

City of St Charles

Cultural Commission Meeting

May 9, 2016

Century Station Training Room

5:15 PM

Call to Order at 5:17 PM

Roll called by Carylie Forte

Present: Anne Becker; Debi Mader; Father Peck; Kathy Melone; Larry Maholland; Scott Corbin; Jamie Swenson (arrived 5:20pm); Sharon Spero (arrived 5:21pm); Jodi Manthei (arrived 5:43pm)

Also Present: Chris Minick, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles;

Anne Becker opened the meeting asking if there was anyone who wished to chair the Visitors Cultural Commission. Becker asked for a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 8, 2015 meeting. Father Peck made the motion, which was seconded by Larry Maholland. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Presentations began with:

Fine Line Creative Arts Center – Lynn Caldwell, Executive Director and John Abel, VP

A video was shown to illustrate Fine Line. This was produced with help from monies received last year. 30th anniversary of Fine Line being located in St. Charles. Providing art education and experiences. Bringing more people to the area and have expanded the Fine Line Arts Festival with a Friday evening event and art auction. Have scheduled more events involving outside performance artists as well, which brings in hotel/motel revenue to the City. Next year they are mounting their first ever outdoor sculpture show – received an outside grant to fund this project. Continuing into 30th year with “Uncommon Threads” program at the Q Center, which continues to be quite successive. Needing and wanting to grow, so they need additional funds to make that happen. They need to spend more on marketing endeavors. New Marketing Manager hired in January but her hours are limited to 10 per week due to lack of funds. Her scope of time and efforts needs to increase, which is their focus of funds that would come from the Visitors Cultural Commission.

Anne Becker asked where do they show their video? It is on their website and was shown at “Common Threads” last year, and during tours, etc. Chris Minick asked - what are they planning to take the Marketing Manager’s hours to? It would go from 10 hours to 20 hours per week. Larry Maholland asked what do they hope to do with the Marketing? To let people know that they are here: with advertising, more social media focus and going out to talk to groups to spread the word.

Fox Valley Concert Band – Susan Tarson presented (PowerPoint was used).

They perform a dozen concerts per year and partner with the Norris Cultural Center throughout the year. The Band has more than 80 performing members who are auditioned before becoming a member of the band. They support Illinois artists, middle school students and also have an Intern program where these students can audition to become members of the band, so educating young players is a part of their goals. They bring in guest performing artists and collaborate with Chicago Brass Band, the Elgin Choral Union, the Fox Valley Orchestra, and others. Questions: Jamie Swenson asked how they decide which middle school to focus on music education? This year they chose Kaneland Harter Middle School to share their music education. FVCB is the “house concert band” at the Norris Center, but they do pay

a reduced rate to perform there (4 x in the past year). They anticipate they will be playing more concerts next year, and some in collaboration with the STC Park District. Sharon Spero asked how they will be using the VCC funds. The money they receive will be used help to cover the Norris Center performing costs (usually \$1,000 per performance). Their concerts are free to the public (part of the FVCB mission). Debi Mader asked if they sought funding outside of St. Charles? They do not qualify unless they perform in that particular city.

Preservation Partners of Fox Valley – Liz Safanda presented. Their mission mostly geared to history and cultural education, often including music performance in every event they schedule. They are gearing their events to young children through teenagers for instruction and education. The downside is that school visits have dropped off because of common core and transportation costs as a factor. Senior groups are also a focus as they find the historical aspect very interesting. They have 2 new programs: Elder Care and Challenged Adults. They will be programming a Memory Café at the Fabian Japanese Garden. They will use VCC funding toward expenses related to their education mission.

St. Charles Arts Council – Kris Wano (new Exec Director) presented. They now have a contract with BMO Bank to purchase property from 11-15 E. Main Street (all floors). They are in motion to become a downtown center for arts and education and the hope is to be open in their new office/space sometime in the fall. Kicked off an intense philanthropy campaign to attract major donors to fund this project. Wano made the point that their new space will benefit all the arts in the community – visual, performing, music, etc. Wanting to generate a lot of people to the downtown area. Will attempt to rent space to artists as well, as a place to present their art form. So it will take a significant build out to repurpose the space to their needs and the needs of the community. In their 50K request, they would earmark half of that toward the repurposing of the first floor space. Looking at matching grants to help redo the façade of the buildings. They will partner with other downtown business to present a once a month gallery event to allow artists to display their art. Social media will be the focus of the use of the other half of the money they are requesting. Currently pay a media person on a part-time basis but would like to increase that person's time with promoting the Arts Council.

Questions: Jodie Manthei asked Kris to speak more to the repurposing aspect. The building's interior needs quite a bit of repair and refurbishing. Sharon Spero asked about the financing of the 400K mortgage. The hope is to get 200K upfront in donor funds and the other 200K would be financed. 100K of that 200K has already been committed to be paid by a donor. The mortgage and financing are in place, with BMO Bank.

Steel Beam Theatre – Joe Billquist and Lori Holm presented.

The emphasis this past year has been on a new marketing effort and a revamped website, and increasing their social media presence. With the departure of Donna Steele last fall, Marge Uhlarik-Boller took over as Executive Artistic Director. Have expanded summer shows and are partnering with some other new businesses, like Abbys and Rocket Fizz that can mutually benefit by working together on certain event. They've seen a 70% increase in attendance in the last year and are proud of this success in attracting new audiences. Requesting 20K to be split between the Mainstage Theatre and the Children's Theatre. Lori Holm talked about the SBT Youth Education program, consisting of 4-5 classes within 6 week sessions, running from August to May. These classes help kids to build confidence and giving them tools to use in everyday life. Storytelling is also a way to educate and introduce history in a creative way. Marge Uhlarik-Boller was introduced to the group.

Kathy Melone asked if the increase in attendance is due to their marketing or something else.

Resurgence in economy and downtown activity and possibly the closing of Fox Valley Repertory. Also, their marketing and media presence has greatly increased. Anne Becker asked them to clarify in their Budget Expense sheet what is "debt service" that is under Additional Cash Flow items? Marge Uhlarik

stated it is their goal to be debt free of the Additional Cash Flow items (with the exception of the LeRoi note) by the end of 2016. It was an accumulation of debt over five years.

Norris Cultural Arts Center – Mark Smith presented.

Thanked the board for their previous support. He noted past achievements within a bare bones operational structure and budget. They have one full-time employee and 2 hourly part-time staff, and use an outside marketing firm on a limited retainer. Music in the Gallery events are increasing 50%, from 6 to 9 concerts in that venue. This has doubled their average audience. So they are continuing to reinvent themselves as a performance venue. They're getting more sponsors and increasing their collaborations and partnerships, but still rely on the VCC funding to help balance costs. In the case of presenting a group like the US Air Force Band, they cannot do anything that results in revenue for them, like sell advertising or tickets (it is a free concert), so any costs associated with that, they have to take on. They've developed a relationship with radio station WNIU in Dekalb, which helps to draw a new audience of their radio listeners from west of St. Charles and even Rockford, to come to hear live music at the Norris. They've renewed their lease with D303, so are set in their space for another two years. In total, they've had 22 events in the Gallery, plus 6 long-term art exhibits -- all on a pretty lean budget. Their Spring fundraiser presented the world premiere of a new work by composer Bill Bolcom which was an outstanding event in which to raise funds for the Norris.

Sculpture in the Park - Erika Young and Vanessa Bell-LaSota presented.

Their purpose is to raise awareness of sculptural arts in the St. Charles community. The sculptures in the park impact all ages, all interests, and all abilities, and Mount St. Mary Park is now used by tens of thousands of people. It's a free exhibition of unique and original sculptures, some of which have been acquired by the Park Foundation over the years, and each year they bring in a new crop of sculptures to the show. According to their survey, the award-winning Sculpture in the Park event is the third most enjoyable experience in the downtown area. Their Artist Reception is another big piece of this event, which helps to draw visitors and residents to the park. This year their expenses are at \$8,500. Questions: Larry Maholland asked how much received in donations? Last year it was about \$9K, in total. Jodie Manthei asked how they solicit artists? They have a list of about 300 sculptor artists nationwide, mostly gotten through other organizations and educational institutions.

St. Charles Singers – Kay Kendall and Jennifer Hunt presented. They showed a DVD about STC Singers at the start of their presentation. Several board members commented on the professional look of the DVD and as a persuasive marketing tool. STC Singers are a professional chamber choir with a mission to perform, promote and preserve the finest choral music. 73% of their patron base are non-residents, and this is a plus in bringing additional revenue to the City when the out-of-town folks stay for a meal in the downtown area. They are asking for \$14K this year for programming; marketing; educational outreach and their international tour (to represent the City when they tour England in June 2017). Also, they have acquired a new portable *positiv* chamber organ, a rare instrument which is being rented out to other Chicago area music organizations. Other projects they continue to provide to St. Charles and the surrounding area: Sing! Workshop for teens; volunteer training; and other group activities and special events.

A discussion amongst the Commission's board members followed:

The group discussed an idea from Larry Maholland on changing the process of the allocation funding in a more quantitative way. In the past, an excel spreadsheet was sent to the board before the funding meeting with the funding each organization had received in the previous year, and what they were asking for in the current fiscal year. By sending this out ahead of time, the board members can come to the funding meeting with this knowledge as a base to begin the discussion. Maholland's idea is to have categories and their importance (which would carry a number value) to evaluate and score the various

organizations, prior to deciding the amount of funding allocated to each of them. In this way, the conversation has a starting point with certain quantitative values, and then they can make funding correlations to the organizations. So board members are tasked with coming to the May 16 meeting with their own values weighted and assigned to each category on the spreadsheet, for each organization asking for funding. It was decided that Maholland would send out his spreadsheet to the members by Friday, May 13, and that the original mission statement of the Visitors Cultural Commission be sent to each member, as a reminder of what they should be examining specifically about each organization's funding request. The 5 categories discussed: Economic Impact; Enhance Community Culture; Resident Benefit; Enhance St. Charles Reputation; and Essential to Existence.

Because there are new members this year to the VCC board, each member introduced him/herself at the end of the meeting.

Public Comment – there was no one from the general public present for public comment at this point in the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.