CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS
STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: September 23, 2008

To: Honorable Mayor & City Council

From: Brad Meyerowitz, Recreation Services Manager

Subject: 2008 Community Services Department Halloween Activities

Attachments:

INTRODUCTION

The Community Services Department is not intending to offer a Halloween Carnival in 2008. The carnival, which has been held annually at La Cienega Park, has experienced a decline in Beverly Hills resident participation in recent years. Due to this trend, the Department will be offering alternative holiday-themed activities at existing City programs where there are a large number of resident participants. These programs include the preschools, after school playgrounds, and after school on-site childcare. This will ensure that the level of resident participation will be at a high level.

DISCUSSION

Surveys of Halloween Carnival participants were conducted in 2006 and 2007. Patrons were asked what Zip Code they resided in. In 2006, based on 505 respondents, Beverly Hills residents accounted for 30% of the participants. In 2007, the percentage of residents decreased to 28% (based on 427 respondents). Staff presented this data to the Recreation and Parks Commission at their November 2007 regular meeting. Discussion took place on possibly relocating the carnival to a location more centrally located than La Cienega Park. Based on the data collected from the surveys, the majority of non-residents that came to the carnival lived in the Los Angeles neighborhoods adjacent to the park.

Due to the lack of sufficient space to hold a carnival at other facilities in Beverly Hills, and the low numbers of Beverly Hills resident participation, the Commission moved to discontinue the Halloween Carnival and to look for alternate ways of celebrating the holiday. Emphasis was placed on planning Halloween activities at existing Department programs located at school sites and at La Cienega and Roxbury Parks. Department Preschool staff surveyed program parents and found that they were not attending the carnival because they were out trick or treating in their local neighborhoods and attending parties at friend's homes.

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The Halloween Carnival was discontinued for several years in the 1990's but brought back after requests from Beverly Hills school PTA's. The requests were made to have the carnival reinstated to offer an alternative to trick or treating. At the time there were incidents reported from across the country of tampered-with candy and treats.

The carnival was brought back with financial support provided by the Beverly Hills school PTA's, as well as other community groups. Over the years there have been fewer incidents of tampering reported and trick or treating has once again become part of the holiday tradition. In lieu of the carnival, staff will be providing activities such as costume parades, games, and arts and crafts at the various Department youth programs.

FISCAL IMPACT

Over the years, revenues collected from the Halloween Carnival have barely covered the expenditures incurred. In 2007, $7,735 was spent on rides, prizes, entertainment, and other components of the carnival. In addition, an honorarium of $850 was given to the Helene's Organization from USC, which provided a large group of volunteers for the carnival. In the event of inclement weather, the City runs the risk of not covering costs associated with the event as we are still obligated for all operating expenses but poor attendance generates correspondingly low revenues.

A minimal amount of funds budgeted for the carnival will be used to cover the costs of the alternative Halloween programming. City-owned Halloween games that were used at the carnival will be transported to the various program sites as a way to avoid incurring rental fees from private game vendors. Fees will not be collected from participants for these new activities, so it is anticipated that there will not be any revenue realized this year. Conversely, the City will also not incur the historical operating expenses.

RECOMMENDATION

With the endorsement of the Recreation and Parks Commission, and due to the low number of Beverly Hills resident participation, staff recommends that the Halloween Carnival be discontinued and that alternative activities be planned in existing Department programs. Pending City Council approval, appropriate contacts will be made with the Beverly Hills PTA's informing them of this intent. Unless otherwise directed, staff will move forward with the planning of these alternative holiday activities.

Steve Miller
Approved By