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Matthew Lubin,
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As Public Safety Professionals, we are sometimes tasked with making unpopular recommendations in order to improve safety. Over the past several months the Cranford Police Department, Cranford Fire Department, Cranford Office of Emergency Management, and Cranford Recreation and Parks Department have been in discussion on ways to improve on the safety of the annual Independence Day Fireworks display held at Nomaheghan Park. Each year the attendance at this event gradually increases, while the area in which the fireworks are actually displayed continues to shrink because of tree growth.

Roughly 6,500 spectators converge on Nomaheghan Park within a 4-hour period for this display. This presents a significant challenge to our emergency personnel and taxes the preparedness of our local and county safety professionals. For example, last year multiple physical altercations between spectators occurred during the course of the event in which fire department personnel responded as law enforcement officers were committed to another incident. In the course of reviewing prior displays, our professionals have identified concerns with the physical site of the display, as well as the level of staffing available during the display.

We have a tremendous working relationship with our partners at the Union County Police Department, who provide support to us during this event which is held at their county park. Historically, the County has been limited in their ability to provide enhanced resources due to other county events occurring on the same day. Moving the event to July 2nd will facilitate the appropriation of additional county resources necessary to ensure the safety of spectators during this event. These additional resources are necessary to implement the best practices for securing a large-scale mass gathering such as this.

Furthermore, due to the large number of attendees in the primary viewing area, many people have taken to alternate viewing sites both in the park and around town. These sites include the baseball and soccer fields on Kenilworth Boulevard and the Municipal Parking Garage on South Avenue. These remote viewing areas are not formally established or approved and therefore, are not properly monitored because of the lack of manpower. Lastly, the Cranford Police and Fire Departments must continue to respond to all regular and emergency calls for service in the township during this major public event.

In recent years, we have seen our traditional local events be affected by the evolving security and safety requirements recommended by our county, state and federal partners. Whether it be at a school graduation, a street fair, a sporting event, or a local play, our traditions will continue to adjust to these new challenges so that the safety of our residents and visitors remains our top priority.

Yours in Safety,

Ryan Greco,
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Matthew Lubin,
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