



MEMORANDUM

P.O. Box 4100 ♦ FRISCO, COLORADO 80443

TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: VANESSA AGEE, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
RE: FRISCO BBQ & JULY 4TH EVENTS DISCUSS
DATE: OCTOBER 25, 2022

Summary and Background:

The pandemic suspended and then reshaped events, and in 2021, Town Council took this opportunity to better understand community needs and wants around events during three events focused discussions, including a February 23, 2021 strategic events discussion where all Town events were considered and evaluated. Council stated during that time that the current event mix seemed right for the community and gave staff direction to work on localizing and scaling back larger events to find harmony between resident quality of life and visitor experience. Subsequently, staff returned with a July 4th discussion on August 10, 2021 and a BBQ Challenge discussion on September 28, 2021.

Frisco's "Fabulous 4th of July" is a longstanding community tradition celebrating July 4th, which has primarily been held on Frisco's Main Street and at the Frisco Bay Marina. Celebrations have included a free kids' fishing derby at Meadow Creek Park; a pancake breakfast benefiting Team Summit; a parade; several free concerts, often including a concert at Marina Park (held on Main Street in 2019 due to Marina construction); and a fireworks display over Dillon Reservoir.

In March 2019, Frisco Town Council made the decision to suspend July 4th fireworks, as the Town of Breckenridge had made the decision to cancel July 4th fireworks into the future causing an anticipated influx of visitors to Frisco's fireworks which could not be supported by existing infrastructure. Also, first responders anticipated that response to medical and other incidents would be likely be significantly hampered by traffic gridlock, as attendees tend to leave fireworks displays at the same time. Town Council directed staff to bring back the July 4th fireworks discussion once infrastructure improvements had been made; such as, completion of the GAP project on Highway 9.

During the August 10, 2021 meeting, staff brought back a discussion of not just July 4th fireworks, but of the whole traditional July 4th schedule. Town Council directed staff to meet the community's desires and localize the event more by bringing back beloved components of the day with some modifications. This included the return of the pancake breakfast, free fishing derby, a human powered July 4th parade, a concert which was held at the Frisco Historic Park in a Concert in the Park format, and July 4th fireworks over Dillon Reservoir, which would be launched from Summit School District property as in past years. All of these events, except fireworks, happened during Frisco's 2022 July 4th celebrations.

On Tuesday, April 19, 2022, the Frisco July 4th fireworks display's special event permit application was denied by the Dillon Reservoir Recreation Committee (DRReC), which includes Summit County, the Summit County Sheriff's Office, Denver Water, the US Forest Service (abstained from voting), and the Towns of Dillon and Frisco. The permit was denied by a majority of the committee because of impacts on traffic, watershed, and wildlife; ongoing major road construction in Summit County and on I70; anticipated fire danger; and a lack of consensus among the Towns and Summit County to have an event with significant impact on the whole county. Also, securing permission from the School District to shoot fireworks from this location was challenging and an agreement was not reached prior to the April 19 DRReC decision.

During the **BBQ Challenge** discussion on September 28, 2021, Town Council was presented with past BBQ budgets and event formats and a non-scientific survey regarding the BBQ Challenge. As it was non-scientific, it is to be inferred that those with the strongest sentiments and opinions, both in favor and critical, around the event were the ones who were most likely to respond. There were 1,793 survey responses, which is an unusually high level of response compared to past Town surveys on a variety of issues. 87% of respondents that do not own businesses in Frisco had said that they would "like to see the event remain in Frisco." About 64% of business owners recorded this opinion, but with 9% unsure. One in five business owners (22%) said they did not want to see the BBQ event remain in Frisco. Importantly, while 73% of full time Frisco residents indicated that they would like to see the event remain in Frisco, and 82% of Summit County residents felt this way, respondents from beyond Summit County (including second homeowners) were strongly in favor of the event remaining in Frisco (93% to 97%).

The survey also pointed to a general feeling that the event had gotten too large and carnival like, and a more substantial focus on BBQ, a place for friends and family to gather, and live music were important to respondents. Subsequently, Town Council directed staff to proceed with the BBQ Challenge in a "back to basics" format by eliminating ancillary components such as the Whiskey Tour, chef demos, carnival-like food and bounce houses/mechanical bull, the firefighter cook-off, and street performers.

Analysis:

Event Survey

In preparation for this discussion, a non-scientific survey was conducted to gain information about the sentiment around 2022's 4th of July and BBQ Challenge events. A detailed report is included as an attachment and contains all of the comments in response to open ended questions in the survey. In summary, there were 443 respondents, 52.98% were Frisco residents, 18.48% were Frisco second homeowners, and 18.71% of respondents owned a business in Frisco.

BBQ Challenge survey synopsis-

- 42.47% of businesses believed BBQ had no impact on their business, 27.4% of businesses believed it had a positive impact, and 16.44% a negative impact.
- 60.55% of all respondents believed BBQ had a very positive or positive impact on the community, 23.56% thought it was a neutral impact, and 15.89% believed it was negative or very negative.
- 72.78% of all respondents wanted to see the BBQ event return

4th of July survey synopsis-

- 41.97% believed that July 4th celebrations had no impact on their business, 32.1% believed July 4th had a positive impact on their business, and 23.46% a negative impact.
- 45.91% of all respondents believed July 4th celebrations had a very positive or positive impact on the community, 34.91% thought it was a neutral impact, and 19.18% believed it was negative or very negative.
- The July 4th parade and fireworks were listed as the most participated in July 4th event components in prior years.

Special Event Staffing

It is important to note that seasonal special event staffing was down almost 75% this year, and the vast majority of seasonal special event staff were under 18 junior staff, which limited their work duties and times. Consequently, events did not have the staffing to add more components in 2022, and regular year-round Events and Communications staff worked 17+ hour days during BBQ and expanded schedules during other events as well. It is our hope that 2023 will bring more opportunities to hire seasonal special event staff to support events.

4th of July

As stated above, this year's July 4th celebrations included a pancake breakfast, free fishing derby, a human powered July 4th parade, and a concert featuring the Saucy Bees, which was held at the Frisco Historic Park in a Concert in the Park format. July 4th marketing has traditionally only included local advertising for awareness and no PR push in order to respect that the event does not require growth, and that remained the same this year with Frisco coordinating a joint ad with all of the Towns for a second year in order to localize the event and better collaborate across the region. Also, in the interest of supporting local businesses, a decision was made not to bring in outside vendors. Based on numbers extrapolated from cell phone data, this year had greatly decreased participation/visits when looking at the Frisco Main Street business district for July 4th: 2018- 15.5k visits, 2019- 18.3k visits, 2021- 12.1k visits, and 2022- 7.8k visits. Also, average time spent has been decreasing since 2018: 2018- 182 minutes avg., 2019- 147 minutes avg., 2021- 127 minutes avg., and 2022- 96 minutes avg.

Through survey and anecdotal feedback, three themes emerged around July 4th feedback.

- 1- Parade- There was consistent feedback that the human powered parade was lackluster and did not meet expectations. The marching band was generally lauded, and while there is a push every year to recruit a marching band, event staff are acutely aware that securing a marching band is very challenging and rests on the travel schedule of primarily mid-western marching bands, as Summit County does not have a marching band.

While emergency services were invited each year to participate in the parade, that did not happen and was likely due to this being billed as a human powered parade. There has also been feedback around the event being less chaotic and more charming without a lot of "vipers, jeeps, and corvettes" so a return to exactly what it has been in the past may not be quite right for the community. Events staff has pondered that it may be interesting to incorporate vehicles back into the parade by setting a year limit, such as all vehicles manufactured in 1976 and before. Staff also suggests that providing formal written invitations to first responders and providing a substantial prize purse for human powered floats (\$1,000 for 1st place, \$800 for 2nd place, and \$500 for 3rd place) might bring more of these parade entries.

- 2- Fireworks- The cancelation of the July 4th fireworks was clearly a disappointment to many, as the community consistently voices a nostalgia for returning to this tradition. The most responsible fireworks space is certainly over Dillon Reservoir, which means that the launch site would be in DRReC's jurisdiction from any viable sites. While impacts on traffic, watershed, and wildlife; ongoing major road construction in Summit County and on I70; anticipated fire danger; and a lack of consensus among the Towns and Summit County to have an event with significant impact on the whole county were cited during the permit denial, there was no indication from County staff that they were considering these types of reviews for other events, such as Breckenridge's Oktoberfest or snow sculpture event. Perhaps, there is an opportunity to work together through concerns around July 4th fireworks.

Laser shows and drone shows have been investigated by staff, and communities like Avon, Aspen, Parker, and Gypsum have experienced mixed reviews. As a surrogate for fireworks, both options appear to fall short with the public, and drone shows in particular carry a hefty price tag.

- 3- Live music- This year's Concert in the Park style show with a low key Denver band saw modest attendance. The Marina is often cited as the ideal location for 4th of July music, but currently there is no appropriate space for a large scale concert, and staff are also hesitant to send more people to an already busy area on one of the busiest days of the year.

A return to the stage being set up on 1st Avenue/Main Street with a bigger name band or continuing to have a Concert in the Park style live music event at the Historic Park featuring a band with greater draw may better meet the community's expectations.

BBQ Challenge

Staff brought the event "back to basics" by not only removing ancillary events, but also consistently spreading the new "back to basics" format and renaming the event the Frisco BBQ Challenge, rather than the Colorado BBQ Challenge. Staff also reduced the event site by one block, added more shaded seating areas, did a minimal PR push, and spent 79% less on marketing than in 2019. The marketing was all local radio and newspaper, except for one e-newsletter and one Facebook/Instagram promoted post, which was directed to a local and Front Range audience. Marketing was very minimal, but necessary for at least some awareness of the event to honor the efforts of local businesses and BBQ vendors.

As stated during the September 2021 Town Council discussion, pent up demand would likely result in robust attendance, but also in longer food lines with vendors running out of food sooner and some unmet expectations during the event; this certainly seemed to be the case for some. Based on numbers extrapolated from cell phone data, the three days of BBQ challenge saw the following participation/visits when looking at the Frisco Main Street business district: 2018- 71.6k visits, 2019- 72.6k visits, and 2022- 63.2k visits. Average time spent went down as well, which was anticipated due to the elimination of ancillary events which were built to keep attendees at the event longer: 2018- 370 minutes avg., 2019- 397 minutes avg., and 2022- 291 minutes avg.

- 1- Vendors- Securing and keeping vendors presented one of the most significant challenges this year with vendors citing gas prices, general inflation and supply costs, severe lack of staff, and no longer pursuing vending after having to sell equipment during the pandemic or still suffering from long COVID. The elimination of carnival food vendors and vendors who were offering items or services unrelated to BBQ also reduced

the amount of vendors.

Staff cold called vendors in Colorado and surrounding states with some success. Yet, staff believes that this will continue to be the biggest challenge for this event and may determine whether the event can continue with the quality that Frisco expects. The changes to the restaurant business, labor market, and supply chain/costs may very well not reverse, keeping it challenging to secure temporary BBQ and complementary food vendors.

2019 Totals:

- Non-Selling Competitors – 35
- Selling BBQ Competitors – 25
- Non-Competing Food Vendors – 35

2022 Totals:

- Non-Selling Competitors – 28
- Selling BBQ Competitors – 11
- Non-Competing Food Vendors – 23

- 2- Hogbacks- Long lines and vendors running out of food resulted in people having Hogbacks that they could not use during the BBQ Challenge. Hogbacks could be and were used at local businesses through the Monday after BBQ, but this inability to use Hogbacks the way that people wanted to during event made for frustrated attendees. Also, Hogbacks are paid out through a process where a third party non-profit weighs them and then assigns a value based on that weight. This is cumbersome, and more importantly, some vendors ask for hand recounts as they do not believe this system is reliable. Recounts consistently show about a \$70 margin of error in either direction.

Therefore, staff has been investigating RFID/card systems, which would include connecting a RFID card to a credit card that would only be charged when an attendee buys something. These systems may also be pre-loaded using cash if a customer prefers. Vendor would have a small handheld card reader that would record what is being spent at their location.

A RFID system of this type would make it possible for attendees to skip lines to continuously purchase Hogbacks or to be stuck with unused Hogbacks, for payouts to be more efficient for the Finance Department, to reduce amount of the staff needed to handle cash, to eliminate the need to print 300,000+ Hogbacks, and to provide a system with greater transparency for vendors. The system would require a temporary dedicated WIFI/cell system, and staff has only received one partial quote for a RFID system at this point. Costs would likely be around \$45k-55k, and staff is looking at additional vendors for competitive quotes.

Financial Impact:

BBQ Challenge

- In 2018, the net expense for the BBQ Challenge was \$123,198- the \$123,198 includes a \$70,541 donation to nonprofits, which provided event services.
- In 2019, the net expense for the BBQ Challenge was \$107,984- the \$107,984 includes a \$73,805 donation to nonprofits, which provided event services.

- In 2022, the net expense was \$36,956- this includes a \$45,337 donation to nonprofits, which provided event services. This non-profit donation is showing as less, as previously revenues paid out to non-profit vendors, such as the Summit Seniors margarita booth, were included in this amount. Staff believes this provides a more accurate picture of this donation going forward.

Attachment 2 includes information on the expenses and revenues from 2016-19 and 2022. The BBQ Challenge has not been a direct revenue producer for the Town, as it has been positioned since its inception as an event started by locals to benefit the community and culture and a way to kick off the summer season to encourage spending on lodging and in local retailers and restaurants.

Final financial numbers are dependent on revenue during this event, and the addition of an RFID system would possibly have a \$45k-55k impact on this budget.

4th of July

2023 budget is \$65,000, which includes \$40,000 for fireworks and resources for a larger band as a placeholder in case Council directs staff to pursue fireworks and/or a more well-known band.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Events and the return of event components, such as fireworks, support a thriving economy by drawing visitors Frisco who stay, eat, and shop in Frisco. The July 4th fireworks also appeal to many community members who have expressed how much they cherish this component of July 4th and the vibrant culture it supports.

Also, community celebrations, whether BBQ events, parades, or fireworks, can support culture, arts, and recreation, as long as they have community support and can sustain harmony between resident quality of life and visitor experience.

Environmental Sustainability: The return of July 4th fireworks would have a negative impact on the environment as it creates noise pollution, light pollution, and disturbs wildlife, and the inclusion of vehicles in the parade would certainly increase the carbon footprint of the parade. Beyond that, Frisco's July 4th events do not create significant waste and most ancillary events are not reliant on vehicles and are fairly neutral.

BBQ Challenge certainly has a significant output of waste, even with zero waste efforts. High Country Conservation has indicated that they may want to pass on zero waste efforts during the BBQ Challenge due to resource constraints and that the Town would then need to hire a third party to handle this component, as many reputable and reliable businesses now provide this service on the Front Range. Staff will work with High Country Conservation Center first to see if this is still an option for them.

The Town's zero waste efforts have always been seen as an opportunity to show visitors what the Town's values are around waste reduction, and this can continue even with a third party contractor. Meat production is also a significant source of greenhouse gases and requires substantial resources to produce, such as water.

Staff Questions:

Staff is seeking direction from Town Council about the future direction of the July 4th and the BBQ Challenge events:

July 4th

- 1- Should the parade return to a traditional vehicular parade, stay a human powered parade, or morph into a hybrid version to include personal invitations to first responders, requirements that vehicles be a certain vintage, and a cash contest for non-motorized floats?
- 2- Should staff pursue the possibility of bringing back July 4th fireworks in 2023, understanding that there would need to be discussion and support from the County and surrounding towns?
- 3- Should staff stick with the Concert in the Park style concert at the Historic Park or pursue a stage on 1st Avenue/Main Street with a bigger name band?
- 4- Should any other components be added to July 4th?

BBQ Challenge

- 1- Even with the possibility of ongoing vendor challenges and shortages, should the BBQ Challenge return in 2023 on the Friday and Saturday of Father's Day weekend with a Thursday night kick off concert?
- 2- Should staff pursue a RFID system to replace paper Hogbacks?
- 3- Are there old or new components that should be added to the BBQ Challenge?

Reviews and Approvals:

This report has been reviewed and approved by:

Tom Fisher, Town Manager
Diane McBride, Assistant Town Manager/Recreation and Culture Director
Leslie Edwards, Finance Director

Attachments

Attachment 1- Summer 2022 BBQ and July 4th Sentiment Survey Results

Attachment 2- 2016-2019, 2022 Revenue VS Expenses BBQ Challenge Budget