



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager

DATE: November 12, 2009

SUBJECT: 2009 Holiday Recommendation - Trail of Lights

The following recommendation comes after aggressive and extended attempts to secure private production of the TOL festival in full. In making this proposal, it is the goal of the City to continue to present a holiday event that lifts the spirit of Austinites where memories are made with families and friends.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) proposes the “*2009 Zilker Tree Holiday Festival*”. Showcasing a holiday festival theme, this multi-night festival is designed to offer a fun, free to the public, family-friendly, quality holiday experience for Austin and the surrounding community. Staff has creatively captured the spirit of the holiday season in the festival concept, including many of the traditional activities that Austinites have grown to love over the years.

All holiday activities this year will be situated around the Zilker Tree and Zilker Hillside Theater, located south of Barton Springs Road. As in past years, our official holiday season will kick off on December 6, 2009. The department proposes a holiday calendar that will run through December 31, 2009. Following are the highlights and dates of the proposed 2009 Zilker Tree Holiday Festival.

- No trail entry fees assessed (in 2009). The department will postpone charging an entrance fee in 2009 in an effort to ensure that all Austinites are able to enjoy this holiday season.
- \$10 parking per car (reduced from \$15 in 2008)
- Tree Lighting Ceremony - December 6, tree lit nightly - December 6 - 31
- Lighted Holiday Displays & Exhibits (nightly) - December 13-21 (9 festival nights), 6pm - 10 pm
 - ½ mile walking pedestrian oriented event grounds in addition to the Zilker Tree
 - Utilizes approximately 50% of the existing current display inventory
- 2 Community Performance Stages (nightly entertainment) - December 13 - 21
 - Nightly community-based entertainment
 - The **Addition** of 1 feature concert, December 16th, with a professional entertainer at the Zilker Hillside Theatre (entertainer to be announced)

The Zilker Holiday Festival will be within budget and will not entail the extensive set-up and take-down that holiday events have required in previous years. However, PAR is relying on the continued significant support of numerous City Department's resources and staff who step up and help provide this wonderful community event each year. In addition, the City has developed an operational plan model that utilizes additional crews from several city departments to help defer the impact directly to the Austin Parks and Recreation Department operations staff, which has continually struggled with maintaining core services while significant staff are committed to event set up for weeks.

In addition, corporate sponsorships and volunteers continue to serve a key role in event production. Each donation and sponsorship received directly impacts the event by helping reduce the financial burden to the budget. How the corporate community steps up is directly reflected in the ability to present an event to the community.

Moving Forward

Full scale production and set up will commence immediately to ready for the December 6 event for the 2009 season. The Zilker Holiday Tree is already installed, and the annual Zilker Tree Art Contest is already accepting entries from the future artists of the community.

PARD will begin aggressively assessing next steps in January 2010. This will give us a jump start on identifying potential viable options for next year's holiday event.

We are looking forward to this holiday season.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Assistant City Managers
Sara Hensley, Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Roger Duncan, Director Austin Energy
Tammie Williamson, Acting Director Solid Waste Services
Art Acevedo, Austin Police Department
Howard Lazarus, Director Public Works
Ernesto Rodriguez, Director Emergency Medical Services
Rhoda Mae Kerr, Director Austin Fire Department