

City of St Charles

Cultural Commission Meeting

June 8, 2015

Century Station Training Room

5:30 PM

Call to Order at 5:31 PM

Roll called by Carylie Forte

Present: Anne Becker, Catie Barron, Jim Collins, Larry Maholland, Jamie Swenson, Stu Ainsworth, Father David Peck, Kathy Melone, Jodi Manthei (arrived 5:44pm)

Also Present: Chris Minick, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles; Representatives of Steel Beam Theater (Donna Steele); St. Charles Arts Council (Elizabeth Bellaver arrived at 5:40pm);

Anne Becker began the meeting asking for a motion to approve the Minutes of the May 18, 2015 meeting. Kathy Melone made the motion, which was seconded by Jamie Swenson. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Anne asked if any visitors would like to make Public Comments at this time. Donna Steele expressed thanks for the funding and continued prosperity and success to all of us.

Anne asked Chris Minick to speak again to how the 10% reduction impacted the total funding amount this year. Chris projected on the screen the schedule of funding spreadsheet. The sheet shows the amount of funding each organization requested for 15-16, what they received the prior year, and their percentage of the total allocation – which is \$80,460. This year, Water Street Studios did not apply for funding, so they were excluded from the calculations, given that they received \$5,750 last year. He assumed the 10% reduction that was approved by the City Council on June 1, 2015 to work with in the allocating of funds. The reduction is approximately 9K from last year. He used the same percentages used in 2014-15 to allocate out the funding for the organizations this year. Discussion would then begin from this starting point, with any changes reflected on the excel spreadsheet on the screen. Chris turned it back over to Anne to begin the discussion.

Anne said it would be helpful to see the Requested Funding column, and Carylie said she had brought with her copies of the Funding Request sheet she had emailed to everyone a week before, which were passed out to the group. Anne asked if there were comments to get the ball rolling on the funding discussion.

Catie Barron said she did not recall hearing anything in the presentations on May 18 that seemed to have a big change re: operating expenses for any organization. So she thinks using the same percentages/numbers as last year does not present an issue for her. This was a sentiment that was generally agreed with by the group. Anne thought she had heard from the presentation by Fox Valley Repertory (FVR) that they have 4 plays scheduled, but if one of those is a musical, which would be a big draw for them, but would also increase their expenses. What FVR is asking for this year is quite a bit more than previous year, so she was wondering if anyone else had heard in their presentation – that they needed more funding to try to do a musical. Anne also mentioned that there are some groups that are closer to meeting their funding request than some others. While there are others that are quite far

from achieving their funding request. For example, FVR, St. Charles Arts Council, and Steel Beam Theatre are requesting quite a bit more funding than other organizations, and thus, are far from meeting the figure of their current funding request, if it were to stand as is. Kathy Melone commented that she thought some orgs that are requesting less did so because they realized the funding pot was not large enough to request 1/3 of it just for their organization, for example, as one or two others had. Kathy recalled that at the May 18 meeting it was asked of St. Charles Arts Council during their presentation, why they were requesting 33K and the response was recalled as “we thought we would shoot for the moon.” Kathy’s point being that she doesn’t look as closely at the “amount requested” by each organization, since the funding is allocated usually amongst at least 9-10 organizations per year, with a view to parity in the allocating of funds. To even out the playing field, it was decided to take \$500.00 from St. Charles Singers, Preservation Partners, and Sculpture in the Park to put toward the allocation for Fox Valley Repertory.

Anne wanted to acknowledge the guests in the room who may disagree with this tack, and so solicited comment from Donna Steele and Elizabeth Bellaver, should they wish to comment. Chris allowed that it was the Chair’s prerogative to allow additional Public Comment during the meeting. Elizabeth Bellaver wanted to clarify something in the comment made earlier by Kathy Melone. Anne polled the VCC board members to see if they would allow the comment. Three members said yes, and six members said no. Comment was not allowed.

Stu Ainsworth wanted to add that any one organization could, with additional money, be doing something new or important to them. He felt it is not up to the VCC to try to make that happen for one organization over another by giving additional funds. Jodi said that FVR said in their presentation that they were looking at using the funds on marketing and advertising, and did not speak directly to being able to use VCC funds to present a musical show. Anne said let’s go with what the Minutes reflect, and then someone can rebut what Anne had suggested. She asked Stu if he would want to do that. He said it was his recommendation not to add funds to FVR.

Catie said that because of their location at Pheasant Run, FVR has great potential to bring in greater tax dollars to the City, which is where these VCC funds are coming from in the first place – which are the hotel/motel tax dollars to the City. She does not have a problem giving the additional \$1500 to FVR. If you compare them to other theater organizations in the City, like a Steel Beam, FVR is underfunded compared to them. Steel Beam is poised to get 13K, whereas FVR is likely to receive near 9K. Jamie said that FVR is gearing their outreach with scholarships to younger audiences as well, in an effort to develop future audiences.

Anne summarized by saying they had 2 things happening: 1) Fox Valley Rep receiving \$1500 more in funding; and 2) Stu disagreed with that. So Anne asked for a hand vote from members on proceeding with the funding allocations as suggested with the Ayes (8) and Nays (1):

Fine Line Creative - \$8,007
Fox Valley Repertory - \$9,508
Preservation Partners - \$8,157
St. Charles Arts Council - \$12,216
Steel Beam Theatre - \$13,466
Norris Cultural Arts Center - \$6,733
Sculpture in the Park - \$5,271
Fox Valley Concert Band - \$5,579
St. Charles Singers - \$11,523

Jamie made a motion to approve the funding and it was seconded by Father Peck. Carylie called the roll to poll the members of the board. Ayes – 8 and Nays – 1.
(Catie Barron qualified her vote with an abstention on the St. Charles Arts Council funding).

Anne asked Chris if he had heard any feedback from the letter that was read at the May 18 City Council meeting. Chris said Mark read it into the record, verbatim, at the Council meeting. He talked a bit about why he couldn't represent it personally. Anne asked if this 10% would be taken away only when the state enacts it as law, or is it a done deal now, without a reduction that the governor has proposed by taking half of the tax revenue from municipalities? Chris said it is a done deal, no matter if the State makes the change or not. If the Council were to change this, they would need to vote on it at a future City Council meeting. Catie asked if they would hold that 10% (roughly 9K) for the following year? Chris said it was a good question, and it would be up to the discretion of the Council to how they might restore it in the future.

Stu wanted to draw attention to page 10 of the 990 Form submitted by Fox Valley Rep. (Not everyone had brought those documents with them to the meeting). He doubts if there is another org that has their level of expenditures. And if they want to do a musical that will cost them a little more, they should be able to find room for that.

Anne asked Chris when the funding allocation suggestions would be presented to City Council. Chris said that would either be July 6 or July 20. Most likely it would be July 20. Anne asked if anyone would like to attend the City Council meeting with her on that date.

Anne asked the Board members if it was ok to allow Donna Steele and Elizabeth Bellaver another opportunity to offer Public Comment before the meeting adjourned.

Elizabeth wanted to clarify that when asked during their presentation on May 18 why they asked for more than any other organization (33K), that it was not her or a rep from her organization that said they would "shoot for the moon."

Donna wanted to state that FVR has always done musicals, so adding one to their rep this year would not be something new. That notion upset her. She also thinks the "Funding Request" column on the spreadsheet should not exist. She has been requesting funds for the last 14 years and feels she has survived and existed these years, through changes within the City and with a recession, and is grateful to finally be getting 14K from the VCC, but it has taken her 14 years of programming in this community. She suggests that the City do as the Illinois Arts Alliance and the Illinois Arts Council do and "grade" the organization on its merits, rather than on their request for funding amount. Funding is based on the budget of the organization and Donna suggests that the City look at this, especially the economic impact the organization has in the community, in how it distributes the funds.

Jodi Manthei made a Motion to Adjourn and it was seconded by Jim Collins. The Motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52PM.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.