



Corporate Report

NO: R239

COUNCIL DATE: November 20, 2006

REGULAR

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: November 16, 2006
FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture FILE: 8200-20/SF
SUBJECT: *First Night Surrey 2007 Celebrations – December 31, 2006*

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receive this report as information.
2. Provide \$20,000 from the Council Initiatives fund to support the *First Night Surrey 2007* celebrations on December 31, 2006.

BACKGROUND

The Whalley Business Improvement Association (the BIA) and the City of Surrey partnered last year to launch the inaugural *First Night Surrey* celebrations at Central City Plaza. The BIA worked with an event management company to secure sponsorship and to plan and execute the event, which was warmly greeted by the community and was well received by corporate partners and member businesses within the Whalley BIA. The City provided financial support of \$15,000 for the event from the Council Initiatives fund, played a permitting role and did a significant portion of the marketing of the event.

The event was staged on Saturday, December 31, 2005 and drew a crowd of about 5,000, comprised mainly of parents with children and young adults. The site was secured by fencing and included the plaza, the closure of 102 Avenue and use of the City parking lot adjacent to the North Surrey Recreation Centre. The ice rink at the Recreation Centre was utilized for public skating.

Family-focused entertainment took place throughout the day, with performances on the children's stage plus other scheduled interactive activities. Live music continued throughout the evening on two stages, culminating in a headline performance at 11:00 p.m. A countdown to the New Year and fireworks occurred at midnight. A special 9:00 o'clock chime and countdown took place for the younger children who needed to go home early.

Last year's First Night celebration was a non-alcoholic event with full private security. Surrey RCMP were on site and reported no incidents.

DISCUSSION

In a debriefing after last year's event, the BIA indicated their desire to continue with the event as a sponsor, with a financial commitment of \$32,000, but requested that the City become more involved, especially in the areas of volunteer management and working with sponsors. The BIA has limited staff resources, and they felt that there were challenges in working with a contracted third party event management company, especially in communicating with sponsors and BIA members.

Based on this request, City staff evaluated their capacity to play a larger role in the event management and have now taken over sponsorship recruitment and some other key aspects of event planning. If longer-term sponsorships can be achieved, the City hopes to transition First Night to a community-driven event, run fully by a non-profit association.

City staff have secured official sanctioning and licensing of *First Night Surrey 2007* by **First Night International**. Along with Whistler, the City is one of only two cities in the province to hold sanctioned First Night celebrations, as the City of Vancouver will not be holding First Night celebrations this year.

There are significant costs in staging a major First Night event. These include production management, sound and lighting, staging, artist's fees, children's activities, advertising and marketing, licensing, and fireworks. A budget of \$150,000 will be offset through direct financial support of the Whalley BIA, corporate sponsors, the City and ticket sales. Discussions between City staff and the Whalley BIA staff have concluded that an admission of \$10 per person with accompanying children under the age of ten (10) allowed in for free if accompanied by a parent. Given the scale of this event and the broad range of Surrey residents, staff recommend that Council support the event by contributing \$20,000 from the Council Initiatives Fund.

To create significant public interest in the event and stimulate ticket sales, the organizing committee is considering several major Canadian artists as potential event headliners.

CONCLUSION

This non-alcoholic, family-oriented event will provide the community with a wonderful venue to celebrate the New Year. In order to accomplish this celebration, it is recommended that Council provide \$20,000 from Council Initiatives to support *First Night Surrey 2007* celebrations at Central City Plaza on December 31, 2006. Following an evaluation of the 2007 event, a recommendation to consider funding the event in future operating budgets versus Council Initiatives will be brought forward for consideration in 2008 budget discussions.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture

OCC:dlg

c.c. - General Manager, Finance, Technology & Human Resources

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