

City of St Charles
Visitors Cultural Commission Meeting
May 2, 2018
Century Station Training Room
5:15 PM

Call to Order at 5:22 PM

Roll called by Carylie Forte

Present: Anne Becker; Kathy Melone; Larry Maholland; Scott Corbin; Jamie Swenson; Sharon Spero; Sue Klinkhamer

Absent: Jodi Manthei; Debi Mader

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

Anne Becker asked for a Motion to Approve the Minutes from the May 17, 2017 meeting. Sharon Spero made the motion and it was seconded by Jamie Swenson. The Minutes were unanimously approved by the board.

Next, Becker asked if there was Public Comment at that time – there was none.

Becker welcomed visitors to these open meetings of the Visitors Cultural Commission and explained that the board uses a matrix with guidelines to help make funding decisions. It was used last year and has been refined a little this year. She added that after this point, no Public Comment is allowed.

Presentations began at 5:24pm.

Fox Valley Concert Band – Jan Mammaing, Executive Director, presented. Thanked VCC for past support and opportunity to speak tonight. Highlights from their packet of information, include: Performing for 35 seasons in St. Charles and they feel they are a positive presence to the cultural and artistic life in St. Charles and benefit other St. Charles based organizations and business as well. Their professional musicians perform 10 or more high-quality music concerts and for more than 10 years their formal concert season has been presented at the Norris Cultural Arts Center. They also perform at park districts, retirement communities and other organizations wishing to present a concert band performance. 70 band members come from more than 2 dozen communities in 6 counties. Members drive many miles to attend rehearsals, which speaks well to the vitality of the band and these musicians who want to perform for the St. Charles community/audience. This past season the band based music selections from Latin America and Africa, and they will end the season with musical selections from European composers. Their annual Holiday concert is well attended, as are the summer concerts, and these patrons also help to support other local businesses while they are in town to attend their concerts. They continue to support education through their collaborations with middle school music students. They perform free of charge and this makes them unique, and thus, grateful for grants they receive. They solicit support from local organizations through program advertising and gifts in-kind. Band members and their contacts provide personal donations which results in a mailing list representing donors from nearly 100 communities. Their major need each year is to fund their operating expenses. They would like to continue this by requesting funding from the VCC to help offset the expenses of performing at the Norris Cultural Arts Center, for the services of music director Holman, and for obtaining music that creates exciting musical programs to present to and add value to the City of St. Charles.

Jamie Swenson asked if they planned to continue to have the relationship with the middle school honors bands? Yes, they plan on continuing that 16 year relationship with middle schools. It provides the younger musicians exposure to performing with a large ensemble and exposure to a professional performance band.

Anne Becker referred to their budget and inquired about how they would allocate their funds, noting that they totaled around \$9,000, but asking for \$14,000. They talked about space rental fees, custodial services, insurance, and salary for their professional conductors. Mamminga said they would like to hire professional soloists for certain programs, so the additional 5K would also be earmarked for that. Larry Maholland asked what has been the biggest change in the last 10 years? The quality of their music has been elevated in the years that Dr. Holman has led their group and that stability has brought many more professional players to their group.

Preservation Partners of Fox Valley – Kelsey Shipton (new Exec Dir.) presented. They are very appreciative of the past support of the VCC. They're a non-profit historical preservation advocacy and education group focused on the Tri-Cities, but based in St. Charles. They operate 3 house museums and an historic school, 3 of which are in St. Charles. Their aim is to educate local children. Durant House offers year round tours designed for the third grade curriculum of school districts. A summer camp at the Durant House reflects daily tasks that would have drawn settlers to Kane County, featuring period tools and equipment for a hands-on activities learning experience for young children. Fireside and Summer Frolic are other programs they offer to children and parents combining fun and learning in an historic setting.

The Beith House in St. Charles was restored as a preservation study house-it exists as a physical record of historic construction techniques and interior decoration techniques. School tours are hosted for the public, in particular for youth to educate on the importance of local heritage. In 2018 they took over operation of the Scholes School and will be introducing new programming in the coming year. They are requesting \$9,000 to accommodate their new responsibilities with Scholes School, their educational responsibilities and museums. Anne Becker asked in the Budget, are there 3 directors or two. Kelsey said there are two directors. Does each museum have its own staff? Yes. Passport fees? DuPage and Kane Counties can offer a "passport" to get into all the museums. Schoolchildren get in free. Jamie Swenson asked how they took over Scholes School? The school approached them and it was a natural transition for them since having worked with Scholes School for many years. The contents of the school and operational responsibilities were passed to them

St. Charles Singers – Kay Kendall and Jeff Hunt presented. A 2-minute video was presented re: their performing tour of England last year. Kendall thanked the Commission for their support over the years. Each year they rehearse about 20 times in preparation for approximately 7 public performances at Baker Community Church and also at privately contracted performances. Each year they present (2) \$1,000 scholarships at choir concerts at either high school. They host a summer singing workshop for teens which on average brings about 50 students from 20 area high schools to participate that concludes with an inspirational concert that is open to the public (on July 19 this year). Will host their first ever Mozart Festival weekend - the details still taking shape – on Aug. 24-26 in St. Charles. By performing in regional, national and international venues, and through CD releases, they act as artistic ambassadors for St. Charles. They survey their audiences at roughly 3 year intervals and through these survey results they can say with certainty that 50% or more of their singers and their audience will visit St. Charles restaurants and pubs prior to and after their concerts. They strive to offer artistic excellence as a choir ensemble and as ambassadors of the St. Charles community. Their Mozart Festival has posed an additional stress to their budget because they've hired an orchestra. This project is 10 years in the making and they will be the only choral group to have performed and recorded all of Mozart's sacred music. This is choral music that has been underserved, so they are taking this initiative as well to make it better known. The Festival will

include a symphonic concert and two choral concerts. The 3 day festival should bring in additional revenue to local businesses. Anne Becker asked if with their international tours, have those groups they have exchanged with to they think of coming to St. Charles? Claire Choir from Cambridge, UK did come over once. Kathy Melone said she appreciated getting this survey from them as it is a step in trying to quantify results of the attendance by patrons to their programs. Larry Maholland asked what changes they have seen over the last 10 years? The choir has gained national and international recognition with their CDs, and being played on Sirius radio and WFMT, so they have really seen growth there. Also this has given them more local recognition as people are hearing them more on radio. Becker asked how they actually did this survey? Kendall said that through their patron management and ticket system they emailed those patrons and their singers to ask specific questions about their habits on the days they attend a performance.

St. Charles Arts Council – Director, Alison Bastian presented (PowerPoint presentation used). Arts Council is grateful for VCC support. Bastian is the first paid contractor, all others helping at the Council are volunteers. Their mission is to serve and promote the arts and cultural life of the St. Charles community. They support local artists of all disciplines and provide opportunities to share their art form with the broader public, making arts more inclusive and accessible in the community. Their objective is to provide information and promotional efforts about the arts and be a communication hub for the arts. They also promote cultural tourism getting the word out to a broad audience. They want to create a center for arts and education and this is a continuing goal, with Bastian focusing this year on getting closer to that goal. Envision the space to be where artists can network, learn, and interact through the arts, a space that would host gallery exhibits and live performances in all artistic disciplines, with an education component involved. This past April, they co-organized with Water Street Studios and Fine Line Arts the Fox River Arts Ramble. This was a one day tour of the arts from Aurora to Elgin, conceived as a “gallery crawl” across 5 towns. Over half of the organizations involved were from St. Charles, so there are a lot of arts organizations working in our community. With the Park District, they host “ArtsFest” - a 10-day arts festival in September, featuring dance, music, literature, live theater, and art galleries. Strong Pop-Up Art Gallery program – 30 galleries to date at 2 shows, currently held at Pheasant Run. The funds requested would support their advertising and promotion and program contractors and grow their program and event offerings, Art in Public Places walking tour and to expanding ArtsFest. Kathy Melone asked if other nearby communities have an Arts Council. Yes, but they all act in slightly different ways. Anne Becker asked about the slide, “Soul of Communities” – is that about St. Charles. No, it is a general survey that was done outside of this area. Becker suggested they look at the City’s last Strategic Plan, which listed the 5 top areas that residents thought attracted people to St. Charles. Becker also asked to clarify if the OtoCast tracking app, was to track people who were doing the tour. Bastian said yes that was the case and represented over 1,000 hits. Sharon Spero asked how they utilize the catalog on their website. The website is navigable by artist, by location, and other ways to sort data and helps people to do the tour by checking the site and deciding what they want to attend. Larry Maholland asked if there was a formal relationship between the Arts Council and the city’s Economic Development dept. Bastian mentioned they work specifically with Economic Development for ArtsFest and get \$2,500 for promotional material. There is no formal relationship between the two entities at this point.

Steel Beam Theatre – Presenters: Pat Abel, Marge Uhlarik-Boller, and Vicki Michalski. Abel is an actor and former board member. Steel Beam Theatre just finished its 17th season and had very good attendance – at 65% and growing gradually on a show by show basis. They continue wonderful partnerships with other local businesses and this helps to amplify their revenue opportunities. They’re continuing to use the discounting service Goldstar system which opens up a 50% discount on 20 tickets per performance. This helps to attract a wider audience to St. Charles and Steel Beam. They earn 1/3 of their revenue through ticket sales. They are a

professional non-equity theater performing culturally rich plays. Uhlarik-Boller noted that their youth theater has grown significantly in the last season, bringing in young actors who are inspired to do musical theater, which is a draw for the young. They had 65 kids this year in their youth program, a significant rise from the previous year. They're at 72% attendance in that program. With presenting musicals, there is the cost of royalties to produce these. So this is an area which Steel Beam would utilize funds from the Visitors Cultural Commission. Their Sensory-Friendly program is aimed at those who have autism spectrum disorder, providing them a safe place to take in theater without having to worry about bringing them for entertainment. They are training their young performers to learn how to perform under these conditions. Marketing this program will take money, and they would be the only theater in the western suburbs to offer this special program. Michalski talked about keeping the theater on track, to run as lean as they can and to put on performances; they have become known for these last 17 years. Ticket sales cover roughly 1/3 of their budget (which is balanced every year). With costs like rent, teacher stipends, one employee salary, they must put on their programs at a price people can afford. Sharon Spero asked about the debt service portion of their budget. Are back rents nearly paid? An agreement with landlord – he has divided over the next 24 months, and they will pay off what is owed that way. The other debt service item - payment of that loan has been deferred with the lien holder. Chris Minick asked if their FY 2017 tax return would be available soon. Michalski said it is due June 15 and they will send it to the commission when it is available.

Norris Cultural Arts Center – Mark Smith presented. He thanked the VCC for its past support of their organization and the City's support over the years. The first performance at the Norris Cultural Arts Center was May 7, 1978. This past 40th Anniversary season kicked off last September with a gala event at the Baker Community Center. It was a dinner theatre event with a professional production with lighting and sound system, which was a success and proved what can be done with that recently renovated space. They are blessed to have dedicated volunteers that constitute the Art Gallery committee and they manage all three of their annual art shows. So they are always trying to fortify their volunteer base and keep the energy at a high level. In the past years they have been using their art gallery as a performance venue, and that has helped to add needed revenue. They hosted nine events this past year, which is keeping pace with where they want to be for the season. Their request for funding from the VCC will help to bring in new cultural art exhibits and performances. Performing artist fees, facility costs, art exhibit expenses and marketing also will come from the funding by the VCC. Their audiences are growing as they are expanding their offerings, one example of this is Bill McLaughlin performing live his radio version of his syndicated program "Exploring Music." WMFT's Carl Grapentine hosted and promoted the appearance of the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club. People from all over the Chicago area are coming to St. Charles to attend events. So the variety of arts programming they present is engaging new audiences.

Sculpture in the Park - Erika Young marketing liaison to the St. Charles Park Foundation, presented. Sculpture in the Park is part of the Park Foundation, and is in their 13th year of presenting original sculptures at the Mount St. Mary Park. Their mission is to enrich the recreational, educational and cultural life of the St. Charles community by encouraging and soliciting support for the St. Charles Park District. New this year is that their entire application process on their website. All the details participants need are now online and are downloadable, including completing and submitting their information as a participant. This year, they received more submissions – 18 artists and 25 pieces were reviewed. 12 of the 13 pieces selected were wider and higher than 5 feet, which is an exciting development this year. This occurred because they increased the stipend this year to \$1,000 per chosen sculpture. It was previously at \$500, so the increase to \$1,000 helped to cover their costs to transport the piece to the Park and other travel expenses. Stipends account for about 75% of their budget, and in the past the commitment from the VCC has covered about half of their overall budget. This past year the St.

Charles Park District committed \$6K to their program, which allowed them to increase the stipends for this year's program. In previous years the Park District donated construction services and supplies and staff to assist with planning and execution, but this was the first year that the Park District had donated funds to the program. They don't know for sure if the Park District will continue to support Sculpture in the Park, but the Park Foundation will again appeal to the Park District for financial support. The Park Foundation is asking the VCC for \$10K this year in the hope that they can sustain the \$1K stipend for at least new sculptures for next year's program. Also, Sculpture in the Park has expanded beyond the boundaries of Mount St Mary Park. And they are showcasing a piece of art in the new Baker Community Center plaza, facing Rt. 31 and it will remain there for one whole year.

Anne Becker asked how they arrived at the 51,000 population and they said they include the St. Charles Township with the City population. She suggested they tap into Otocast to calculate the number of people who come to see the sculptures at Mt. St Mary Park and other locations.

Marquee Youth Stage (MY Stage) – Connie Flores and Michelle Das presented. Their mission as a not for profit performing arts organization founded in 2011, is to allow all those who want to perform, the chance to perform – it's a "no cut" environment – there's a role for every kid; to inspire creativity, to support and enrich and empower youth. Theater has the power to influence and impact youth and to build on life skills. Kids struggle with so many outside pressures, that they want to provide a safe place for kids to develop confidence and to feel a sense of belonging. They can grow as leaders through what they learn, be it via acting, directing or learning stage management and techniques. These kids are making lasting friendships and can go beyond themselves by serving in their communities. They're creating a family atmosphere where youth is the focus and they can learn how to grow as performers and leaders in the arts community. By the time they are ready for college, they are ready to face the pressures of auditioning and the performing arts. They are currently affiliated with about four D303 schools and hope to build on that each year. This summer they will produce the musical The Little Mermaid so there are extra costs affiliated with those royalties. With last year's funds from the VCC, they were able to get a new lightboard and sound upgrades. This year they ask for the VCC's support for 8 new LED lights; for script and royalty fees for new productions, and additional operating and marketing costs. They've partnered with the Park District and hope that the word gets out from that partnership. Kathy Melone asked about their marketing line item, what would they like to do now to be effective in reaching more kids. Flores said that they would like to send out more postcards, which the kids like to spread the word by handing those out. So more of those would add to the promoting of their productions. Becker said she was confused by their number of actual enrollments (350) vs actual participants (199). Some participants enroll several times during the year, so the 199 are unique participants. They're averaging one production per month, and have experienced a 35-40% growth rate in the past 6 years.

Fine Line Arts – Lynn Caldwell presented. Thanked the VCC for their past support. One of their missions is to move forward in enriching the St. Charles area, and in the past year their board has revised Fine Line's mission statement. They have grown into a unique community resource that offers St. Charles residents a vast selection of opportunities to enjoy and connect with the arts. Last year was their first ever outdoor sculpture show and the bridge was finished just in time for the opening (they reached out to Sculpture in the Park to cross promote and collaborate). Next year they will celebrate their 40th anniversary. Fine Line is always looking to bring more visibility to St. Charles and they got the idea of doing an arts tour of the Fox Valley – the Fox River Arts Ramble – and they reached out to St Charles Arts Council and Water Street Studios and created the arts tour. More than half of the participant artists were from St. Charles. This event drew hundreds of visitors to Fine Line to see their studios during this tour. The Kavanagh Gallery continues to offer a diverse lineup of shows including a juried invitational opportunities across all media. Their Create Friday series has been a huge success and offers Fine Line's take on social art experience. They've had a 15% rise in workshop and class

revenues, which they feel is partially a result of the new coursebook they launched last year. They are exploring new opportunities – glass blowing operation is now becoming reality due to the luck of finding glass blowing equipment that became available. So using existing space and expanding that will become the new glass blowing studio by fall 2018 or early next year. This will require a marketing campaign. Fine Line contributed to the Motel Hotel tax by having brought in 45 room nights that they are aware of, with their events. Fine Line Arts Festival is June 2 this year. Larry Maholland asked what has changed in their outlook over the past years? They have sort of been a “best kept secret” for a number of years, but the changes they have seen have to do with marketing themselves more as a St. Charles arts organization and by partnering with other St. Charles cultural organizations. Their connection with St. Charles is getting better and better.

A discussion amongst the Commission’s board members followed:

Becker asked the Board if they had comments on the Matrix ranking guidelines she handed out.

VCC MATRIX RANKING GUIDELINES	
1=REMOTE	Grant funds will be used for things outside of the mission of the VCC such as building, physical structural additions, remodeling, etc.
3=MODERATE	Grant fund applicants show evidence of one of the following: Applicants meet the criteria established by the VCC; use of monies has a structure with clear, definite plans; they have yearly assessed or evaluated their successes and use of the money; the group demonstrates consistency in their plans and uses of the money.
5=STRONG	Grant fund applicants show evidence of two of the following: Applicants meet the criteria established by the VCC; use of monies has a structure with clear, definite plans; they have yearly assessed or evaluated their successes and use of the money; the group demonstrates consistency in their plans and uses of the money.
7=DIRECT	Grant fund applicants show evidence of three of the following: Applicants meet the criteria established by the VCC; use of monies has a structure with clear, definite plans; they have yearly assessed or evaluated their successes and use of the money; the group demonstrates consistency in their plans and uses of the money.
9=DIRECT AND STRONG	Grant fund applicants show evidence of the following: Applicants meet the criteria established by the VCC; use of monies has a structure with clear, definite plans; they have yearly assessed or evaluated their successes and use of the money; the group demonstrates consistency in their plans and uses of the money.

Last year was the first year a Matrix was used for scoring and arriving at funding allocations. Becker wanted to hear any clarifications or concerns from board members. For example, Becker pointed out that they differentiate between Direct and Direct and Strong by evaluating that an organization clearly demonstrates longevity and that use of the funding has clear and definite plans and that they have performed an annual assessment or evaluation of their success and

prior use of funding. Becker asked for input in making these guidelines even more distinct. An example of Remote would be that funding is not allowed for building or remodeling. Becker asked if scores could be turned in by Friday, May 11. The Funding Allocation meeting is May 16.

Larry Maholland asked if residents were queried on the importance of the arts in the Community Survey that the City sends out. Chris Minick said he would follow up on what was asked in the 2016 Survey the City sent and report back.

Maholland made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Scott Corbin. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33pm.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.