



Date: 09/26/2023

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Robert Womack - Emergency Services Manager

Title: After-Action Report from the July 4th, 2023, Fireworks Event

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action:

Council to Receive 4th of July Fireworks Event Review and Accept the After-Action Report from the July 4th, 2023, Fireworks Event.

Discussion:

On March 14, 2023, the Town Council reviewed the special events permit request from Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District (TDRPD) for the annual 4th of July Fireworks Celebration at West End Beach. Discussion points included concerns raised by the Town around ingress and egress of spectators, emergency response for first responders, evacuation of spectators and residents in the event of a major incident occurring in the west end Donner Lake area, environmental impacts, overall neighborhood impacts, and the tradition and celebration of the 4th of July Fireworks events. As a result of this discussion, the Town Council approved the special events permit, with the TDRPD paying the permit costs, including additional staffing and traffic control support needed for the event (which historically the Town had absorbed) while the Town would fund up to \$25,000 in additional mitigation measure to help improve the safety and reduce environmental and neighborhood impacts.

Based on this direction and in collaboration with the TDRPD staff, we began planning for the event and developing new and additional mitigation ideas. As a result, in addition to the traditional increased staffing, which for the 4th of July Fireworks event is primarily Public Safety staffing, and standard traffic control contract, measures such as shuttle services, increased communication and messaging, trash bags, dumpsters and portable toilets were added to the event plan. Also, incorporated into this year's event efforts was the development of an After-Action Report to memorialize the lessons learned and create an action plan to address recommendations. This staff report is a follow-up to the event, and includes the After-Action Report, additional mitigation measures and summary of total event costs.

Communication: The Town contracted with East River Public Relations to complete a comprehensive messaging campaign around the 4th of July holiday and Town events, including the West End Beach Day activities and evening Fireworks. The campaign theme was Clean, Safe and Fun as illustrated with the image to the right.

This messaging was shared on social media outlets, posters in both English and Spanish were printed for distribution to multi-family complexes, mobile home parks, the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown businesses. In addition, Visit Truckee Tahoe developed and hosted a landing page on their website that included frequently asked questions, information, a timeline of events, and the shared messaging of clean, safe and fun with information on shuttle services and pack-in, pack out for trash mitigation.

Lastly, the Town, TDRPD, Chamber of Commerce and Truckee Fire Protection District collaborated to record a community spotlight on KTKE 101.5 Truckee Tahoe Radio to spread the messaging about the day's events, shuttle services, trash, restrooms, and refillable water bottle stations. In prior years the Town has not funded or contributed to this amount of communication surrounding the 4th of July holiday events.



After-Action Report: The goal of this After-Action Report was to conduct a review of the 2023 Donner Lake fireworks event with all the involved agencies that contributed to the planning and operation of this event. This included the Town of Truckee (police, transit, emergency services, and special events), the Truckee Fire Protection District, the Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District (host of the event), California Highway Patrol, Cal-Fire, and California State Parks. An after-event meeting was held with interested agencies to solicit input for the AAR and several iterations were circulated to ensure all parties had a chance to comment on the AAR and have input before the final copy was brought to the Town Council for review.

As noted in the AAR, on 07/04/2023 the Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District hosted their annual West End Beach 4th of July fireworks show. This show has been held annually since 1985, with an exception when it was canceled for 3 years beginning in 1999 after a near riot occurred on the beach and again for 2 years beginning in 2020 due to Covid.

The event has been estimated to attract more than 15,000 people to the west end area of Donner Lake to view the fireworks. This is in addition to nearly 100% occupancy of the residential areas surrounding the Donner Lake area. In the past, the population estimation was anecdotal as there have been no official counts conducted. This year traffic was counted at the east and west end of Donner Lake in an attempt to quantify the number of spectators. Also, sewer flow data was used to estimate residential occupancy rates. Overall attendance this year in the Donner Lake area appeared to be down from previous years based on observations and comparisons to prior years. Conservatively, population estimates for 2023 were at least 20,500 people (spectators and residents) with at least 2,500 vehicles using the road during this event (not counting vehicles at residences that stay parked).

The fireworks display lasted 22 minutes. The pyrotechnics company has submitted a report describing no unusual incidents with the show, however the grand finale detonated at a very low level that scattered fall-out over the transport vehicles and surrounding vegetation in the launch area. Stand-by fire personnel were also underneath the fall-out but protected by PPE. The pyrotechnics company noted the fall-out from this was within the noted pre-plan fall-out area and that it was not unusual to have low level loads based on manufacturing issues. This follows an incident last year (2022) where a launch rack came loose and 5 rounds were launched and detonated over the west end residential area, well outside the lake fall-out area. The AAR also notes that a part of the fall-out area and exclusion zone is across the Summit Creek inlet area on the private beach.

Mobility and Shuttle Services: For the first time this year, event specific shuttles were utilized consisting of 4 full-sized buses provided under contract from Northstar Resort. The shuttles operated on 15-minute frequency from 4:00 PM – 10:30 PM and shuttled spectators from park and ride locations at the High School campus and Administrative Offices to the west end beach area. Ridership data collected 1,121 total two-way passengers (559 on ingress and 562 on egress) which is estimated to have resulted in 150-200 fewer vehicles in the area. In comparison, Truckee Thursday Shuttles carried approximately 722 average total two-way passengers for the 2023 Truckee Thursday event season.



TART Connect had its highest day of ridership on record on July 4th, 2023, with 674 passengers, while Truckee Local carried 54 passengers. These collective numbers, which totaled 1849 total passengers, are very encouraging given this was the initial year of providing 4th of July fireworks event shuttle service. These ridership numbers further demonstrate the community is willing to access events by other means than private automobiles if alternative means are available. However, as demand increases, this will also require a corresponding increase in level of service and costs in the form of additional shuttles with a focus on load out / egress to achieve reasonable wait times for return trips.

With additional outreach, potential incentives (or disincentives), and other event management strategies, such as more stringent parking management and enforcement, these numbers should increase year over year. This is especially true as the community becomes more familiar and comfortable with transit service and reliability is increased through opportunities to provide transit priority at strategic ingress and egress access points.

The need to further evaluate strategic prioritization for transit was highlighted by illegal parking in the No Parking zones on Donner Pass Rd. at South Shore Dr. This resulted in shuttles having to execute a 3 point turn on Donner Pass Rd., which was accomplished with minimal difficulty as this movement benefited from the emergency closure of Old Hwy 40. However, this is not an optimal situation with Old Hwy 40 expected to be open in future years and increased traffic flow from this area into the South Shore Rd / Donner Pass Rd intersection. Riders that were queried by staff at the event reported the overall shuttle park and ride experience was positive with many riders appreciative that alternatives were provided, even with the waiting period on turnaround due to illegal parking on Donner Lake Rd. and extended routing for these shuttles.

In addition, it should be noted that the Town partnered with the Trails Foundation to offer Bike Valet services from the High School to West End Beach. This service was not significantly utilized and could be due to not enough advance communication and messaging and/or the difficulties of transporting beach bags and supplies while on a bike.

Litter and Other Mitigation: This year's fireworks event included additional efforts to mitigate litter and trash impacts from attendees. Prior to the event, Keep Truckee Green staff created a series of leave-no-trace messaging for social media to encourage attendees to bring a trash bag and pack out all their trash. Trash bags were also available for those using the event shuttles, and two dumpsters were provided in the shuttle parking lot so passengers could dispose of any trash upon their return. TDRPD hosted a litter cleanup effort on the 5th of July around Donner Lake, covering West End Beach and the north shore, with a small barbecue afterward to thank volunteers. Volunteers reported a relatively small amount of litter, especially compared to other locations in the Tahoe area. TDRPD and Town staff believe that while this year's mitigation efforts were largely successful, a weekend holiday may require more comprehensive efforts to address trash and litter impacts.

The TDRPD also coordinated delivery of portable restrooms, around the lake at the Sanitary District's lift stations, and located at the High school near the shuttle services. This was in response to community concerns heard about the need for restroom facilities around the lake for attendees

spending the day enjoying Donner Lake before the fireworks display in the evening. While funded by TDRPD, the Town will credit the cost of the portable restrooms (approximately \$1,300) back to TDRPD as a credit against TDRPD's overall event invoice. The availability of the portable restrooms did not create any additional concerns, there was no reported vandalism, and the Town did not receive any post event complaints or calls for human waste clean-up.

Lastly, for the first year, two water bottle filling stations were borrowed (free of cost) for the full day of events, one located by the parade staging area, and one located at west end beach. The overall messaging for the holiday included messaging to bring refillable water bottles to help eliminate trash. We are unable to collect data to assess usage of the refilling stations but overall believe it is an important first step to incorporate these stations into Town events to encourage and promote behavior change going forward.

Associated Costs: The 4th of July Fireworks event totaled \$50,478 (not inclusive of costs incurred by the TDRPD such as the fireworks vendor, TDRPD staffing, etc.). Event costs included Police Staffing (upstaffing from typical police staffing levels), traffic control, communication, shuttle services, portable restroom rentals, and Town staff time for planning purposes. Of this amount, TDRPD will be invoiced for \$22,846 in total "traditional" expenditures such as the Police overstaffing and traffic control. The Town absorbed approximately \$26,000 in additional planning and mitigation costs to help support a cleaner, safer and fun event. It should be noted that the staff time included over 462 hours of Town staff resources. A breakdown of event expenditures are outlined below:

4th of July Fiscal Impact Table			
	Town Costs	TDRPD Invoice	Total Costs
Town Labor Cost - Not Charged To TDRPD	\$16,045		\$16,045
Town PD Costs Charged to TDRPD		\$9,008	\$9,008
Traffic Control - Contractor		\$15,175	\$15,175
West End Beach Shuttle – Contractor	\$3,752		\$3,752
Advertising/Outreach	\$4,713		\$4,713
Misc. Expense - Printing	\$448		\$448
Port-a-potties – Paid for by TDRPD	\$1,337	-\$1,337	\$1,337
Total	\$ 26,295.09	\$22,846	\$50,478

Conclusion: The West End 4th of July Fireworks display has been a traditional community experience and 2023 continued this trend. While the actual estimated attendance appears to be higher than originally believed in pre-planning meetings, there were limited law, fire, and EMS incidents as has been the case during the event in recent years. However, in past years incidents have included a traffic fatality, major medical calls, law enforcement issues, and others that have been handled by event personnel without the need for outside assistance. With that being said, some community members are unhappy with the influx of spectators and the potential overuse of the area and continued success of this event will need to address those concerns with adequate mitigations.

It should be noted that the potential exists for an incident within the event that would quickly overwhelm response agencies with little chance of timely assistance coming from out of the area. Something like an immediate evacuation due to a fire or criminal event would not only overwhelm event staff but could create a gridlock condition and the inability to get response agencies into the area. Conversations among the agencies involved in this event need to continue going forward to address the potential issues considering best practices for staffing and planning to respond to a potential large-scale incident during an event of this size.

Page 9 of the AAR has 16 Recommendations for future events including moving CHP officers for better traffic control, increased No Parking areas, better signage and enforcement, increased transit options, and better enforcement of the exclusion zone including the areas located on the private beach. These

Recommendations were developed and agreed to by the different agencies involved as suggested Best Practices after reviewing this year’s 4th of July event. Many of these recommendations have increased costs (better No Parking signage, enforcement, additional police officers for weekend events, etc.) and will need to be examined as requirements going forward. The planning team was not aware of the exact boundaries of the fall-out / exclusion zone prior to the event and future events will need to take into consideration this as a safety factor, especially since some of extends outside of the area specifically controlled by the Recreation District.

Priority:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced Communication | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Investment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Core Service |

Fiscal Impact:

The 4th of July Fireworks event totaled approximately \$50,000 in Town supported or related costs, which does not include costs incurred directly by TDRPD. Of this amount, the Town of Truckee absorbed approximately \$26,000.

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Public Communication:

Normal posting for Council items. Pre-event community meetings and a Council workshop were held.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - 4th of July 2023 After-Action Report