



Council Communication No. 97-311

SYNOPSIS –

To accept the bid submitted by Audio Art Systems for sound and light services for City sponsored music events this summer. These include Music Under the Stars, Firststar Nitefall on the River, Jazz in July, and RAGBRAI. Eight bids were sent out, two were returned.

FISCAL IMPACT –

The total cost for the service is \$11,100.

RECOMMENDATION –

Accept the bid from Audio Art Systems.

BACKGROUND –

Staff has reviewed the two sound bids, including a phone consultation with a professional sound company in Greensboro, North Carolina, who evaluated the two systems. While the cost savings associated with Commitment Sound and Lighting is attractive, we recommend awarding the bid to Audio Art Systems for the following reasons:

1. Audio Art' s system includes main P.A. amplifiers totaling over 20,000 watts of power (with more available if needed) compared to 6,000 from Commitment. One guideline to gage required system output in wattage to an audience is 5 watts of power per audience member. If an under watt system is used on an oversized audience, the result is an audience who either can' t hear the sound, or hears distorted sound. Based on this guideline, Audio Art can easily handle, with existing inventory, an audience of 4,000 people compared to 1,200 for Commitment. Music Under the Stars draws an average of 2,000 per week, and a crowd of 15,000 is expected at the RAGBRAI event.
2. The inventory of equipment for Audio Art is much larger and more extensive. Five mixing consoles vs. two, 20 3-way house speaker cabinets vs. six tower speakers, 10 subwoofers vs. four. This additional inventory assures the integrity of the production in the event of equipment failure.
3. The number and quality of microphones in Audio Art' s inventory is much larger and superior to those listed on Commitment' s list (e.g., microphones designed for specific uses in specific

situations). Audio Art also has six wireless microphones vs. one for Commitment.

4. One function of a system equalizer is to eliminate or filter the peaks that are a source of feedback through the monitor system. Commitment' s equipment is considerably less sophisticated than Audio Art' s, which will increase the likelihood of feedback problems through the stage monitor system.

5. Since 1993, the City has provided top quality sound services for the concerts produced. The ability to provide these services is the result of the efforts of City staff to raise sufficient funds to acquire high quality equipment. There are many less expensive alternatives to what we have provided for the past four years, but they do not provide the same sound quality and integrity. Private sponsorships, not General Fund money, have funded these services. The City of Des Moines relies heavily on corporate underwriting to offset the cost of producing its concerts. The quality of the audience' s experience hinges on the sound system, and compromising this will result in an unsatisfied audience which may jeopardize our corporate sponsorship dollars.

6. Audio Art has a long list of satisfied clients, including at least two Presidential visits. Commitment Sound and Lighting is a new company to the community and has the desire to do shows where experience and inventory are needed, but they do not have the equipment to adequately handle the needs as outlined. At this point in their business they could easily handle most neighborhood events with crowd sizes of 500-600.