



AGENDA REPORT

To: Mayor Sylvia Ballin and Councilmembers

From: Nick Kimball, City Manager

Date: October 18, 2021

Subject: Discussion and Consideration to Accept a Donation of a Compana de Libertad Liberty Bell for Public Display in the City of San Fernando

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

- a. Accept the donation of a Compana de Libertad Liberty Bell (Attachment "A") from a private donor for public display in the City of San Fernando;
- b. Authorize staff to work with the non-profit organization Ballet Folklorico Ollin to host a dedication ceremony to be held in San Fernando on Tuesday, November 22, 2021 to unveil the Liberty Bell; and
- c. Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to work with staff and Ballet Folklorico Ollin to develop recommendations for a permanent location to display the Liberty Bell.

BACKGROUND:

1. In early October 2021, the City was approached by representatives from Ballet Folklorico Ollin about the opportunity to receive a donation of a Compana de Libertad Liberty Bell from Enrique Michel Velasco, a business owner and philanthropist from Jalisco, Mexico, to be displayed in San Fernando.
2. On October 15, 2021, representatives from Ballet Folklorico Ollin met with City staff to provide additional information and discuss a timeline and logistics for receiving the donation.

ANALYSIS:

Mexican Independence Day, often referred to as 'El Grito' or El Grito de Independencia, is a celebration of freedom commemorating Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's call to arms in 1810 that led to a revolution and, ultimately, the end of the Spanish colonial rule in Mexico.

Discussion and Consideration to Accept a Donation of a Compañía de Libertad Liberty Bell for Public Display in the City of San Fernando

Page 2 of 3

On Sunday, September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rang the bell of his church in the town of Dolores, in the now state of Guanajuato, calling the people to mass and to bear arms against 300 years of Spanish colonialism. The original bell stands now above the central balcony of the National Palace in the City of Mexico where the president rings it at exactly eleven o'clock in the evening of each September 16th in a traditional ceremony called El Grito – the Cry of Independence.

Mexican businessman and philanthropist Enrique Michel Velasco is forging a number Liberty Bells and donating them to cities across the United States in an effort to promote cultural awareness of Mexican Independence Day and Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. Through Ballet Folklórico Ollin, the City of San Fernando has been offered the opportunity join other cities, including Salt Lake City, Utah and North Las Vegas, Nevada, and receive a Liberty Bell donated by Mr. Michel Velasco.

The Liberty Bells being donated by Mr. Michel Velasco will be forged in the coming weeks and take a total of ten (10) days to complete. In order to receive a Liberty Bell, the City will need to notify Mr. Michel Velasco immediately. The benefactor has also asked that the City unveil the Liberty Bell at an official ceremony during the week of November 22nd. Consequently, staff will need to begin planning such event as soon as possible.

The Liberty Bell is being forged and transported to the Mexican border by the donor. Ballet Folklórico Ollin has offered to pick the Liberty Bell up in San Diego and transport it to San Fernando. The City will store the Liberty Bell at a City facility until the unveiling ceremony on November 22nd. Staff recommends that City Council create an Ad Hoc Committee to work with staff and Ballet Folklórico Ollin to identify a permanent location to display the Liberty Bell.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There is no cost associated with accepting the donated Liberty Bell. Ballet Folklórico Ollin has offered to work with the City to raise funds to construct a proper stand to display the Liberty Bell once a permanent location is selected. The donated Liberty Bell would be property of the City. As such, the City will be responsible for maintaining the Liberty Bell once it is installed. It is expected the routine maintenance will be minimal.

The Recreation and Community Services Department would take the lead on making preparations for the official ceremony on November 22, 2021. It is expected that the ceremony will cost less than \$1,000, which can be funded through the City Manager's Appropriated Reserve budget as an unexpected cost.

Discussion and Consideration to Accept a Donation of a Compana de Libertad Liberty Bell for Public Display in the City of San Fernando

Page 3 of 3

CONCLUSION:

It is recommended that the City Council accept the donation of a Compana de Libertad Liberty Bell from Enrique Michel Velasco, authorize staff to work with the non-profit organization Ballet Folklorico Ollin to host a dedication ceremony to be held in San Fernando on Tuesday, November 22, 2021 to unveil the Liberty Bell, and establish an Ad Hoc Committee to develop recommendations for a permanent location to display the Liberty Bell.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Photo: Sample Liberty Bell

Sample Liberty Bell:

