



Date: September 29, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Bright Nights - Renewal of Agreement with BC Professional Firefighter's Burn Fund and CUPE Local 1004

RECOMMENDATION

- A. *THAT the Agreement with the BC Professional Firefighter's Burn Fund and CUPE Local 1004 for Bright Nights in Stanley Park be renewed for the period July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2008.*
- B. *THAT the Board transfer a 13% share of the Bright Nights net admission revenues annually to the BC Professional Firefighter's Burn Fund.*
- C. *THAT no legal rights shall arise and no consents, permissions or licenses are granted hereby and none shall arise or be granted hereafter unless and until all contemplated legal documentation has been executed and delivered by all parties.*
- D. *THAT once the form of all legal documentation has been approved by the General Manager and Director of Legal Services for the city of Vancouver, that the General Manager be authorised to execute and deliver such documentation on behalf of the Board.*

POLICY

Sharing of revenues with a charitable institution is not considered to be a grant, so Council approval is not required.

BACKGROUND

Every December since 1980, a Christmas Train has run in Stanley Park. In 1997, staff were approached by the BC Professional Firefighter's Burn Fund (Burn Fund), which was seeking a new site for the "Winter Wonderland" Christmas lights display. This display had been operating for 10 years at a private home in Surrey, as a fund raising event for the Vancouver General Hospital Burn Unit.

On February 16, 1998, the Board approved entering into a five year agreement with the Burn Fund to jointly operate “Bright Nights in Stanley Park”. The Burn Fund purchased the entire display from the Surrey homeowners and transferred it to the Board. Very few of the items included in this asset transfer remain, since most of the original ones have been replaced by new lights and displays purchased by, or donated to, the Burn Fund over the past five years.

The operating agreement expired on June 30, 2003. The parties wish to extend it for five more years and have agreed in principle upon the proposed terms.

DISCUSSION

The Event

Bright Nights currently runs for 30 days annually, from early December to the weekend after the New Year. It has over one million lights and is now considered to be the largest seasonal lights display in Canada. In 2002, over 67,000 visitors rode the train and visited the farmyard during Bright Nights. It is estimated that an equivalent number came to view the plaza lights but did not ride the train, often because the train tickets were sold out or because the wait was too long.

For the past four years, staff have worked with Mortal Coil Performance Society on the performance and entertainment aspects of the event. Fire fighter bands and other musicians and performers have also volunteered their time. Up to 300 volunteers, primarily school students fulfilling CAP hour requirements, are involved in assisting in various capacities during the event.

In previous years, tickets for the train rides were only sold on site, and only for the same day’s rides. Tickets often sold out quickly and many people who came on the busier nights were too late to purchase tickets. Staff regularly received requests for advance, offsite ticket sales. As a result, in 2003, for the first time, a portion of the tickets will be sold through Ticketmaster. Tickets will still be for sale on site for those who prefer to purchase them when they arrive. After the event is over, the new ticket sales arrangements will be reviewed to consider whether they should be continued in future years.

The Burn Fund

The Burn Fund is a registered non-profit charity established in 1978 by the BC Professional Firefighter’s Association. The donations it collects at Bright Nights, and its share of the admission revenues, contribute to assisting burn survivors and their families, purchase of equipment, training of medical staff and the operation of a summer camp for young burn survivors.

The Agreement

The operating arrangements in the agreement renewal will continue the practice of the last five years at Bright Nights. Park Board staff are responsible for all of the displays inside the Miniature Railway area and the Children's Farmyard. The Burn Fund's volunteer Firefighter's put up and maintain the lights and displays in the Plaza area. Firefighter's are onsite every night to collect donations to the Burn Fund. The Burn Fund also receives a share of the train admission revenues. In 2003, the total amount collected by the Burn Fund from these two sources was \$130,000.

The previous agreement gave the Burn Fund a fixed amount per ticket sold. However over its five year term, while ticket prices have risen, the amount paid to the Burn Fund per ticket has remained unchanged. For example, in 1998, on an adult ticket priced at \$5 for admission to the train and farmyard, the Burn Fund received 75¢, and on a child ticket priced at \$2.50, the Burn Fund received 35¢. By 2002, the same admission prices had risen to \$7 and \$3.50 respectively, while the amount per ticket which was paid to the Burn Fund remained unchanged. Ticket prices in 2003 are: adult \$8, child or family member \$4, youth \$6, senior \$5.75.

In the new agreement, the Burn Fund's share of revenues would change to 13% of the net admission revenue. Assuming a similar paid attendance to 2002, in 2003 the estimated share of these revenues payable to the Burn Fund would be \$38,000.

CUPE Local 1004 Approval

CUPE local 1004 is a party to this agreement. To deal with initial concerns as to whether allowing the volunteer Firefighter's to put up and take down the lights and displays in the Plaza would impact on the hours worked by CUPE 1004's members at the Christmas event, the previous agreement guaranteed these members a minimum of 1300 auxiliary hours for putting up, maintaining and taking down the event's lights & displays. With the continued expansion of the event, they have worked in excess of that number of hours each year since then. In 2002, CUPE 1004 members worked over 1600 hours in this capacity.

CUPE 1004 has agreed in principle to the renewal of the agreement on the understanding that these minimum 1300 auxiliary hours will continue to be guaranteed to its members.

JUSTIFICATION

Bright Nights in Stanley Park is a very popular event and is now a regular part of the Christmas season tradition for many families. The partnership with the Burn Fund has enhanced the event and allowed significant amounts to be raised annually for its burn survivor programs.

Prepared by:
Stanley District
Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC
AD