

# Capitola City Council

## Agenda Report



**Meeting:** January 9, 2025

**From:** Police Department

**Subject:** The Monte Foundation Fireworks 2025

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**Recommended Action:** That the City Council 1) consider whether to support the continuation of the Monte Foundation Fireworks Show tentatively scheduled for Sunday, October 12, 2025; and 2) if the Council supports continuation, direct staff to coordinate with the Monte Foundation to obtain the required Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the event.

**Background:** The Monte Foundation has funded an annual charity Fireworks Show since the mid-1990s. In 2015 the event was moved from Seacliff State Beach to the City of Capitola. The Monte Foundation has raised money for the McGregor Skate Park, the children's wing of the Capitola Library, resurfacing the tennis courts at Jade Street Park, and most recently, resurfacing the bike pump track at McGregor.

The event has been scheduled for a Sunday night in October, to attempt to focus the show on local Capitola residents and the broader Santa Cruz County community. The Capitola Police Department has managed the event by closing roads and ensuring community safety. The fireworks are launched from Capitola Wharf; other possible launch options have been evaluated, but none have been determined feasible. The Police Department estimates the event attracts 10,000 attendees each year, with increases in recent years.

Overall community feedback consistently highlights the event as a valued and unifying experience that promotes civic pride based on overwhelming attendance. However, the City also receives several complaints about the event each year.

The Monte Foundation contracts with Zamboni Fireworks to put on the fireworks display. The Capitola Wharf is closed to the public 16 hours before the event for safety checks and fireworks set up. "No Parking" signs are posted in the area 72 hours before the event and messaging is provided to the public that the Wharf is closed the day of the event. A permit for the event is also issued by the Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County and Central Fire personnel are present for the duration of the event, along with the Coast Guard.

The City's permit requires the Monte Foundation to provide additional garbage containers and recycling bins for the event. The event organizers also coordinate with Save Our Shores to conduct clean-up for the event on the Wharf and surrounding area, as well as a one-day beach cleanup following the event.

The Coastal Commission regulates events over coastal waters and previously issued a five-year Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the fireworks show, which expired in 2024. A new permit will be required for the 2025 event.

**Discussion:** The continuation of the Monte Foundation Fireworks Show is an important consideration for the community, as the event has become a Capitola tradition. There has been ongoing discussion about the potential for exploring alternative forms of the event, including the possibility of a drone and/or hybrid show. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the event's impact on surrounding neighborhoods, particularly regarding noise and environmental factors. These considerations will play a role in the permitting process moving forward.

Staff has reached out to the Monte Foundation to discuss the potential for a drone or hybrid show. Based on the event coordinator's prior experience with drone shows, the Monte Foundation does not believe that this is a feasible option due to the possibility of high winds, among other factors.

Based on recent experiences in other jurisdictions, securing a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for a fireworks display of this nature is expected to be a more complex process than in the past, requiring a detailed alternatives analysis conducted by a reputable firm. The key components of this analysis include:

- **Alternative Locations:** Evaluating other potential venues for the event.
- **Alternative Media:** Exploring environmentally friendly alternatives, such as drone light shows, to replace traditional fireworks.
- **Environmental Impact Analysis:** Assessing potential impacts on wildlife, noise levels, and the surrounding environment, along with proposed mitigation measures.
- **Community Support:** Demonstrating strong public backing for the event.
- **Public Agency Accountability:** While the Monte Foundation has traditionally organized this event, based on recent hearings regarding fireworks displays over the ocean, the Coastal Commission appears to be strongly favoring issuing these permits directly to public agencies. If the City is willing to take a lead role in obtaining permits for the fireworks, preparation must begin immediately to maximize the chances of approval for the 2025 event, though securing the permit is not guaranteed.

Fiscal Impact: All costs related to the event, including permit fees and expenses for the required alternatives analysis, will be borne by the Monte Foundation. The Monte Foundation will also be responsible for all permit costs with other agencies. Funds raised by the Monte Foundation will be donated to benefit youth in the community.

Attachments:

1. 2024 Monte Foundation Fireworks Major Special Event Permit
2. Staff Agenda Report from 2014

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Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager