



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: August 20, 2024

DATE: Thursday, August 15, 2024

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Ryan Johnston, Captain, Special Operations Division
(775) 321-4912, rjohnston@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Darin Balaam, Sheriff

SUBJECT: Recommendation to approve the Law Enforcement Funding Agreement between Burning Man Project (BMP) and Washoe County, on behalf of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office to provide reimbursement for extra staffing [\$129,582.00 estimated total reimbursement] needed in the Gerlach/Empire area during the annual Burning Man Festival for 2024. (Commission District 5.)

SUMMARY

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has been tasked with providing additional coverage in the Gerlach/Empire communities while the Burning Man Festival is taking place in the nearby Black Rock Desert. BMP has agreed to a contract which provides for reimbursement to the County for the cost of providing the additional manpower.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Safe, Secure and Healthy Communities.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On June 27, 2023, the Board accepted item #6.I.1., a funding agreement for the 2023 Burning Man Festival.

On August 23, 2022, the Board accepted item #8.J.1., a funding agreement for the 2022 Burning Man Festival.

On July 23, 2019, the Board accepted item #5.F., a funding agreement for the 2019 Burning Man Festival.

On August 28, 2018, the Board accepted item #10.L.9., a funding agreement for the 2018 Burning Man Festival.

On June 13, 2017, the Board accepted item #5.J.2., a funding agreement for the 2017 Burning Man Festival.

The Board has been approving funding agreements for Burning Man since 2008.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

BACKGROUND

The Burning Man Festival has been taking place in the Black Rock Desert for the over 16 years, with the event currently being held in Pershing County, approximately 8 miles from the town of Gerlach, NV. The main roads into the event are in Washoe County's jurisdiction with more than 70,000 people traveling through Gerlach and Empire to get to the event.

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office is tasked with providing additional law enforcement presence in the communities while the event is going on, which creates a financial burden to Washoe County. Washoe County is not responsible for providing a law enforcement presence inside the festival, which is being handled by the Pershing County Sheriff's Office and the Bureau of Land Management. The Burning Man organizers are aware of the financial burden to Washoe County and have agreed to offset the Sheriff's Office expenses by providing funding to the Sheriff's Office. They have agreed to pay \$129,582.00 for law enforcement presence.

FISCAL IMPACT

WCSO supervision will determine appropriate additional staffing levels needed during the Burning Man event and costs that include the Gerlach Resident Deputies salaries, lodging, per diem and vehicle expenses shall be reimbursed by Burning Man Project in the amount of \$129,582.00. The funds obtained will be used for salary reimbursement, lodging, per diem, and vehicle expenses. The reimbursement received will be deposited into account 150200-485129 (Office of the Sheriff-Salary Reimbursement).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve the Law Enforcement Funding Agreement between Burning Man Project (BMP) and Washoe County, on behalf of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office to provide reimbursement for extra staffing [\$129,582.00 estimated total reimbursement] needed in the Gerlach/Empire area during the annual Burning Man Festival for 2024.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move to approve the Law Enforcement Funding Agreement between Burning Man Project (BMP) and Washoe County, on behalf of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office to provide reimbursement for extra staffing [\$129,582.00 estimated total reimbursement] needed in the Gerlach/Empire area during the annual Burning Man Festival for 2024."