

From: Nicholas Davies <nbdavies@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 1:34 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Olin Fantasy in Lights: revise Car-free agreement

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Dear Park Commissioners,

On your agenda this week is an agreement to allow the use of Olin Park for Fantasy in Lights again this year. However, part of this agreement language is in need of an update.

For most of the event's nights of operation, Fantasy in Lights is a car-centric event. Most visitors take in the lights from inside their cars, as they slowly idle around the park in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Traditionally, there has been a single (1) car-free night as well, where pedestrians and cyclists can take enjoy the event without sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic, breathing someone else's exhaust. In my experience, this night has been very well-attended and socially engaging. And with our warming climate, more and more of November is becoming easily bikeable.

However, in some years, the Fantasy in Lights organizers have not arranged for a car-free night at all, turning this into an event exclusively centered on our least sustainable form of transport.

The current agreement language says:

"Car-Free Event. User is authorized to hold one or more car-free events, annually, as part of this Agreement without additional permitting. User will notify the Parks Division of the car-free event date(s). User may partner with other organizations to provide staff or volunteers. In the event the User would like a third party to run the car-free event without the User, the third party will either a) be subject to the terms and conditions of this agreement, including the insurance provisions, as a subcontractor or b) be required to submit a permit application to and be approved by the Parks Division for the event."

In effect, this is saying that the event organizers may include a car-free day in the event, but to do that, the organizers can just literally leave the lights on and walk away, and expect someone else to handle staffing, insurance, etc.

That is a huge burden to place on some unnamed third party non-signatory to the agreement. It's a burden that none of the hundreds or thousands of pedestrians and cyclists who come to enjoy the park and the lights are individually prepared to bear.

I ask that you modify the agreement language to guarantee at least one car-free night as part of the event, not as some second-class subcontractor event.

That simple change will eliminate all of the uncertainty and complexity, and ensure that families who get around by foot and by bike will have an equal opportunity to enjoy this event.

Thank you,

Nick Davies
3717 Richard St

From: Liz Jesse <liz.jesse@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 3:57 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Holiday Fantasy in Lights Car-Free Night

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Good Afternoon,

I am writing to request that the new Holiday Fantasy in Lights agreement with the city should include regularly scheduled "Car-Free" opportunities.

Our city has a strong commitment to all forms of transportation and this very car centric event does not seem to align with with this commitment.

Thank you,
-Liz Jesse
5126 S Hill Dr, Madison, WI 53705

From: Katie Nash <katie@madisonbikes.org>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 7:14 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Holiday Fantasy in Lights comments

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Hello,

I'm the Secretary of Madison Bikes and have lived in Madison for 7 years. I was very excited in my first few years living in Madison to attend the Holiday Fantasy in Lights riding my bike. It was so wonderful to be able to bike through the park and enjoy the lights and not compete with cars. It was also great to see others walking through the park. I would recommend that this year's Holiday Fantasy in Lights be more bike and pedestrian friendly, and not have so much emphasis on car traffic. Perhaps you all could limit the days/times that cars are available to drive through the park, with the default being bike and pedestrian traffic.

I was really disappointed that there was not a day dedicated to bike/pedestrian traffic last year, and the fact that there was a registration required was a major deterrence - as I don't believe cars had to register.

Thanks for considering making this year's Holiday Fantasy in Lights more bike and pedestrian friendly, and even having that mode of transportation be the primary way people can see the lights. Limiting when cars pass through would be ideal!

Best,
Katie
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Katie Nash

[Madison Bikes, Inc.](#), Secretary and Board Member

Pronouns: she, her, hers

Madison Bikes envisions a city where anyone can ride a bicycle conveniently and comfortably to any place in the city and neighboring communities year round.

From: Paul Lata <pflata@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 2:35 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Holiday Fantasy in Lights Event

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I would like to comment on the agenda item at tonight's Board of Park Commissioners meeting regarding the Holiday Fantasy in Lights Event .

I have attended the event in a car, on a bicycle (with cars present), and a couple of years ago when there was a car free event. The car free event was much more enjoyable because everyone could go at their own pace. It also felt safer than riding on a roadway at night when drivers of cars could be distracted by the lights. Please reinstate a car free event if possible.

Thanks,

Paul Lata

From: Mark Shahan <mnshahan@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 3:07 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Agenda Item 87493: Holiday Fantasy in Lights Contract

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Dear Commissioners,

I would request that you refer the contract for the Holiday Fantasy in Lights to a future meeting until short comings in the current contract are addressed.

First, the contract **allows** one or more car-free events but does not require such an event. In keeping with City of Madison policy encouraging multi-modal access to such events, at least one car-free event should be **required**. Car-free nights for the Holiday Fantasy in Lights have happened in the past and have been well attended. The last such event in November 2023 had over 800 hundred people attend demonstrating the need and demand for such an event.

Second, any car-free event should not have any restrictions placed on it that are not required for non car-free nights. In 2024 for example, preregistration was required for the car-free night but not for cars on the non car-free nights. This resulted in the car-free night being canceled because few people registered. If the cars don't need to preregister, why should pedestrians and bicyclists have to preregister?

Third, a traffic plan is desperately needed for the Holiday Fantasy in Lights. Not only does traffic sometimes back up onto the Beltline, it disrupts the John Nolen bike path, one of the heaviest used paths in the City of Madison. This affected me personally because this was on my commuting route home from work for 8 years before I retired. I would get stuck in a line of cars unable to pass because of cars leaving coming from the opposite direction. I then had to run the gauntlet to try and make a left turn on to the Wingra path as cars tried to make a left turn to head south on Olin-Turville Court.

I would strongly suggest that the traffic be one way headed north on Olin-Turville Court which would result in right in and right out turning motions to the Holiday Fantasy in Lights. The south bound lane could then be used for two way bike and pedestrian traffic.

Fourth, the lights should go off at 11 pm when the gates close instead of being on from dusk to dawn. This is a pointless waste of energy.

Finally, I wonder if this is the correct venue for the Holiday Fantasy in Lights given that many other cities have a purely pedestrian event, or a biking/walking/rolling event. This would be more in keeping with trying to reduce motor vehicle use with all its attendant negatives and specifically with all the traffic headaches the current event causes.

,Mark N. Shahan
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