

TO: Harbor Commission

2/12/23

FROM: Corliss Lee citizen of Long Beach

REGARDING: Agenda item 2 Feb 12 2023 HD-23-085 Discussion on Restricting Port Sponsorship and Advertising Funds for Firework Displays.

Honorable Harbor Commissioners,

Along with countless other Americans, I have enjoyed fireworks at various events over the last 50+ years. However, the downside of fireworks – the pollution and debris – as well as the negative impacts to wildlife, domestic pets and veterans are now known issues that need to be taken into account. There is ample evidence that fireworks do damage.

Please consider the following as you deliberate this decision.

- 1) **Would a decision to continue to allow events that pollute the air and water be consistent with the port's green policy?** What good is a policy if we don't use it to guide our decisions on real life issues? If we don't make decisions consistent with our stated policies, we are engaging in "lip service." It denigrates the policy. In this case, it sends the message that we really don't care about pollution.
- 2) **Is there a clean alternative** that could provide awe-inspiring visual beauty for those celebrating events? The answer is yes. Other cities have done it successfully. Drone shows and light shows actually add another dimension with music to accompany the visuals.
- 3) **Should Long Beach provide leadership in sponsoring events that take the fire out of fireworks**, protects the public, wildlife and domestic pets and demonstrates our commitment to green policies? Our port causes great harm to citizens today with pollution (illustrated in the Cal Enviroscreen report). In an attempt to rectify that, the port's green policy was adopted. Stepping up to embrace new technologies that protect our citizens and the earth actively demonstrates responsible leadership – that we care not only about our citizens, but are cognizant of our role in being a good steward of the earth.
- 4) **Is there a downside to moving from fireworks that generate pollution to the cleaner alternative?**

One sponsor of a firework event is attempting *to create a downside* by threatening to cancel an event that benefits non-profit organizations portraying the non-profits as the victim of any decision that changes current practices. The arguments in favor of keeping traditional fireworks seem emotional rather than rational, manipulative rather than substantive. One person's preferences for "the old way" should not be the deciding factor. This Board of Commissioners should not allow themselves to be held hostage when there are alternatives that would allow them to support the non-profits.

There is actually no sound reason to object to a change of materials in providing visual entertainment. The party can still go on. The people that attend the party can still purchase tickets, eat and drink and enjoy the holiday entertainment on the bay. The port can contribute to the event. The non-profits can still receive the donations. All the while, a greater good is being done by transitioning from a dirty source to a clean source of visual entertainment.

This should be an easy decision. All the markers point in the direction of supporting a transition to a clean source of visual entertainment.

I'd like to add my personal experience in 2022 about the negative impacts to the wildlife in the area.

The greatest harm we do to wildlife is eliminating their habitat. It was surprising to see that the large shore birds had carved out a little niche for themselves on Oil Dock Road adjacent to the Boathouse on the Bay – the only place left that has reduced disturbance on a normal day. The birds seem to have given up residence in all their prior nesting locations on Marina Drive due to the disturbance caused by the new commercial buildings on PCH/2nd st. and the excessive trimming of palm trees making their crown too small and flimsy to hold a nest. In 2022, the birds moved away from the traffic of Marina Drive. Hosts of great blue herons, egrets, black crowned night herons, green herons and more had built nests in just a handful of trees on the little-travelled Oil Dock Road.

I was there on July 3 2022 and witnessed the “the big bang on the bay” terrorizing the bird population, causing them to evacuate their nests and leave their young. Waves of large birds fled as the noise mounted and their “safe place” to raise their young was compromised.

The biologist hired to witness and document the event for the restaurateur left the scene before the fireworks started and went to the party at the restaurant. She was not on Oil Dock Road during the fireworks. She came back when it was all over and over 50 birds had evacuated (but how could she know that if she wasn’t there to witness it). As such, no responsible report was given to Mr. Morris. Would he have cared had he known? *Not everyone has that sensibility.* If we continue down this negligent road of ignoring the effect of our actions on the native wildlife, I can’t help but think that eventually Long Beach will be made up of people, dogs, cats and pigeons.

Below are a few photographs of the resident bird population on Oil Dock Road on July 3 2022.





In conclusion, I harbor no ill toward Mr Morris or his restaurant. I enjoy having meals at the Boathouse on the Bay restaurant that is struggling with making this change. It is a beautiful venue that has great food and good entertainment throughout the year. I appreciate that the owner, Mr. Morris, is civic minded and does a lot of work to provide an event for the public to enjoy, while sharing the bounty of his event with non-profits. With his acceptance of this change, we could all move on and embrace the cleaner alternative.

Perhaps a compromise would be to offer help in finding, soliciting and funding the newer technologies for fireworks events while in transition to clean materials. However in any event, I urge the Board to vote in favor of restricting fireworks that are mobilized by explosion and cause pollution of our air and water.

Respectfully,

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