



## CITY OF ORLAND STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: March 5, 2024

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Pete Carr, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Consideration of Fireworks Show or Alternative**  
(Discussion/Direction)

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### BACKGROUND:

Suggestions have recently been made at City Council, Economic Development Commission (EDC), and Chamber of Commerce meetings that Orlando should have its own fireworks show, or a similar alternative, as part of the local Old Fashioned 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration. An alternative growing in popularity is a coordinated drone light show. City Staff is presenting information gleaned to help Council in its consideration of this suggestion.

### ANALYSIS:

#### 1. Fireworks Shows

The cost of a traditional fireworks show for Independence Day can vary significantly depending on several factors such as the size of the city, the duration of the show, the type and quantity of fireworks used, the availability of a licensed pyrotechnician, any additional entertainment or activities provided, permits and safety measures, and logistical expenses. Consideration should be given for the inevitable impact on persons subject to certain types of PTSD, pets and other wildlife, fire risk, and smoke production.

A cost of \$15,000 to \$30,000 should be expected for a basic fireworks show. Longer shows and more elaborate displays will cost more.

#### 2. Drone Shows

A drone light show can offer a modern and captivating alternative to traditional fireworks displays, often with a higher price tag due to the technology involved, the complexity of the show, the expertise required to execute the drones safely and effectively, and the relatively scarce supply of vendors compared to demand for the shows. Drone shows require 400' of airspace and ideally have a launch area 500-1000' from the audience which is viewing from one general angle or perspective (not 360°). There are places in Vinsonhaler Park and Lely Park that would be suitable.

Compared to fireworks, drone shows typically offer:

- A quieter, more environmentally-friendly experience
- Less risk of fire or serious injury
- More limited viewing angle
- More customization of displays

Cost varies with the company number of drones (typically 100-500), complexity of the customized display, and scheduling of the event. Given these factors, the cost of a drone light show for Independence Day can range from \$17,500 to \$100,000 or more. City Staff obtained proposals from three potential vendors.

1. Grizzly -- \$25,000 for standard 11-13 min show; \$2500 media; East & West Coast, since 2020.
2. Open Sky – \$17,500 for 100 drones, \$26,250 for 150; Utah based, since 2021.
3. Sky Elements – \$20,000 for 100 drones, \$40,000 for 200; 12 min show; \$7800 media; claims to be industry leader North & South America with >60% of the market.

### **3. Funding fireworks and drone shows**

In some cases cities and universities will pay for the shows, but more often costs are underwritten by commercial company sponsors, philanthropic individuals, foundations, or fundraising by a local organization. Some communities fundraise all year long for the one show each 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Most communities would set up a 501C3 non-profit for this purpose, or do so under the umbrella of an existing non-profit.

### **4. Scheduling a show**

The more advance planning the better, with a minimum 30 days' notice to a drone company to produce a show. Independence Day shows are booked early, so it is somewhat easier to schedule alternate dates like July 3, July 5, or even more readily available to time it with another event such as Queen Bee Festival (June 22, 2024). The community would want to plan for other activities before the show such as a parade, park activities, downtown shopping, barbeques, and outdoor music. For the show, music can be preplanned to sync with the show.

### **5. Weather**

Both fireworks and drone shows start about 45 minutes after sunset. The main risk is wind gusts, as forecasted by the National Weather Service. Strong winds cancel the show, whether fireworks or drones; some vendors provide a reschedule opportunity. Rain can also cancel a fireworks or drone show.

**Attachments** – selected pages from each of three drone show proposals

**RECOMMENDATION:** Direct Staff.

**FISCAL IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATION:** None at this time.