

Winslow 2016 4th of July Celebration Pros & Cons from a Public Safety Perspective by Michael Heavener

On Tuesday, July 5, 2016, I met with Police Chief Shawn O'Leary, Police Lieutenant Joshua Veilleux, Fire Chief David LaFountain and Deputy Fire Chief Charles Theobald, Sr. Town Councilor Kenneth Fletcher attended the meeting and Parks & Rec Director Jim Bourgoin was late joining the meeting.

Pros & Cons

July 3rd – Street Dance

Pros

1. Everything went well. There were no Public Safety Issues.
2. The 4th of July Committee provided all of the required resources.

Cons

None

July 4th – Parade

Pros

1. Most Everything went well.
2. UTV (side-by-side) donated by Trailside was very helpful in moving resources from one portion of the parade route to another.
3. The 4th of July Committee took care of placing a Porta-Potty at the town office.

Cons

1. There were problems with Police Communication primarily due to staff fatigue
2. Parade participants who tried to return while the parade was continuing created some confusion. Some spectators thought the parade had ended when it had not.

July 4th – Evening & Fireworks (*it is estimated that 40,000 spectators were in the park and another 30,000 in the vicinity of the park.*)

Pros

1. The increased police presence left some feeling the police were better prepared than in prior years.
2. Teams of Police Officers were rotated in and around the park which resulted in positive comments by the local businesses. It is also believed that this rotation gave the impression of a greater police presence which may have contributed to fewer alcohol related incidences.
3. The pedestrian movement pattern into the park worked well because visitors were funneled to one entry point.
4. The 4th of July Committee provided all of the requested resources.

Cons

1. Venue was too small to accommodate all who wanted to attend. At one point visitors who entered the park turned around and exited because there was no place to sit or stand.
2. Due to the rotating teams of police officers, at times there were only two officers in the park. **Solution – Add two additional officers.**
3. Due to the placement of vendors in the Park there was a high concentration of people in one general area with only one narrow means of egress in the event of an emergency. This situation is very concerning.
4. Due to the limited capacity of the park to accommodate all of those who wanted to attend the fireworks display, a crowd of spectators were forced into the street and onto the bridge, resulting in the closure of Rt. 201. The crowd of spectators would likely hinder the movement of public safety equipment in and around the park, including Rt. 201.
5. Due to the anticipated gridlock in the vicinity of the park and Rt. 201, area Fire Departments were asked to be available in the event they were needed in Winslow.
6. Winslow Police Officers were fatigued and exhausted by the evening of the 4th because they had worked the street dance the night before, as well as their regularly scheduled shifts. In one instance an officer only received three (3) hours of rest between the two days. **Solution – Seek additional police officers from other organizations to replace Winslow Officers to give them more time to rest.** *(Note: 8 Officers out of 11 worked July 3rd until 10:30 PM, and returned the following morning to work the July 4th parade, afternoon details, and into the evening until approximately 11:00 PM. Two (2) Officers worked their regular schedule shift on the 3rd, and returned to duty on the 4th for afternoon details and fireworks.)*

Conclusion

The Town has sufficient resources to safely manage the Street Dance the night before the 4th and the Parade on the day of the 4th.

The Fort Halifax Park, however, is not a sufficient venue for the fireworks display because it cannot accommodate all of those who wish to attend. The resulting closure of Rt. 201 to accommodate the overflow of spectators would likely hinder the ability to move public safety equipment in the vicinity of the park and Rt. 201. In addition, the spectator congestion on the bridge could also delay emergency response to all of "South Winslow" and "East Winslow".