

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: January 25, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Eric Stepura, Director, Recreation and Culture
Jim Gordon, Director, Engineering and Municipal Operations

SUBJECT: White Rock Festival of Lights 2021 Event Application Review

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the 2021 White Rock Festival of Lights (WRFL) as a “Category C” special event under the conditions outlined in this corporate report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, community special event organizers are advised to submit a Special Event Application requesting permission to host events on City owned or leased property in White Rock. For 2021 events, the application deadline was extended to November 15, 2020, due to the uncertainty associated with hosting group gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Received applications are reviewed by the City’s Events Team, and a corporate report is provided to Council outlining what existing events are returning, and to request approval of any new events.

One of the event applications received by the City for 2021 (Appendix A) is from the White Rock Festival of Lights Society requesting permission to host their third annual outdoor festive light display at the White Rock waterfront.

As the 2021 WRFL is not a “special event” by definition in the City’s Special Event Policy, but rather an outdoor lighting display, the analysis of this event application has been done by staff from both the Recreation and Culture Department and the Engineering and Municipal Operations Department.

This corporate report will provide a review of the 2020 WRFL, outline the conditions under which the lighting display would be approved as per policy, and make recommendations to Council on the proposed level of support that the 2021 WRFL should receive from the City in 2021.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

At the February 10, 2020 Regular Council meeting, Council approved the following

recommendation:

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
February 10, 2020	“THAT Council Approve the 2020 White Rock Festival of Lights as a Category C event, subject to the White Rock Festival of Lights Society securing their grant and sponsorship funding.”

At the September 14, 2020 Regular Council meeting, Council approved the following motion:

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
September 14, 2020	“THAT Council direct the Recreation and Culture Department to look into the possibility of working with the Festival of Lights Society for a 2020 winter festival, keeping in mind physical distancing protocols due to COVID-19.”

At the October 19, 2020 Regular Council meeting, Council directed the following recommendations regarding the 2020 WRFL:

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
October 19, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all electrical work required for the proposed 2020 White Rock Festival of Lights, be carried out by licensed electricians;• BC Hydro approval be obtained for all power usage except from designated electrical kiosks;• The White Rock Festival of Lights Society insures against potential damage to street lights and other infrastructure; and• That Council not permit the use of the wheelchair van accessible parking spots at Finlay Street and Marine Drive for the location of the large lit tree at East Beach.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Application guidelines and selection criteria of City support for special events held at White Rock owned or leased facilities or properties are governed by Special Event Policy #710.

Community special events are defined for the purposes of this Policy as:

“assemblies or activities ranging in time from hours to days, produced by the City of White Rock, non-profit organizations, private businesses or a combination of partnerships, for community and/or visitor participation, or to attract a significant potential audience.”

This definition includes, but is not limited to, community celebrations, anniversaries, festivals, concerts, sport tournaments, foot and bicycle races and fundraising functions.

The City’s role in the delivery of community special events falls into three (3) categories:

- Category A - City Produced Event: events where all details are organized and/or coordinated by City staff, usually working with a community volunteer committee to

ensure the highest level of community engagement. Examples are the White Rock Sea Festival and Canada Day by the Bay.

- Category B – City as a Producing Partner: events where a high level of staff support is required to work with organizers ensuring that the event content optimizes civic engagement, planning and productions details, as well as marketing needs to achieve strategic objectives. An example is the Concerts at the Pier.
- Category C – City as a Supporter: events where the role of staff is to provide advice and assistance with basic operations and logistical planning and/or services such as public safety considerations, coordinating the use of City staff, facilities, property and/or equipment such as tents, stage, barricades, parking lots, community centres, road use, parking spaces etc.

Review of 2020 White Rock Festival of Lights

The WRFL Society received permission from Council to extend the length of the festival from 29 days in 2019 to 40 days in 2020. The proposed dates were November 28, 2020 to January 9, 2021. However, due to the need for the Society to meet the City's COVID-19 safety plan and electrical requirements, and the need to appeal the Provincial Health Orders banning group gatherings, the dates were changed to run December 19, 2020 to January 24, 2021 (37 days).

To comply with Provincial Health Orders (PHO's) limiting and suspending group gatherings, the Society had to revise its plans at the last moment to avoid offering activities or attractions that might cause groups of people to gather. The focus of the 2020 WRFL was to provide an outdoor lighting display for people to walk through or drive by, rather than a festival of attractions and entertainment.

Festive lighting was added to the Promenade, Memorial Park and the Museum so that it could be enjoyed by both pedestrians and drive by visitors to our waterfront.

The following lighting displays returned in 2020:

- a 30' lit aluminum Christmas tree at Memorial Park Plaza;
- 10 lit sea horses decorating Memorial Park walkways;
- the Magical Meadow of an estimated 15,000 lights on the Memorial Park grass area; and
- lit Christmas trees in Memorial Park.

The Society added the following new light displays in 2020:

- lit fence panels on the BNSF fence along the Promenade between the Pier Head and Vidal Street; and
- a lit trail of lights on the shrubs on either side of the walkway between the grand staircase and the plaza at Memorial Park (sponsored by Telus).

Discussions with the organizers of the WRFL indicate that the Society members felt that the 2020 festival was very successful. Some feedback received and metrics carried out by WRFL organizers include:

- Local businesses along Marine Drive adjacent to Memorial Park, along with the City's three licensed food cart vendors are very supportive of the light display.
- Considerable positive comments received from waterfront visitors on the WRFL social media channels about the lighting display.

- Peace Arch News ran five articles on the 2020 WRFL.
- 10 local schools participated in making the lantern light decorations for the Magical Meadow.
- Increased visual attraction and activity for Memorial Park in the evenings due to the added festival lighting.

City Recreation and Engineering and Municipal Operations staff are pleased with the positive reception the WRFL is receiving from visitors to our waterfront, however, there were many challenges presented this year that needed to be addressed to ensure that the event was held safely and in compliance with Council directives and Provincial Health Orders (PHO's). Staff comments about the 2020 WRFL are as follows:

- The festival added an attractive vibe and increased visitor attendance to the waterfront during a time of year that is typically only heavily attended on sunny days or during major storms.
- Initially there were delays and/or resistance by the organizers to carry out several important tasks well in advance of the proposed initial start date, including developing a comprehensive COVID-19 safety plan, applying for electrical permits, hiring a certified electrician to install the lights, getting BC Hydro approval for use of their power and obtaining liability insurance coverage to protect visitors, volunteers and City infrastructure. The organizers did eventually complete all the tasks required by the City, but the delays placed considerable pressure on staff and required more consumption of staff time and resources.
- The light display was left on overnight on New Year Eve, which was not approved by the City, and resulted in the City receiving complaints from residents.
- Although WRFL advised that they were working with a licenced electrician, electrical safety was concerning for staff.

Review of the 2021 WRFL Application

The WRFL Society's 2021 Special Event application is attached (Appendix A). The Society has asked to extend the length of the festival from 40 days in 2020/2021, to 120 days in 2021/2022 (October 30, 2020 to February 26, 2022). Staff are not supportive of the light display being up outside of the traditional festive season of mid-November through mid-January.

The 2021 WRFL budget is \$150,000, of which they are asking the City to contribute \$50,000 plus additional City in-kind services to perform setup and take-down of the lighting displays. The 2021 WRFL budget is attached (Appendix B). At this time, the City has not budgeted for this level of funding support for this event. This funding request would need to be considered as part of the 2021-2025 Financial Plan deliberations, and if Council agrees to provide \$50,000 in cash support to the WRFL, the funding source would require roughly a .2% increase in property taxes.

The WRFL Society is asking for the City to upgrade its support to a Category B level, which means they want the City to become a co-producer of the event. This would require a high level of staff support to work with organizers to ensure that the event meets City event production standards, including planning and production details, public safety measures, as well as marketing needs that achieve strategic objectives. An example of another Category B event that the City co-produces is Concerts at the Pier, which the City co-produces with the White Rock BIA. The City does not have the staff resources to co-produce the 2021 WRFL Society.

It is staff's recommendation, that Council not approve WRFL Society's request for the City to co-produce the event with them, and that Council continue to support the 2021 WRFL at a Category C sponsorship level, with no additional cash or in-kind support than what was provided in the previous two years.

Conditions for Approval of the 2021 WRFL

The following conditions must be met by the organizers for the 2021 WRFL to take place on City owned and/or leased property at the White Rock waterfront:

- Approval is subject to the White Rock Festival of Lights Society securing their grant and sponsorship funding;
- The lighting display is limited to a maximum of 60 days from mid-November 2021 to mid-January 2022;
- The hours that the lighting display can be lit are from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily;
- All electrical work required must be carried out by licensed electricians;
- BC Hydro approval be obtained for all power usage except from City electrical kiosks;
- The WRFL Society must obtain liability insurance against injuries and/or death to organizers, volunteers, contractors and visitors, as well as potential damage to streetlights and other infrastructure. The insurance policy must be a minimum \$5M coverage, naming the City of White Rock as added insured, include a cross liability clause and a no cancellation clause stating that the policy cannot be cancelled without first providing the City with 30 days written notice of cancellation; and
- Wheelchair van accessible parking spots at Finlay Street and Marine Drive may not be used as the location of the large lit tree at East Beach.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If Council agrees to support the 2021 WRFL as a Category C event, the City's contribution towards the event would be limited to the same level of in-kind-services that are provided to other Category C community events. The estimated value of the City's in-kind support for the 2021 WRFL is \$9,080. The breakdown is as follows:

- Recreation and Culture assistance with event planning,
coordination and promotion..... \$ 3,000
- Engineering and Municipal Operations services including,
labour assistance, extended washroom hours, daily cleanup,
planning assistance \$ 3,000
- Loss of weekend parking revenue
(10 stalls x 7hrs/day for 22 days @ \$2.00/hour)..... \$ 3,080
- Total \$ 9,080**

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Staff will promote the 2021 WRFL on the City's web site and on social media channels, unless the current PHO ban on group gatherings is still in effect.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

The City's Recreation and Cultural Services Department will assist the WRFL Society with event planning, coordination and promotion assistance, and if needed, the development of a COVID-19 safety plan.

The City's Engineering and Municipal Operations Department will assist the WRFL Society with staff time and value-in-kind resource and service support including access to power hookups, electrical work approvals, site preparation and cleanup, washroom maintenance etc.

The City's Parking Services will provide access to up to 10 designated parking spaces needed for staging the event, including parking for festival organizers and volunteers.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Powering the lighting displays will result in added electrical consumption for the 60-day duration of the Festival.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Action item 3.2.5 of the White Rock Waterfront Enhancement Strategy states:

“The City of White Rock should support the Festival of Lights proposal to draw visitors over the festive season during the long evenings. It is an excellent opportunity and should be broadly supported.”

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

Alternate options available for Council's consideration are to:

1. Support the 2021 White Rock Festival of Lights as a Category B City sponsored event requiring \$50,000 in cash support to the WRFL Society, plus additional City services in-kind support. This higher level of City support would require consideration as part of the 2021-2025 Financial Plan deliberations; or
2. Direct staff to conduct a review of other alternative ways to manage the WRFL in the future.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 WRFL is being held at Memorial Park in the evenings from December 19, 2020 to January 23, 2021. The WRFL Society organizes and hosts the event, with support from volunteers, sponsors, local businesses and the City of White Rock.

The City's Recreation and Culture and Engineering and Municipal Operations staff contributes many hours and resources to the successful outcome of the 2020 WRFL, and if directed by Council, will work with the Society again to host the 2021 WRFL at our waterfront.

The estimated value of the City's in-kind support for the 2021 WRFL is \$9,080, which is provided for in existing operating budgets.

Respectfully submitted,



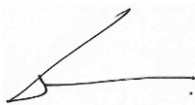
Eric Stepura,
Director, Recreation & Culture



Jim Gordon,
Director, Engineering & Municipal Operations

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendation of this corporate report.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: Special Events Application from WRFL Society for the 2021 WRFL
Appendix B: WRFL Society's 2021 WRFL Budget