



EXPLANATION TO COUNCIL BILL 2023-160 (HARDINGER)

FILED: 08/21/2023

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Public Information and Civic Engagement

TITLE: A special ordinance accepting a donation of \$15,000 from the Hatch Foundation to reimburse the City of Springfield Department of Public Information and Civic Engagement for the purchase of a reusable Christmas tree to be used for Springfield's downtown holiday festivals; and amending the budget of the Department of Public Information and Civic Engagement for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 to appropriate the donation funds.

PURPOSE: To accept a donation in the amount of \$15,000 from the Hatch Foundation for the purchase of a new holiday tree, to be used for Springfield's downtown holiday festivals, placed at Park Central Square every year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Each year, the City of Springfield hosts an annual Mayor's Tree Lighting Holiday show the Saturday before Thanksgiving to serve as the kickoff to the holiday season. This is also produced as a television special aired on KY3. The City's Public Works Department and Downtown Community Improvement District ("DCID") work together to obtain and move a 20-plus foot real tree to move to Park Central Square. This costs roughly \$6,000 in Public Works labor time each year. In addition, the DCID spends \$30,000 per year on lighting installation on and around the tree. The quality and size of the tree varies greatly from year to year. Having a reusable tree will provide consistency for installation and ensure a level of quality year over year. In addition, having a 65-foot tree will make a larger quality of place statement and help with the City's desire to improve its attractiveness as a holiday destination for residents and visitors alike.

The six founding members of Hatch have been members of the Springfield community for most of their lives, and all possess a dedicated love for it. With their family business of 40 years selling in November 2019, the family knew they wanted to give back to the community--the community that supported them for so many years. The family wanted their contribution to the community to play a unique role in the issues that affect Springfield's communities. They posed the question: "How can we build on the inherent attributes of the community and help Springfield achieve its full potential?"

REMARKS: At the suggestion of the City Manager, the Public Information Department has researched the surrounding community holiday events and analyzed the potential for expanding our current very successful Mayor's Tree Lighting Holiday Show into a season-long resident and tourist experience. With Branson, Missouri and Northwest Arkansas' significant investments over the past several years, Springfield has the real possibility of serving as an additional tour stop in the multimillion-dollar holiday tourism



potential.

Since 2017, attendance at the Mayor's Tree Lighting event has grown from approximately 50 people to 2500. No information about attendees is collected, but we assume these attendees are largely from Springfield and Greene County.

In 2020, the height of the pandemic, KY3 / Gray Media became a partner, generously broadcasting our show as a holiday special. The television special has grown into a viable opportunity to promote Springfield and the region as a holiday tourist destination. The PIO team writes, shoots, produces, and edits the entire show in-house.

The Opportunity

A recent hospitality survey revealed that 94% of adults ages 45+ were planning to travel in December 2022 and 58 percent in January 2023, indicating that connecting with loved ones is top of mind for travelers.

While some travelers may seek a reprieve from the cold in sunny destinations, 56 percent of respondents agree that it **doesn't feel like the festive season without snow**. The average airfare in 2022 was up about 40% from 2021. Most holiday travelers **never get on a plane — they drive**. AAA's estimate is that 49 million will travel by car over the holidays, compared to 4.5 million who fly.

While holiday-based travel has been constant for years, recently the travel patterns associated with these holidays are changing, because the times to travel aren't as fixed as they used to be, and when you can work from anywhere, the strict definitions of travel days start to break down.

CONCLUSION: Obtaining a new, impressive, reusable tree will be one step in an effort to enhance Springfield's marketability as a holiday destination, while improving quality of place.

Submitted By: Cora Scott, Director of Public Information & Civic Engagement

Authorized for inclusion on the agenda pursuant to City Code section 2-33:

Attachments:

1. Holiday Tree Donation_ord
2. Exhibit A- Holiday tree donation BA