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Hope for Rockets' Red Glare O'er the Land of the Wave: Darien Fireworks May Not Be Cancelled This Year After All [UPDATED]

Author : David Gurliacci

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Rockets' red glare and bombs bursting in air in a fireworks event may yet happen o'er the land of the (blue) wave at Darien High School this July, according Selectman Susan Marks said at a recent Board of Selectmen meeting.

[The following three paragraphs are an update at 10:05 p.m., Wednesday:]

Board of Education Chairperson Tara Ochman sounded supportive on Wednesday at a Board of Education meeting.

"We have been happy to host that event on our grounds for the community," Ochman said during the "Chairperson's Report" section of the agenda near the beginning of the meeting. Even with construction expected to make stadium seating unavailable, there's still plenty of room on the campus, she said.

"We'll talk to the Fireworks Committee about protecting our facility and our fields [...] They always have done the right thing," she said. "As long as we can get certain assurances, which I have been told will not be a problem, I will bring it [the proposal to hold the fireworks] back to the Board [of Education] with a plan and a discussion with the board and the administration."

At a previous Board of Selectmen meeting, the panel [removed \\$13,498](#) for police overtime from the budget because school district officials had said construction for the new cafeteria and concerns about damage to the turf after last year's fireworks event made it seem that the event couldn't take place this year.

A look at possibly holding the event at Weed Beach resulted in Darien police officials saying they didn't think they could protect crowds walking back and forth on Nearwater Lane, the only road most people could use to get to and from Weed Beach.

But on Monday, Marks said there's still hope, and a group of people are seeing if they can fit fireworks on the high school campus. Marks said the group was going to talk with Superintendent of Schools Dan Brenner and Ochman this week to see if the Board of Education might approve a plan.

The meeting was originally scheduled for Tuesday, but because of the snow day, it was postponed until next week, Marks said in an email Wednesday. She added: "During that meeting we will formally ask the BOE chair for permission to use DHS. I am hopeful we can have the 2018 fireworks at DHS but we need to work out details."

"One of the men from Atlas [Fireworks] that we have dealt with [...] came down to the high school, walked around the high school with [town Fire Marshal] Bob Buch," Marks said. First Selectman Jayme Stevenson and Michael Lynch, the facilities manager for the school district, were also at the recent walk outdoors on the campus, along with a few other people, she said.

The group was there to assess whether it was possible to conduct the fireworks anywhere else on the campus.

"So they think they did come up with a possible new site [on campus]," Marks said. The group had planned to meet with Brenner and Ochman to see whether they would support the idea, she said.

"I'm sure they will have many questions," Marks said. "At the forefront will be 'How do we keep the turf — how do we do things differently with the turf so, hopefully, we don't have as much damage as we did last year.'"

Doing a better job of cleaning up after the event was another topic Marks expected to be discussed.

The Board of Education meets Wednesday night. While the topic is not on the agenda, Brenner or Ochman may bring it up in their regular reports near the start of the meeting.

If the fireworks do take place, Marks said, they would likely take place on either Friday, July 6, with a rain date the following night, or on Saturday, July 7, with a rain date the following night.

"It's all very preliminary, and the Board of Education will have to give [its] permission, so I just want to give everyone, including the public, an update," she said.

Volunteers Wanted

"We still are looking for volunteers," Marks said. "It's not a huge job — I truly mean that."

"If you have a few key people, it's really co-ordinating events and activities. It doesn't take hours and hours and hours," she continued. "We have a step-by-step how-to [manual] for anybody that's listening out there, and Stacey Tie and I would be happy to walk anyone through it." Tie previously volunteered to help with the event.

"So we're hoping for some good news, but our first stop will be permission to use the campus, then we need David Genovese [of Baywater Properties] to work his magic and raise some money from the merchants," Marks said. "And then we need two or three wonderful volunteers from Darien — anyone over the age of 21, I would say, can certainly come forward and we'll work with them very closely.

"So I'm optimistic that we will get people to magically appear [...] and the community will have a great fireworks event."