

STAFF REPORTS

**CITY COUNCIL
August 27, 2002**

To: Mayor and City Council

From: George J. Rodericks, City Manager

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF HOLIDAY PLAZA LIGHTS

BACKGROUND

In 1998, after considerable discussion with the City Council and the owners and tenants in the Villa Park Shopping Center, the City issued a purchase order for the purchase of holiday decorations and for the storage, removal, and maintenance for one year. This totaled \$22,642. The City committed to fifty (50%) percent of the cost of the decorations with the remainder to come from the Villa Park Shopping Plaza owners and tenants.

Invoices totaling \$10,750 were submitted to the center property owners and tenants. A total of \$8,225 was remitted to the City. First year costs for installation, removal, maintenance, and storage was \$3,856. In 1999, the cost for installation, removal, maintenance and storage increased to \$5,219. In 2001, the cost was raised again to \$5,720. These costs do not include re-lamping or changes in the display. In order to maintain the lights in a functional condition for the 2001 display, more than half of the lights were required to be replaced due to burnout. An additional \$1,000 is necessary to finish re-lamping the display for this year's display.

FINDINGS

There has been some discussion as to whether the City should retain ultimate responsibility for decorating the Villa Park Shopping Plaza. In March 2002, staff conducted an analysis of alternatives. The City currently owns the lighting and decoration sets. The alternatives reviewed included the following: 1) City storage, setup, and takedown of existing lighting; 2) leased lights and contract for setup and takedown; 3) leased lights and City setup and takedown; 4) contract storage, setup, and takedown of City-owned lights (current situation); and 5) eliminate lighting of shopping plaza.

Staff concluded that Alternatives 1-3 were not recommended due to their increase in costs and/or impact on staff. Alternative 4 is the City's current situation and Alternative 5 is total elimination of the lights.

There are many activities and programs that municipalities subsidize. These are typically in the form of cultural or recreational programming or community-wide beautification efforts – to include holiday lighting. Since Villa Park is unique and does not arrange for holiday decorations on street poles or banners for any holiday, subsidizing holiday decorations in a plaza in which City Hall is located is justifiable.

On July 31st, staff held a discussion meeting for the owners and tenants to discuss the holiday plaza lighting program. Staff sent invitation letters to all Villa Park Shopping Plaza owners and tenants. The letter indicated that if sufficient response was not received, staff would recommend to the Council that the lighting be discontinued. The City received comments from six (6) owners/tenants and two (2) attended the meeting. In attendance at the meeting was Jim Brodsky, Villa Park Pharmacy and Kim Mauerhan, Manager of The Coffee Grove. Both indicated they would be supportive of continuing the plaza holiday lighting and would be amenable to paying an annual fee. Ralph's, and Rockwell's have both indicated they would be willing to participate. Dr. Weisenberg, D.D.S. is opposed to passing on any costs and the Villa Park Animal Hospital will join in if other merchants are committed.

Based on the response from the meeting and follow-up feedback, staff recommends that the City Council consider making the 2002 display the final year for the City's participation in the holiday plaza lighting project and investigate alternatives for the surplus and sale of the light sets.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of the 2002/2003 contract with Preferred Property Maintenance for the installation, removal, and storage of the decorations is \$5,720. The cost for re-lamping of the lights is approximately \$1,000. Total impact for 2002/2003 is estimated at \$6,720.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and Discuss.