County commissioners vote against fireworks restrictions

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The McKinley County Board of Commissioners revisited a potential ban on the sale of certain fireworks ahead of the summer during a June 8 special meeting. The item had previously been tabled to gather public comment and to await updated drought conditions.

Deputy Fire Chief Richard Austin called into the meeting to speak about the item.

“The vast majority of McKinley County is under severe drought conditions,” Austin said, referencing the latest drought monitor maps that were released June 4.

Those maps show the county is abnormally dry. These conditions have been the same for about three weeks.

County Manager Anthony Dimas Jr. read one of the comments the board received from two local fireworks vendors, Milton Shirley and Megan Barney.

“We feel it would be best if there were a ban of sales on the 2020 season, because we are, as a firework business, a non-essential business, and run the risk of large crowds of people coming in contact with each other day in and day out,” the comment read. “This not only poses a threat to our employees and customers, but to the whole community.”

The comment went on to state it is difficult to effectively sanitize areas where customers come in without potentially damaging their products, and the safety of the community and people should come first.

“Let’s continue to pull together to get through this,” they said.

Commissioner Bill Lee said it is not within the board’s purview to ban fireworks. They can only place restrictions on certain sales. However, he also considered the economic impact on the local vendors.

“There are those who rely on this business and only sell a certain amount through the year,” Lee said. “Some businesses are having a hard enough time right now, so I’m personally not in favor of putting this restriction in place.”

As a result, the board motioned to not put the restriction into place for the 2020 season. The motion was approved with a 3-0 vote.

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