

Fort Collins Human Relations Commission

P.O. Box 580, Fort Collins, CO 80522



HOLIDAY DISPLAY PROPOSAL- Submitted on June 19, 2006

Dear Mayor Hutchinson and City Council Members:

The following is a proposal to the City to mitigate the Holiday Display challenges seen in the past.

DESIGNATED PUBLIC FORUM: The City should designate a public forum, on city property, to allow for holiday displays.

PERMIT SYSTEM: The City should issue permits for each display. Therefore, the City's role would be in granting a permit and not endorsing any particular message of the display. Of course, permit guidelines will need to be established in order not to promote any hateful or demeaning messages.

TIME PERIOD: Cultural celebrations occur on a year-round basis and access to public forum sites should be available throughout the year. For example, if you choose a two-week December period, it excludes many other religious holidays and basically guarantees only the Christmas holiday display each year since many holidays follow the lunar cycle, which varies from year to year.

FUNDING: These displays should be privately funded and sponsored, not city funded (this includes private funding of the Christmas tree as well - in the case where it is open to all, the tree then can legitimately be called a "Christmas" tree vs. a "Holiday" tree).

COMMUNITY EDUCATION: The Fort Collins Human Relations Commission can form a Holiday Display community task force to use this as an educational tool, in the context of history or comparative religions, rather than promoting a particular religion.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Many communities will be watching to see what Fort Collins is doing. The reason why we made news was because of what we were not doing (not allowing the menorah). Fort Collins should NOT garner a reputation of the city with "wide streets and narrow minds." The City's Holiday policy will affect how our city is perceived.

If the City does not allow other displays, then the "holiday" tree should not be displayed. By allowing only the "holiday" tree, this would be an exclusionary policy. The City's Holiday Policy must be to allow "ALL" or "NOTHING" to be a fair policy.

If the city implements this proposal, we are teaching the people of our community to embrace the world, each celebration at a time. This will promote a feeling of community inclusiveness for the diverse populations in our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Human Relations Commission