



City of Flagler Beach

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. William Whitson, City Manager

From: Matthew Doughney, Police Chief and Bobby Pace, Fire Chief

Copy: Commissioner James Sherman, Penny Overstreet and Katie Dockhorn

Subject: 2022 Fireworks Timeline

Date: May 23, 2022

The purpose of this memorandum is in response to a May 13, 2022, e-mail (attached), that was sent by Commissioner Sherman to you, the City Manager, William Whitson, stating: *"Would you mind providing me a timeline of events that transpired for planning for the 4th of July planning from January 28th forward? I am trying to grasp everything that happened as far as contacting firework vendors etc. I want to make sure that I have a full picture of the entire situation. I want to be sure I have all the necessary information to ensure that we clear the air with our residents."*

On the same date you replied, copying Chief Doughney and Chief Pace, with the following response: *"Commissioner: I will try, please standby as the process following the January Report from the Advisory Committee shifted primarily to the Police & Fire Chief with reports to me on occasion. Once we realized that something was amiss with the fireworks display I became directly involved. I still am working on securing the formal parking lot approvals as well."*

Since Chief Doughney and Chief Pace were included and mentioned in your reply, we respectfully submit our *"timeline of events that transpired for planning for the 4th of July planning from January 28th forward?"*.

We have also addressed the specific request to include our very limited involvement and knowledge surrounding *"contacting firework vendors etc."* to assist in satisfying Commissioner Sherman's request.

For additional information and background purposes, the timeline actually starts with the initial formation of the "Advisory Committee" and will also include the Committee's overall purpose.

August 19, 2021: The Ad-Hoc Fourth of July Findings Committee (“the Committee”) was formed by the Flagler Beach City Commission under the authority of City of Flagler Beach Resolution 2021-21 (“the Resolution”). The purpose of the Committee was to discuss, investigate and plan, with City Resident input, recommendations for the City of Flagler Beach’s going forward staging of celebratory events on Independence Day. Specifically, the Resolution provides as follows: *The mission of the committee will be to investigate all aspects of the event including: safety, costs associated, demand on staff, management of the influx of people, resources required, and other associated impacts as a result of the event and then compile the findings for presentation to the City Commission*”. (City of Flagler Beach Resolution 2021-21). Resolution attached.

January 13, 2022: Committee Chair, Mr. Scott Spradley, presented the Committee’s final report during a regular City Commission meeting for discussion and approval. Commission feedback was very positive and they thanked Mr. Spradley and Committee members for their time and for a thorough report. See attached Report and Recommendations of the City of Flagler Beach Ad-Hoc Fourth of July Findings Committee.

February 2022- April 2022: Since the approval of the Report and Recommendations from the Ad-Hoc Committee, we, as the City’s Public Safety Officers, moved forward with our respective duties and responsibilities surrounding the specific planning for overall safety for the 4th of July; resource allocation, coordination with outside agencies, traffic logistics, etc.

March 30, 2022: Chief Doughney and Chief Pace attended the first multi-disciplinary planning meeting at the Flagler County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Present at the meeting were representatives from numerous agencies outside the City of Flagler Beach that aid us in the planning and execution of July 4th events. The procurement of fireworks was not discussed during this meeting, as that falls outside the purpose and responsibility of the public safety team. The City of Flagler Beach and the City of Palm Coast are responsible for the procurement of fireworks for their respective Cities.

April 20, 2022: During a Department Head staff meeting, City Manager William Whitson directed a member of the City’s Finance Department to find \$25,000 in this year’s budget for the 4th of July fireworks. This direction became concerning to us because we were well aware that the funding source for the 2022 fireworks had already been committed and verified by the Tourism Development Office.

Confusion surrounding the funding source for the fireworks prompted Chief Pace to proactively contact Santore and Sons Fireworks to further verify if our City had been invoiced for 2022 fireworks. It was during this phone call that Chief Pace was made aware that not only had the City not been invoiced, but that the City had not been in contact with the vendor nor had they secured fireworks for any date.

Although this was obviously very troubling news, one (1) must consider what the worst-case scenario could have been for the City's reputation if not for Chief Pace's gut instinct to make that phone call.

April 21, 2022: Chief Doughney and Chief Pace met with the City Manager to advise him of the aforementioned findings, and we were then directed to find other fireworks vendors around the State that could conduct a July 4th firework show.

Until this date, neither Chief Doughney nor Chief Pace had any involvement, nor were we tasked or directed with the procuring of fireworks for July 4th, 2022. Additionally, prior to your tenure with the City, Chief Doughney and Chief Pace had no involvement with the procurement of fireworks for any previous years.

April 25, 2022: Chief Doughney and Chief Pace met with the City Manager to advise him that we had contacted multiple vendors, with the assistance of the Beach Safety Director Tom Gillin, but were unsuccessful for various reasons. Chief Pace once again contacted Santore and Sons Fireworks to see if there were any other available dates. The vendor confirmed they could perform a show on Saturday, July 2nd for the usual \$25,000. This information was relayed to the City Manager, and this option was recommended by Chief Pace and Chief Doughney.

April 28, 2022: Chief Doughney was asked by Mr. Whitson to speak at the City Commission meeting to publicly deliver the news that the City's previous firework vendor, Santore and Sons Fireworks, was not available on July 4th but that they could perform their regular firework show on Saturday, July 2nd. Chief Doughney informed the City Commission that having the parade and fireworks on two (2) separate days would be extremely difficult, due to staffing and other planning logistics. It was our recommendation as Public Safety Officers to hold the parade and fireworks on July 2nd, which guaranteed that the City would have their usual fireworks show; with a known, reputable vendor, and with very short notice. This recommendation was rejected by the City Commission, with the known risk of not having any fireworks show at all.

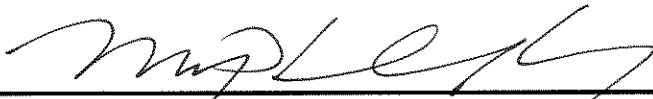
At one (1) point during the Commission meetings discussion, Mayor Johnston stated: *"It's called the fourth, not the second of July. It's not about the fireworks; it's about the celebration and the community, and all the things that the day encompasses."*

The Ad-Hoc Committee, which the Mayor and City Manager were a part of, recommended to have a fireworks show if it could be done safely. It should be noted that the whole reason the Ad-Hoc Committee was formed was due to the City Commission agreeing to no longer have fireworks on July 4th and instead have them on New Year's Eve. This decision was met with great opposition by the majority of residents, which in turn led to a formal resolution to form the "Committee". So, it could be argued that according to the residents of Flagler Beach, it is about the fireworks.

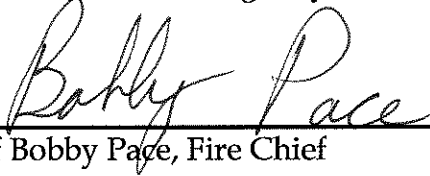
This concludes Chief Doughney and Chief Pace's involvement with regard to the timeline as it relates to this year's fireworks. We hope this memorandum clears up any misconceptions or assumptions that may have been made.

As the Public Safety Officers for our City, our responsibility and role for the 4th of July events, and for all events hosted in/or by our City is just that; **public safety**. We coordinate the scheduling of Fire, Police and volunteer personnel, as well as safety equipment (ambulances, barricades, cones, helicopter, light banks, message boards etc.), that will lead to the overall safety of the event.

Respectfully submitted:



Chief Matthew P. Doughney, Police Chief



Chief Bobby Pace, Fire Chief