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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council Members
Douglas G. Faseler, City Manager

From: Kyle Kramm
Main Street Program Director

Through: Rick Cortes
Assistant City Manager

Subject: Holiday Lighting in Central Park

Date: February 24, 2016

Per Council's request, City staff has investigated different scenarios for leaving the holiday lights on year round in Central Park.

Presently there are an estimated 50,000 C7 incandescent twinkle lights bulbs in Central Park and another 20,000 bulbs around the Courthouse. Annually, the cost to install these lights, remove the lights after the holiday season, and replace burned out bulbs and wire costs approximately \$71,650. Additionally, electrical costs are estimated at \$3,000 for a total program costs of \$74,650.00. The breakdown of these costs are as follows:

Installation/maintenance (Labor)	\$41,100
New bulbs and wire	\$10,000
Electricity	\$ 3,000
<u>Removal (Labor)</u>	<u>\$20,550</u>
Total	\$74,650

Upon Council's direction to study the feasibility of keeping the lights illuminated year round, the Electric Department looked into several different options, including the use of timers to automate the operation of the lights and thereby reducing the number of hours the lights are illuminated.

As a solution to this dilemma, the Electric Department decided to install two oil switch timers to control the lights. The cost for the timers, including installation, will be \$4,111.25. Installation of the timers should be completed by Friday, February 26, 2016. Staff recommend illuminating the lights before sunset up to 10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 12:00 a.m. on Friday and

Saturday, with the start time adjusted based on the when the sun sets. It is anticipated that the timer should reduce the monthly electric costs to approximately \$1,000.

In an effort to find a more cost effective method, City staff requested a quote from Arnett Marketing, a Buy Board vendor from San Antonio, to install the 50,000 LED C7 twinkle bulbs and new wire. Staff requested a second proposal for LED lights surrounding the Courthouse. The two proposals total \$106,516; \$73,818 for the Park installation and \$32,698 for the Courthouse installation.

Please note that the LED bulbs have a longer life expectancy, approximately 20 years, and reduce the monthly electric costs to approximately \$300. Arnett reported that no one has had to order replacement LED bulbs due to them burning out, but rather due to squirrels and the bulbs breaking. Staff believes that the LED bulbs would result in a reduction in maintenance costs when compared to incandescent bulbs. In a testament to the LED lights, the street lights that staff converted to LED three years ago have had no maintenance needs.

If Council chooses to go with the LED bulbs, the estimated delivery date is September 2016. After the installation costs, annual costs for electricity and occasional maintenance, annual costs are estimated at \$8,100 compared to an estimated cost of \$32,000 for incandescent lights, resulting in an annual savings of \$23,900. This predicated the lights around the Courthouse remain up year round as well, if not then the installation and removal of these lights would result in a yearly expense.

Other items to consider in regards to keeping the lights up year round include the following:

- Lights will have to be on during the day for events in Central Park. The lights and electric panels that are installed for events are on the same circuit, meaning anytime there is a large community event, the lights will be burning. If Council selects to go with the LED bulbs, this issues could be mitigated
- Diminished light when the trees are in bloom. Staff expects the quality of the lights to be reduced once the trees begin to bud, but the extent is unknown.
- The annual tree lighting ceremony after the Holiday Stroll is a favorite moment for many community members. With the lights up year round, would Council want to create another avenue to kick off the holiday season? Several other communities leave the lights on the building outlines year round and have a large Christmas tree that they light up. Staff requested a quote from Arnett to install LED lights on the outline of the downtown buildings and was quoted \$55,481.

Staff awaits Council's direction on the matter.