

# Memorandum

CITY OF LA VERNE



**DATE:** August 4, 2023  
**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Ken Domer, City Manager

**SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION PRESENTATION ON CHRISTMAS MORNING**

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Attached, please find the presentation for the Monday, August 7, 2023, Study Session. Study Sessions, when scheduled, are an opportunity to present community issues, upcoming policy questions, or otherwise conduct informal and typically more in-depth discussion of specific issues. While Study Sessions are public meetings, no official action is taken by the Council but direction and guidance on an issue can be gained by staff as the matter may come back for official consideration by the Council.

The Study Session for August 7<sup>th</sup> involves discussing the Christmas Morning event which, as you know, is a long-standing tradition that in its current format has six different routes using staff, volunteers, and typically fire vehicles to convey Santa around every street in the City starting at 7 a.m. on Christmas Day. Staff and volunteers work prior to Christmas Day to organize, prepare treat bags, and arrange the vehicles and volunteers. On Christmas Day, some staff arrive as early as 5 a.m. and there is a kickoff meeting around 6:30 a.m. Depending on volunteer commitment, the routes take anywhere from 4 to 7 hours to complete. Unfortunately, a few staff members remain working almost 12 hours on Christmas Day.

Due to worsening logistics for the event, including reduced volunteer hours and the desire to let staff and volunteers spend Christmas Day with their families, the Christmas Morning Committee reviewed the program and is putting forth an alternative concept for discussion. I witnessed the morning activities this past year and understand the importance of tradition. I don't take lightly the consideration the Committee undertook in developing a recommendation to propose to the Council and, ultimately, the community about how to proceed forward. Their goal of having a successful event is appreciated.

The Study Session on Monday will go over more details and the attached presentation is designed to help guide it. In general, one option for consideration are celebrations to be held over the course of five days in the evening prior to Christmas. Each event would have Santa and friends, including a Councilmember, on a fire engine drive through a designated route in each district. Each route would end at a local park within each district for visits with Santa and his friends. The holiday-themed park visits would feature photos with Santa, treats and crafts, donation opportunities to tie back into the original purpose of the Christmas Morning tradition, and offer social gatherings for friends and family.

I look forward to hearing from the community and the City Council on Monday.

# *Christmas in La Verne*

*A new story...*



# History...



- ❖ The “Fireman’s Treat” started nearly 100 years ago in 1925.
- ❖ During the 1920s La Verne’s volunteer firefighters delivered food to needy families on Christmas morning.
- ❖ As the community transitioned from a small citrus farming community to a growing suburb, the tradition of providing treats to the community grew along with the city.
- ❖ By the 1990s, nearly 11,000 treat bags were distributed throughout the community. This effort required the entire on-duty professional fire department staff, plus 60 volunteers, including reserve and retired volunteer firefighters, friends, and family.

# A New Tradition...

## La Verne Holiday Nights

Five Nightly Events Featuring Santa on a Fire Engine driving through La Verne districts culminating in a holiday celebration at a local park

- ❖ Enjoy Christmas and the holidays with Santa and Friends
- ❖ A different theme each night
- ❖ Treats and crafts at each location
- ❖ Photo opportunities with Santa
- ❖ Greater impact to the community, safer alternative
- ❖ Volunteers on Christmas day no longer required
- ❖ Donation opportunities to our local community to return to the original concept from the 1920s



Committed  
Departments

- ❖ Police
- ❖ Fire
- ❖ Community Services
- ❖ Public Works
- ❖ Information Systems



Committed  
Volunteer Groups

- ❖ RSVP's
- ❖ CERT





# *That We're More Than Just Christmas*

- ❖ LVFD as a community staple for 115 years, year round
- ❖ Dramatic increase in responsibility over the decades
- ❖ Fire Season extending through holiday months
- ❖ Continual increase in calls for service
  - FY 22/23 - 4,310
  - FY 21/22 - 3,667
  - FY 20/21 - 3,378

**6**  
personnel  
to operate

**Limited Equipment**

- 2 Reserve Engines
- 1 Reserve Quint
- 1 Reserve Ambulance
- 2 Utility Pickups



# *Christmas Day is for Family...*



- ❖ The Christmas Morning event has adjusted over the years with the City's growth
- ❖ Review of the event over the years show it is on an unsustainable path due to many factors:
  - ❖ Change in organization over the years and in 2019
  - ❖ Inconsistent volunteer base – leaving mid-route
  - ❖ Physically demanding event and extended hours for volunteers
- ❖ City Employees have negotiated holidays but pressured to volunteer or work
- ❖ Long commitment: 12+ hours for Community Services Staff
- ❖ The goal of the La Verne City organization is to allow employees to spend Christmas with their families

# *Christmas in La Verne*

## *Discussion*

