

City of St Charles
Visitors Cultural Commission Meeting
May 10, 2017
Century Station Training Room
5:15 PM

Call to Order at 5:15 PM

Roll called by Carylie Forte

Present: Anne Becker; Debi Mader (arrived 5:20pm); Father David Peck; Kathy Melone; Larry Maholland (arrived 5:18pm); Scott Corbin; Jamie Swenson; Sharon Spero; Jodi Manthei

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 16, 2016 meeting and the January 12, 2017 meeting. Sharon Spero made the motion and it was seconded by Jamie Swenson. The Minutes were unanimously approved. Next, Becker asked if there was public comment at that time – there was none. Becker began the discussion of the revised scoring matrix that had been sent to the board for review in February. The Rating Criteria and Evaluation scale were tweaked to allow for a better correlation between the 4 Rating Criteria of Economic Impact; Enhance Community Culture; Resident Benefit; and Enhance St. Charles Reputation and then evaluate them using a scale of 1= Remote; 3 = Moderate; 5 = Strong; 7 = Direct; 9 = Direct and Strong. This will be the first year that the VCC will be using this matrix to score and Becker asked the Board members to have their scoring completed and sent to Carylie Forte by the weekend, so that numbers could be entered in preparation for the Funding Allocation meeting on May 17. The point is for VCC to present more data driven assessments of the impact these organizations have on the City, as a better measurement tool.

Presentations began with:

Fine Line Creative Arts Center – Lynn Caldwell, Executive Director, presented for Fine Line. Thanked the VCC for its past support. Create Yourself program is new and is a great way to begin the year with ways to explore your creative self. Also, there is Create Friday, which is one Friday night per month. Focusing on things like quilting, silk screening, torch-fired enamel work, and basket making, etc. Every month is different and is very social and creative. Design A Class is another option for small groups to design their own art class as it fits into their schedules. There's a new brochure on team building that is currently in process and will be a very valuable way for companies to incorporate a bonding experience for corporate team members. Last year Fine Line updated their website and made it mobile friendly and became a great transformation for them. Their course catalog was updated as well, so now reports are available from their website and help them organizationally. They will be having their very first outdoor sculpture show, brought by a grant from the Reva and David Logan Foundation and will be partnering with Sculpture in the Park on this project.

Larry Maholland asked if Design A Class was a corporate program. Any type of business can do a team building day with Fine Line. Kathy Melone asked if there is a target market or is this more for the general public? It is any skill level and more for general public. Melon mentioned this program has many very good possibilities. Becker said it looks like there are 7 programs that are "repeat" programs, so can they guess how many folks are return customers with these programs? They had their best season yet in 2017 and classes, the Christmas Show and the

Festival can draw up to 3,000 people. Fine Line will use VCC funds for marketing of their new programs to the public.

Norris Cultural Arts Center – Mark Smith presented. Their concerts in the Gallery are still going strong. There are 9 concerts in the series and average attendance is now at 50-75 people per event. The final program of this season is May 14. They have an active social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. They partner with Fox Valley Concert Band on other gallery concerts and these have been successful as well. They try to keep the Gallery full with curated exhibits with their fall, spring and winter shows. These are professionally judged shows. They fill gaps when one of these 3 shows is not on. In 2017-18 Norris will celebrate its 40th season. They will be discussing again with D303 in use of their theatre and those requirements. They'd like to commemorate their Anniversary Season with several stage events. They hope to maintain or increase the art gallery concerts next season. Maholland asked about D303 rentals and Smith said they are not at present able to arrange rentals using the theatre. Fox Valley Band concerts are the only thing they don't present in the Art Gallery. Becker asked if they previously got revenue when they booked an organization like the Air Force Band at the Norris Theatre. Smith said they were not able to get revenue since that was a service they provided for free, as a community service. They cannot be in a position to lose money anymore in these circumstances, so they're trying to renegotiate a plan with D303 for future theatre rentals.

Fox Valley Concert Band – Susan Tarson presented, with music director Dr. Colin Holman. They are a community ensemble of auditioned performers. They perform a dozen concerts per year and partner with the Norris Cultural Center throughout the year. Unlike some concert bands, they perform year round. They support other Illinois artists by showcasing them at concerts. They collaborate with other organizations like Norris Cultural Arts and the History Museum. Every year they share the stage with a high school or middle school and have an internship award for a high school student or qualified middle school student. They perform with them, and receive a stipend. They believe in supporting the local community, other Illinois artists, and young musicians. Collaborating with others in quality musical works is a focus of this group. They look out for other grant funding (like the Community Foundation funds allowed them to purchase a professional marimba) and revenue methods to help support their goals. They have as their concert home the Norris Cultural Arts Center. Kathy Melone commented that their performances in places like the Homestead retirement home is a good outreach in the community. Becker asked if their small ensembles garner any donations. They ask for a little help when they go outside of normal events to perform. Another area they thought they could improve on was to purchase banners to hang from performer's music stands to further identify their brand.

Preservation Partners of Fox Valley – Liz Safanda presented. At the Durant Museum the Camp and Youth Group programs provide lots of involvement for kids from June through October and only charge \$50 per child, per week. The Beith Museum is open primarily during the summer but anytime by appointment. They're especially proud of their Memory Care Program and the impact it is having on those attendees. They're always looking for other funding sources in order to maintain current programs and add to those. Senior groups are also a focus as they find the historical aspect of the Museums very interesting, and more interest is coming from school age children. They will use VCC funding toward expenses related to their The Beith House Museum and the Durant House Museum educational programming and operational costs (staff fees and printing and supplies). Becker asked how the Memory Care attendees know of this program. Safanda said that they have developed a brochure for this purpose and will be using that to reach out to many agencies to offer this program to them and this program are poised to really take off and grow.

St. Charles Arts Council – Elizabeth Bellaver and Peggy Sue Seehafer presented. They are expanding their organization's emphasis on public art and cultural tourism. They provide the support all of the arts for the St. Charles community is their focus and as overseer, helps them along. Their Pop-Up Galleries (20) are ongoing, and the challenge is to find the space to have more long term spots for these and add consistency. Pheasant Run has been instrumental in currently providing that space. The Arts Council brings back to St. Charles the arts in all sorts of formats. The Art in Public Places project is the continuation of the idea that St. Charles has many avenues in which to present and promote its arts, and the Arts Council will develop and maintain and promote the inventory of the city's cultural scene. All of this is showcased on their website. The Gratitude Project and Artsfest are two of the other programs the Arts Council brings to the community. Funds allocated to them from the Visitors Cultural Commission will be focused on public art, promote the Art in Public Places project, renew the Walking Tour App, and work on website upgrades. Manthei asked about their expanding the social media expertise, but the person they had working on this left for a fulltime job, so right now they are utilizing Facebook and their blog for online exposure.

Steel Beam Theatre – Richard Westphal, Marge Uhlarik-Boller, and Joe Billquist presented. Westphal asked if their application was missing answers to questions 5 and 6, and since the answers were missing, they brought the revised version (which was scanned and emailed to the VCC board members on May 11). Steel Beam has produced mainstage productions for 16 years and as with any arts organization of this kind, is dependent on box office revenues and donations. They would like VCC funding to support both mainstage and their youth and education programs. Been building on strengths of past years; their last show playing to 86% capacity and that's been consistent this season. The intimacy of their stage is both an advantage and a bit of disadvantage in that without increasing their seats, they do not have more seats to sell, so they will be more aggressive in their fundraising efforts. On the youth and education front, they are spending more time on retuning this program to make sure the content continues to be rewarding and challenging, and are seeing positive results. They've scheduled an ambitious program of classes and workshops for the summer and applications are coming in, but they see outreach as an important part of what they do to develop new audiences. They've increased mutually collaborative partnerships with other downtown merchants, which helps in many respects the promotion of Steel Beam Theatre.

Marquee Youth Stage (MY Stage) – Connie Flores and Cathy Mollsen presented. This is the first time they have presented requesting funds from the VCC. Flores is a founder of MY Stage and in her youth she was frustrated by the lack of theatre education in her school. Her dream was to offer theater to every child that has interest in it, and even give a nudge to those who didn't know they might have an interest. Many life skills that exposure to theatre can provide young people and they are education based. Everyone who auditions earns a role. They create a safe place where everyone is respected and given a chance. They have mentoring programs where older kids teach younger kids, learn about the tech side and from the ground up, building life skills. They offer plays and musicals seasonally and ages from pre-K to 18 years. They offer summer camps, weekly improv classes and private voice and acting classes. They've grown each year for the past six years and continuing to get their name out in the community. They'll partner with Norris Cultural Arts and will produce their summer show "Shrek" this year. With every show they do a community outreach program and this also teach the kids to give back to the community. They will be losing their space for the past six years at the Quad, and so they are looking to develop a long term presentation space in the Foundry Business Park, which is first phase of their plan. In the interim few months they will be performing at the space at Pheasant Run. They have a growing program with high demand for space so they need to find a long-term solution for this. Their programming really encompasses every day of the week, so their needs require a more permanent space. The funding they would use from VCC would go toward securing, in part, a more permanent performing space.

Sculpture in the Park - Erika Young presented.

Sculpture in the Park is part of the Park Foundation, whose 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. The foundation itself has several new projects this year: the Dog Memorial project where residents can put their dog tag on the sculpture; the Memorial Park trees and benches, and arboretum memorial in City parks. Sculpture in the Park's website now has a donation and support page (Paypal or credit card) and is able to promote their activities via their active website. Their goal is to attempt to purchase or get donated at least one new sculpture per year, and funding from the VCC is also important in their ability to attract new artists to contribute sculpture and so a stipend is paid for each of those. Questions: Melone asked how they're getting the \$1.00 donation from the Park District's website. It is \$1.00 per every program registration made at the Park District's website. Becker asked why, if the Park Foundation funds these other projects mentioned, did Sculpture in the Park come to the VCC to ask for funding. The Foundation felt that the nature of what Sculpture in the Park is about was better suited to the mission of the Visitors Cultural Commission.

There was a five (5) minute break at this point – 7:57pm.

Resumed meeting at 8:02pm

St. Charles Singers – Kay Kendall and Jeff Hunt presented. STC Singers are a professional chamber choir with a mission to perform, promote and preserve the finest choral music. This June they will embark on their fourth European tour, which they hope again will be as successful as in previous years (Note: no fundraising \$ pay for this tour). They have a lot of radio exposure and will appear at Ravinia this August 20, and they hope to fundraise for their next CD recording project. They have grown and evolved into an organization that is far reaching and their goal is to continue to provide music and culture and educational opportunities to the area. They continue fundraising efforts and hope to use VCC funds toward educational outreach, partial funding of musicians, and marketing and website revamping efforts. Becker asked how their business analysis affected their 3 year strategic plan. Hunt and Kendall explained they assessed their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to forge their strategic plan – which really points back to their success is driven by focusing on this community, and by increasing their performance schedule, and in 5 years will begin a capital campaign.

Camp Kane – Kim Malay presented. Camp Kane is new this year to VCC requests. Camp Kane is located at Langham Park and is an important local historic resource (Civil War related), but is one of this area's most underutilized resources. Formed in 2014, the Camp Kane Foundation arose as a part of a heritage tourism initiative package which was presented to some City officials. History tourism in Illinois is a big attraction and the founders felt that Camp Kane would be a good program to initiate. The City is a partner, not a funder of Camp Kane. Camp Kane uses Langham Park as their base location/campus. In 2014, the lower half of Langham Park was rededicated by the City as Camp Kane and it was landmarked to protect it. Phase 2 of their master plan is the Camp Kane Memorial. They want to redevelop it and make it attractive visually and historically to the public (the City is housing the exterior, to be constructed). So there are construction elements and materials that need to be paid - for which VCC funds would be used. Also, they host 2 events per year and they invite schools to come and visit and learn about the site.

A discussion amongst the Commission's board members followed:

Becker asked the Board if they had comments. Becker wanted to clarify to the board that things like building a space are not fundable. Manthei noted that in the past, lighting etc. was fundable. But for example, Marquee Youth Stage requests funding for renting space, not building a space, so their request for funding would go towards that. Becker asked Minick what the City's VCC budget was for FY 17-18. Minick said it was \$80,460. Becker asked if it was possible to raise

that to \$81,000 this year. Minick agreed he could accommodate that. Becker asked how the group is disposed to preparing their individual scoring sheets to send to Forte by the end of the weekend (May 14) so that Forte can input the numbers in preparation for the May 17 Funding meeting. Board members agreed to do that. Becker asked Minick to think about the best strategy to present the data to City Council, that would help them get an increase in funding (to 100K) for the Visitors Cultural Commission in the years ahead. Becker asked if the Downtown Partnership was still in existence. Minick stated they were and would be going to City Council with their funding presentation on May 15. Becker made the point that the organizations that have received funding from the VCC are inputting a beneficial contribution back to the City with their artistic product, and should be compared in kind to what other organizations, like the Downtown Partnership, History Museum and the St Charles Visitors Bureau contribute. If changing the allocations a bit amongst these organizations would be possible, that is what she would like to shoot for. Minick said it would involve presenting impactful data to the Government Operations Committee, including the number of residents these cultural organizations serve. Manthei added that there is enough data now that we could state the numbers, which would be impactful and a good starting point.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:18pm.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.