

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: June 13, 2022

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager

Council Action Requested:

Resolution Approving a New Lease Agreement with the Carolina Thunderbirds LLC to Play Their Home Games at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds Annex Beginning in 2022 (North Ward)

Strategic Focus Area: Economic Vitality and Diversity

Strategic Objective: Promote Travel and Tourism

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

The Carolina Thunderbirds began play at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds Annex in October 2017, completing their first full season as the hometown professional ice hockey team in Winston-Salem. Since then, the Thunderbirds have successfully completed a total of four full hockey seasons, averaging 31 home games per year and entertaining more than 285,000 guests over that time. The Thunderbirds are members of the Federal Prospects Hockey League and in 2019, won the Commissioner’s Cup. Information about the league is available at www.fphl.com.

The City’s lease agreement with the Thunderbirds is set to expire on June 30, 2022. Exhibit A provides a recap of direct revenues and expenses associated with the professional ice hockey operation over the initial contract period, which ran for four years. The Thunderbirds did not play home games in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the lease was extended through the 2021-2022 season.

The Thunderbirds have formed several community partnerships over the years, including the Winston-Salem Youth Hockey Association, Bed and Book program, Crisis Control Ministries, and Marine Corp Toys for Tots. The Thunderbirds also are planning to introduce the Thunderbirds MVP Program, which will provide 50 children between 11 and 12 years old,

Committee Action:

Committee	<u>Finance 6/13/22</u>	Action	<u>Approval</u>
For	<u>Unanimous</u>	Against	<u></u>

Remarks:

who otherwise cannot afford to play hockey, the opportunity to learn the game. The Thunderbirds, through partnerships with Novant Health and the City's Human Relations/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department, will furnish these children with skates and all the hockey equipment needed to play, including custom Junior Thunderbirds jerseys.

City staff and the Thunderbirds have agreed in principle to terms for a new lease agreement that are similar to the initial contract period. Exhibit B highlights the key provisions of the proposed new agreement.

On May 16, the Public Assembly Facilities Commission adopted a resolution recommending City Council approval of an agreement with Carolina Thunderbirds LLC to play their home games at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds Annex beginning in 2022.

The attached resolution approves a new lease agreement with Carolina Thunderbirds LLC for one year with the option to renew for nine additional one-year terms, according to the terms highlighted in Exhibit B.