

MINUTES
City of St Charles
Visitors Cultural Commission Meeting
Wednesday, May 7, 2025

1. Call to Order at 5:15 PM

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Anne Becker; Jodi Manthei; Suzie Remitz; Harvey Miller; Sharon Spero; Jamie Swenson; Lori Stahulak; Sally Stancati

Also present: Bill Hannah, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles

3. Approval of the Minutes of May 1, 2024

Becker asked for a Motion to Approve the Minutes from the May 1, 2024 meeting. Motion by Stahulak, seconded by Miller. The Minutes were unanimously approved by the board members present.

4. Public Comment – no public comment was offered

5. Presentations by organizations

Sculpture in the Park – Erika Young, representing the St Charles Parks Foundation, presented for Sculpture in the Park. A number of current sculptures currently at Mount St. Mary Park were discussed and shown as a way to illustrate the excitement and energy that they bring to the city. Their goal is to bring at least 15 new pieces of sculpture into the park annually. In total, half are part of the permanent collection and the other half are sculptures on rotation.

They will use funding for the 25-26 season to help offset the monetary stipends they offer to the artists who are involved in this year's Sculpture in the Park project. Individual stipends are currently \$1,500 per artist.

Sculpture in the Park is run annually in cooperation with the Parks Foundation and the St Charles Park District. The Park District funds the program as well as supplies the construction crew, marketing and recreation staff to assist during the run; the Parks Foundation is the key fundraiser for all the stipends for the artists.

Fox Valley Concert Band – Sylvia Phillips (oboist with FVCB) presented. They're entering their 43rd season this year and she thanked the VCC for helping the band to continue to operate by its funding assistance over the years. They perform most of their season at the Norris Cultural Arts Center with five concerts annually. They reach an audience of about 300 people per concert, bringing visitors into St. Charles to not only enjoy music but also to spend time at restaurants and other venues. Their collaboration with middle school students has been meaningful and rewarding and allows budding musicians once a year to perform with the band, by invitation. Also in the past year, they paid high school students as interns to perform with the band over the summer. To fund its programming, the band raises money from donations from members and patrons and from its concerts. They recently received a memorial donation from a loyal member who has since passed. They are considering the best use of that money for the future.

St. Charles Singers – Jeff Hunt, Music Director of St. Charles Singers, presented. He discussed their past year musically during their 40th anniversary season. Concert series of four concerts during the year. The St Charles Singers are becoming quite well known, with radio broadcasts enhancing their exposure to new audiences. Two of the concerts last year were sold out and that is a testament to their reach and audience growth. In the coming year they will have an October concert with a theme, the Christmastime Candelight Concert, the Connections concert (with outside choirs added as one large). The last concert will be next June 2026 and they will be taking this concert on tour to Italy after performing it first in St. Charles next June. St Charles Singers has become a world-wide organization and have been reviewed and written about in Gramophone magazine, Choir and Organ and others. They are very grateful and proud to be associated with the City of St. Charles and make this their performance city to showcase it to their audiences. Some of the funding money will subsidize the purchasing of music and paying musicians.

Fine Line Creative Arts Center – Executive Director, Lynn Caldwell presented. They welcome everyone out to visit their facilities and partake of the arts education programs they offer. They recently secured an additional 3 acres to add to their campus. Exciting opportunities to grow their programming. Their very popular Orb Hunt is back and will happen with about 150+ hand-crafted Orbs hidden at Leroy Oakes and a second location. This will happen again this September. The Fine Line Arts Festival is coming up June 7 and that is part of the Fox River Arts Ramble (self-guided arts tour from Aurora to St. Charles). They will be demonstrating at the St Charles Arts show at the end of May downtown. Cultural education is their mainstay and they had a record over 2,000 students participate in more than 500 classes offered. This will be their 46th anniversary and they are not going anywhere. Plan on continuing to support St Charles exploring the arts and are grateful for the city's support each year.

Preservation Partners – Executive Director, Kelsey Shipton and Director of Durant House and Shoal School Museums, Debra Corwin presented. As a reminder, they are a St. Charles based non-profit, tying the present to the past. Preservation Partners is celebrating its 51st Anniversary this year as a non-profit educational organization. Their mission is to offer heritage education and to promote the appreciation and preservation of the Fox Valley's architectural and historical resources. In 2024 they saw continued growth in attendance and involvement in their St Charles sites. Site visitation numbers grew 28% from 2023 to 2024. They attribute that to an increase in visibility in the community and an improved visitor experience. Their surveys indicate that about 29% visit other St Charles sites either before or after their visit to their sites. The 1850 Beith House (their home office) has shifted to become a meeting space for history talks and visits to the house have increased. Also for special events and artist inspiration. The gardens have been rehabilitated as well and have transformed the back side of the house. Looking for better community use of this property.

Marquee Youth Stage (MYS) – Executive Director Connie Flores presented. Established in 2011 and dedicated to empowering youth for life. Their mission to broaden the reach and impact of theater so that students of all abilities, skills, ethnicities and economic backgrounds can benefit and increase the opportunities for theater, and inspire creativity and support, enrich and empower youth with skills and knowledge of how the arts can serve and influence the community at large. Tuition is their top revenue source but their top funding needs for the coming year will be for technical needs with a stage curtain and lighting upgrades. They have an ongoing capital campaign and are about half-way there for a new building buildout. This is needed to help accommodate the increase in performers and allow their families to be able to attend multiple performances. Spero commended them on how much they've grown over the past years. Becker reminded that the VCC mission and focus is not to fund "bricks and mortar" but to help with performance and rental needs, as an example.

St. Charles Arts Council – Executive Director Kathy Hill presented. Founded in 2010 with the mission to advocate for and support the arts in St. Charles. To fulfill that mission, they create community art projects that involve many of these organizations requesting funding, and that engage the public to help make them aware of various creative art forms. Their weekly eBlasts go out to about 2800 people with community arts news. Last year, their signature event was the Plein Air event. This program was a huge success and 45 artists came to St Charles for painting and they sold more than \$18,000 in art and it was all paintings of the St Charles area. This is going on again this year and are partnering with other city businesses, helping to bring more revenue into the city. The Banner program is another successful partnering program. The banners are painted and sold to the community. A very successful public art exhibit. This year will have 150 banners to sell. This past year the SCAC is renting office space which has been a huge benefit to their operations and ability to host artists in a physical space. Continuing to partner with local artists and to get the word out about the depth of creative arts in St. Charles.

Norris Cultural Arts Center – Konnie Sherry presented with Jim Collins and Mark Smith. They celebrated their 47th anniversary. They have 3 art shows a year in the gallery with some outside exhibitors as well. They've grown in the last year and they had more artist participants. For the Art Antics show they had 231 entries, the most they've ever had. The sculpture show and water color show were both very successful. "Wednesdays at One" is another program highlighting some time of artistic topic at the Baker Community Center. They will continue to use that facility for the next five years. Saturday Night Lights is usually a concert presenting various musical genres. They share the Norris Center with St Charles East HS programs so they are mindful of how they are programming to get a variety of events in.

6. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn Meeting was made by Spero and seconded by Manthei. Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.