

DATE October 17, 2001

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: Transfer and Loan of Historic Fire Fighting Apparatus
from the Travel Town Museum to the Los Angeles Fire
Department

J. Combs _____	J. Kolb _____
*A. Coroalles <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>	M. Tamuri _____
J. Duggan _____	M. Matthews _____
H. Fujita _____	

[Signature]

General Manager

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board authorize a transfer and assignment of the following historic artifacts from the Travel Town Museum to the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) for use in their new fire-fighting Museum: 1937 American La France Triple Combination Pumper (Accession No. 62.01), Water Tower #24 (Accession No. 69.03), and two 1929 Seagrave Hose Wagons (Accession No. 62.04); and,

That the Board direct staff to transact a permanent loan of the following additional fire-fighting equipment which has specific relevance to the LAFD Museum: the Hayes Aerial Ladder Truck (Accession No. XX.10), 1910 Anderson Aerial Ladder Truck with 1913 Seagrave Tractor, including three ladders, two poles and trampoline frame (Accession No. 54.08), two hand-drawn hose reels and a hand-drawn double cylinder chemical tank (Accession No. 56.01), and one Pompier ladder (Accession No. XX.68); and,

That the Board accept with gratitude the efforts of the LAFD to relocate three narrow gauge, wooden railroad cars from the Museum's outdoor display area into the existing Exhibit Building as part of the mutual agreement for the transfer and loan of the fire-fighting apparatus.

SUMMARY:

In the founding decade of the Travel Town Museum (1952-1962), staff tended to follow typical museum practices of the day by collecting every available artifact that related in any way to the general theme of the museum. In this fashion, a vast array

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of equipment and artifacts from early in the century and before World War II were preserved, which would otherwise have been lost in the rush to modernization after World War II. However, caring for these diverse, aging collections has become an ever greater challenge for all museums as the century came to a close; also, museum practices have evolved considerably in understanding how to use collected artifacts to tell a coherent and worthwhile story about history, technological advancement, social trends, and so on. Hence, a key element in the Travel Town Master Plan, approved by the Board in 1987, was to evaluate the full inventory of historic materials and artifacts which had been collected over the years for Travel Town, to decide which ones were appropriate to retain and to be cared for, and then to find appropriate homes for the remainder at other museums. In fulfillment of this directive, Museum staff was able to place, for example, the miscellaneous military aircrafts in aircraft museums, to move the construction equipment to a museum specializing in machines and tractors, and to relocate oil pumping equipment to an early oil field museum.

The collection of fire-fighting equipment at the Travel Town Museum presented a special challenge, however. Nearly all of the displayed equipment was clearly traced to Los Angeles or other local cities. The collection included an early, horse drawn aerial ladder truck that is extraordinarily rare and nationally valuable. In total, the collection could be readily used to illustrate quite well the history of fire fighting in the Los Angeles area from the time the LAFD formed to nearly World War II. While Travel Town staff, indeed, performed the research to compile such an exhibit, which opened in 1987, they also built a relationship with the LAFD. At that time, a dream of the LAFD, which had recently celebrated its centennial, was to open a Los Angeles Museum of Fire Fighting. Combined with a few other pieces of equipment still owned by LAFD, the Travel Town collection would clearly make a desirable base collection for a museum. Several of the pieces had been acquired by Recreation and Parks from the Fire Department directly. Since a goal of the Travel Town Master Plan was to cull the collection along a railroad theme, and the Museum philosophically supported efforts to create other public museums saluting important aspects of Los Angeles history, the two Departments came to an understanding that a portion of the fire-fighting collection would properly be housed in a LAFD museum, when it came to fruition.

That day has now approached. Fire Station No. 27, built in 1930, has been reconstructed for future use as a museum space: a pre-

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opening has been planned, and initially public tours will be offered on weekends. LAFD has requested a transfer of all former LAFD apparatus, and consideration of a loan of other items which are connected to the LAFD Museum's theme, though the artifacts may have come to Travel Town through sources other than LAFD.

Four of the pieces under request were given to Recreation and Parks by the LAFD. Staff recommends a direct transfer of those pieces. Other pieces were donated by other sources, and in order to serve the original commitment of the Department in accepting these artifacts for public display, staff recommends a permanent loan of those items to LAFD, thus insuring they stay within the City family. Several pieces have been previously loaned on a temporary basis to the LAFD.

The withdrawal of the historic fire-fighting equipment will leave the existing metal exhibit building about one-half full, which staff has long anticipated. These transfer and loan actions will provide the Museum the opportunity to move, under cover, three wooden narrow gauge railroad cars formerly used in the Owens Valley, north of Los Angeles. The narrow gauge railway post office, boxcar, and stock car are valuable connections to local history, and due to their less rigorous original construction, are particularly suffering after forty years of display without overhead protection from sun and rain. The LAFD experts and equipment which will be used to relocate the fire fighting apparatus will afterwards return to the Museum to relocate the three railroad cars into the Exhibit Building. LAFD's heavy equipment unit has had previous experience at the Museum assisting in similar projects.

Staff perceives that this transfer and loan can be a turning point for the Travel Town Museum: as we prepare to enter the 50th anniversary year of the Museum, the Department can finally and fully achieve the Master Plan goal of focusing the Collection on railroad-related history. We also look forward to continuing our partnership with the Los Angeles Fire Department as we share research and exhibit materials accumulated over the years by the Travel Town Museum.

Report prepared by: Linda Barth