

#703

I appreciate the City Council allowing me to address the issue of July 4th fireworks in Portland neighborhoods.

Perhaps someone would say, why would you take the city council's valuable time to talk about fireworks? After all, it's only really bad for a night, and then just off and on for a week before and after the 4th. Let people have their fun.

When I told my 80 year old neighbor, Mrs. Johnson, that I was going to take three minutes and talk to the City Council about fireworks, she just rolled her eyes, " Oh , those fireworks" she said, "they scare the heck out of me. I turn the TV way up loud and even the air conditioning and it doesn't do any good. God, I get scared." " Well", I said," I only have three minutes". "Well," she answered" you get their attention, you hear?"

So for Mrs. Johnson I 'd like to talk about fireworks. And for my Cat, Musette, too. All July 4th evening she hid under the bed with eyes as big as saucers. And for the dogs, too, many of who shake and shiver all night and can't be left alone and some who have to be tranquilized.

So for the cats and dogs—and the wild birds and creatures-- let's talk about fireworks.

And how about those of us who had to go to work the next morning and were kept up past midnight, sometimes until 2am or even later? We hope you won't mind if we take these three minutes to get grumpy about fireworks.

I'm not talking about every neighborhood, of course, and I'm not talking about legal fireworks. In my neighborhood in Northeast Portland we're talking an artillery soundtrack, not fireworks really, but explosions. These explosions begin about nine o'clock and go past midnight, setting off car alarms, scaring 80-year-old women and keeping us up at night, resistant to earplugs and pillows over our heads.

We know these illegal fireworks are dangerous. This July 4th a commercial building on Alberta caught fire when a failed illegal firework landed on its roof and was put out after the second alarm and caused \$100,000 in damages. On the streets of our densely populated Portland neighborhood, isn't it possible that next time a house might be hit, or as in my neighborhood, one of the bicyclists who were riding the streets during the heaviest onslaught?

We also know that the city is aware of this danger and is trying to control it. Fire Marshal Erin Janssen sent out an eloquent appeal to Portland community members to be good neighbors and to curtail illegal firework activity.

Obviously, the experience in my neighborhood and the experience of many people in other neighborhoods is that those setting off huge firework explosions don't give much thought about being good neighbors or weren't affected by the promised extra police and fire department patrols.

I think it's also important to realize how few people are really involved in illegal fireworks.

At about 10 o'clock when I looked down the streets of my neighborhood, it wasn't a scene of families and kids watching fireworks set off in the streets. There was a small group down the street, including kids, having a wonderful time setting off huge fireworks, but the rest of the neighborhood was eerily quiet with people hunkered down in their houses waiting for the explosions to end.

So what should we do or should we even do anything?

There are those who view regulating illegal fireworks to be another example of an overbearing government taking away individual rights. Clearly, these issues bring up the issue of finding a balance between individual rights and the peace and safety of the community.

So, yes, I do think we should do something. Here are some suggestions the Council might consider:

ONE: SET A CURFEW. A 10 or 11pm curfew seems to be a good beginning to regulating the fireworks nuisance..

TWO: GET PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOODS MORE INVOLVED.. The noise and disruption of illegal fireworks is a neighborhood issue. Some neighborhoods are more affected than others. Neighborhood associations need to empower neighbors to monitor for illegal fireworks and increase their efforts to promote a safe July 4th..

THREE: CREATE A DESIGNATED FIREWORKS HOTLINE. A Fireworks Hotline would help identify troubled areas and send fire department officials to investigate. Portlanders are reluctant to call the Portland Police non-emergency number to report on their neighbors.

FOUR: CONSIDER SETTING UP A CITIZENS TASK FORCE ON NEIGHBORHOOD FIREWORKS.. Ask a task force to monitor the next Fourth of July fireworks (and New Year's) and to report to the Council on the extent of the fireworks problem in Portland neighborhoods and possible remedies..

FINALLY: The degree to which illegal fireworks have become a problem is inconsistent with Portland's reputation as a progressive, livable city. Illegal fireworks create an environment of chaos and fear, use costly emergency services, and create tension between neighbors.

Let's hope we can make the 4th of July a happy and enjoyable time for all of us, including my neighbor, Mrs. Johnson.

ARN STRASSER

503. 287. 2800

Jennings, Gayla

From: Arn Strasser [drstrasser@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, July 05, 2011 1:27 PM
To: Jennings, Gayla
Subject: From Arn Strasser re. Council Communications

This is a request to appear before council during the communications portion of its meeting on July 13, 2011. I wish to discuss the issue of July 4th fireworks in Portland neighborhoods which I feel have become a major neighborhood nuisance.

Arn Strasser
3807 NE 12th Ave.
Portland OR 97232
503.287.2800

Request of Arn Strasser to address Council regarding July 4th fireworks in Portland neighborhoods (Communication)

JUL 13 2011

PLACED ON FILE

Filed JUL 08 2011

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By  _____

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		