



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Aldinger and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation
Juanita Purner, Cultural Arts Manager

DATE: December 4, 2007

SUBJECT: Status Report of City Council Workplan Item Regarding Metlox Plaza Programs and Landscape Improvements.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive and file this status report regarding the Metlox Plaza Programs and Landscape Improvements.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

The City's annual expenses for 10 programmed events are approximately \$11,000 for musician fees printing and advertising.

BACKGROUND:

During the 2007 City Council Work Plan Meeting, City Council requested that staff bring forward the Metlox Plaza Programs and Landscape Improvements for their review. The City of Manhattan Beach has been conducting the Metlox Plaza Program in collaboration with Metlox Management (Tolkin Group) since 2006. This program includes a seasonal music series as well as other individual special events.

DISCUSSION:

The Metlox Plaza's 1st annual open house in August 2006 initiated the first Metlox Plaza Program entertainment series which coincided with the Downtown Manhattan Beach Summertime Sidewalk Sale Weekend. The City and Metlox management each identified five musical groups and these performers appeared in the Plaza on Thursdays, August through October 2006.

In 2007, the ten-week series continued with two sessions scheduled on Sundays in the spring and fall. The musicians perform in the Plaza next to the Metlox kiln. This area is shaded by trees with many tables and chairs which invite people to sit and listen. Three restaurants in the Plaza provide outdoor eating areas where patrons are able to enjoy music while dining.

The seasonal entertainment has featured various jazz and pop artists including David Aldo, Antonio Flores, Jerry Johnson Jazz Quartet, Terje Lie, and Marcus Miller with Freedom Jazz

Movement. Many patrons returned to see either the entire series or to see those performers they loved hearing. Patrons have commented on a specific musician's ability being of such a high caliber and equal to the jazz legend, Art Blakey.

Attendance for the Metlox music series has increased from an average of 20 spectators in 2006 to 100 in the fall of 2007. Feedback received by staff confirmed the positive impact this program has made on the community. The weather has not been an issue but on a few occasions temperatures have risen and it's been necessary to provide a cover to shade the performers. During the upcoming budget, staff will be looking into the installation of an attractive shade system at the Metlox 13th Street space (corner of 13th & Morningside) which would enhance the area for public events, especially during the summer programming.

In addition to the Metlox Plaza entertainment series, staff coordinated one-time special events in Metlox such as: the Growing Great event; the Chamber of Commerce Business Expo; and the Manhattan Beach Middle School orchestra performance.

Additional activities that staff is considering for the Metlox facility include local artist and children's art exhibitions; and the scheduling of a summer family movie series. Staff and Metlox management have scheduled a December meeting to discuss the 2008 schedule.

Recently, Public Works has completed approximately \$12,000 dollars worth of landscape and electrical enhancements in the Metlox Plaza area. The original "dune" themed plantings in the north plaza area were not as aesthetically pleasing as originally envisioned. The replacement planting palette was chosen to create a visual relationship between the Metlox public plaza and the well received Civic Center planting theme. The added blue toned decorative rocks lessen abrupt contrasts with the neighboring Shade Hotel's unique landscape and colors. The barren breezeway connecting the north and south plazas were enhanced by the addition of several ceramic urns with bamboo and new plantings within the water wall planters. Additionally, staff is looking into placing bright, beautiful urns, such as those currently outside the Shade Hotel, for the rest of the Metlox Plaza and areas around City Hall entrances.

In addition to these landscape enhancements, custom electrical upgrades have also been completed. The customized connections provide safe and quickly installed 110 volt power stanchions in six locations on the north and south side of the 13th Street corridor. This power is available to all future City authorized events, eliminating the noise, exhaust and rental costs associated with tailored generators. Public Works completed the electrical connections in time for the recent Business Expo and the installed powered connections performed as designed.