSE:** To provide the Committee with information related to fireworks

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** this report be received for informational purposes.

REPORT

At the Public Safety meeting held on 2015 December 10, the Fire Department was requested provide information related to fireworks.

In a report to the City Manager dated November 15, 2012 Fire Chief Shaun Redmond provided a brief history of nuisance fireworks in Burnaby, current initiatives and methods for dealing with the problem and potential remedies for the future.

Beginning in 2005 cities and municipalities across British Columbia began to make changes to their bylaws in an effort to reduce availability and/or limit the use of fireworks, and a number of cities in the Lower Mainland enacted outright bans. In spite of these measures fireworks usage continues region wide and consensus on a regional firework strategy remains unresolved. In 2005, a proposed regional fireworks ban was placed before UBCM delegates and but was not endorsed. Since 2008 there has been little change in regards to the regulation and restriction of fireworks from Lower Mainland jurisdictions.

In Burnaby there are few remedies available to control fireworks use, so the Fire Department attempts to enforce and regulate fireworks use through the business license process and building code compliance. In many cases a fireworks vendor will temporarily rent space and set up shop in contravention of current zoning requirements, which causes much extra work for Fire and City staff.

The Fire and Licensing Departments have collaborated to address these issues and most recently have discussed modifications to the current licensing system which revolve around allowing only established Burnaby businesses with valid licenses being allowed to sell fireworks. This would eliminate vendors who come in once per year, rent space, sell fireworks and then leave within a week of Halloween.

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These temporary businesses provide a unique challenge, and there are currently no restrictions on how many of these business licenses are issued. An inspection is required for every license, so depending on the number of applicants there can be a significant amount of extra work for Fire Prevention staff over and above their regular duties. In addition, the short operating life of the business makes bylaw enforcement very difficult. By the time violations are reported and investigated the business is usually closed and there was no way to enforce compliance.

Staff from the two departments will revisit this issue in order to provide recommendations to Council for implementation in 2016, with the goal of allowing staff to better monitor, educate, enforce and mitigate any issues that arise regarding the selling of Fireworks.

Attached is a fireworks survey done by the Greater Vancouver Fire Chief's Association in 2015 that compares all Lower Mainland jurisdictions. Currently only Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver and Burnaby allow fireworks for sale. Most jurisdictions do not allow the sale of fireworks to the public, and they also require a firework supervisors or a licensed pyrotechnician with a permit for any type of fireworks display.

2. CONCLUSION

In 2005, consideration for a region wide fireworks ban was proposed at the UBCM but was not endorsed. From 2005 to 2008 most jurisdictions, including Burnaby, amended their firework bylaws in an effort to restrict and regulate the availability, usage and purchase of fireworks. These amendments have reduced firework related incidents.

Some municipalities have adopted complete fireworks bans, but since residents can obtain fireworks in other jurisdictions they must still contend with fireworks-related problems including fire instigation and noise complaints. There remains a strong demand for fireworks for events such as Halloween, Chinese New Year and other cultural celebrations with a significant, ready supply available from many sources.

If a regional ban is desired it must be initiated by a higher level of government, since achieving consensus at the local government level remains problematic.

The Fire Department will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our fireworks bylaws, and will consult with other jurisdictions regarding the status and effectiveness of their fireworks bylaws.

Doug McDonald
FIRE CHIEF

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