

MINUTES
City of St Charles
Visitors Cultural Commission Meeting
Wednesday, May 4, 2022

1. Call to Order at 5:15 PM

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Anne Becker; Scott Corbin; Sharon Spero; Sally Stancati, Lori Stahulak; Chuck Amenta; Jamie Swenson (arrived 5:30pm)

Members Absent: Jodi Manthei; Kathy Melone

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

3. Approval of the Minutes of May 12, 2021

Becker asked for a Motion to Approve the Minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting. Motion by Chuck Amenta, seconded by Sharon Spero. The Minutes were unanimously approved by the board members present.

4. Public Comment - Becker asked if there was Public Comment – there was none.

5. Presentations by organizations

Fox Valley Concert Band – Jan Mamminga presented. Thanked VCC for past support and opportunity to speak tonight. Visitors Cultural Commission funds are very useful to allow them to continue to fund operating expenses; to perform at the Norris Center and to keep their longtime conductor Dr. Holman. They are expanding their season to five performances with an indoor program in July. Still recovering from the economic adverse effects due to the Covid pandemic and trying to get more people to their concerts now that things are opening up. Anne Becker asked where they are holding practices and they are now using Batavia High School for rehearsals. They used to be at Geneva HS but some custodial issues prevented that so they would like to get back there. They pay a very minimal donation to Batavia HS for this use. Chuck Amenta inquired about percussion equipment usage during rehearsals and Mamminga stated when they were at Geneva HS they had better access to this equipment. They have been paying the Aurora American Legion Band's percussion equipment when they were rehearsing at the Baker Center, so the hope is to be able to again use Geneva HS for its rehearsals and equipment use.

St. Charles Arts Council – Executive Director, Kathy Hill presented. The Arts Council's mission is to serve as an umbrella for other arts organizations within the city. They are committed to coordinating community art projects such as the fabric arts installation on the municipal building. They want to bring awareness to the arts and to create a community arts environment. Had over 100 volunteers involved and 600 hours of volunteer time on this project and that generated greater interest in the arts in St Charles. This year they hope to do street painting in a participation environment. They will partner with the Library on this as well. Local businesses are also on board with this community project. They are looking at murals and a mosaic to bring attention to St Charles and the public art that is here. Serving the artistic and business community at the same time. They need funding to grow the projects that are planned and more

to market these programs and grow awareness in the community. Anne Becker asked about their marketing strategies for the future. They want to make the director position full time to increase the amount of work that can get done when you have more hours to do that. The goal is to have a home base location within a five-year period. They want to grow by 10% the number of people involved in their projects. Arts Council board member, Sue McDowell, added that even through Covid period, they're excited about the growth they're seeing in the arts in the city.

Sculpture in the Park – Erika Young, marketing manager for the Park District and liaison for the Parks Foundation (organization requesting funding), presented. Mission of the Park Foundation is to enhance the educational, recreational, and cultural life of the St Charles community by encouraging and soliciting support for the St Charles Park District. They developed a new fund (The Joseph Greenburg fund) that people can contribute to that supports dance academy and dog park improvements through the park district. The VCC's support is integral and Sculpture in the Park would not be possible without the funding that is generously given. They have been able through this funding to increase the stipend they offer and has attracted more artists to develop their sculptures for show entries in the Sculpture in the Park. They estimate that 10,000+ people walk through Mount St Mary's park annually to view the sculptural pieces. They received 24 submissions this year for entries in the Sculpture in the Park show from across the country. 15 artists were selected for the 2022 show.

St. Charles Singers – Executive Director Kay Kendall presented. There are two important outreach projects. They are concluding the 12-year/17 concert Mozart Journey in August. This project has encompassed the performing and recording of the complete known sacred choral works of Mozart. The project will culminate with performances of the Mozart Requiem on August 27 and 28. The recording will be released to the general public and is a one-of-a-kind project of this genre. A video was shown to illustrate the choral conducting teaching sessions that are provided by the St Charles Singers. Scott Corbin congratulated them on their efforts in this 12-year project and on the prospect of releasing the music and music notes with the possibility for generating revenue. Becker asked if they have tracked the number of people who have attended the performances of the Mozart journey, which would be a good measurement for tracking other economic revenue to the city associated with these performances. They will look into producing that type of report.

Fine Line Creative Arts Center – Executive Director, Lynn Caldwell presented. Continuing to grow as a community and artistic resource to St. Charles and to the regional area with a vast selection of opportunities to connect and enjoy the arts. The glass blowing studio and jewelry studio have grown since their remodels in 2019 and through the Covid pandemic. They are the only place in the western suburbs that offers glassblowing classes. They are a unique resource for St Charles in this regard. In 2021 they took a hiatus with their outdoor sculpture show. But next weekend they will have a dual opening of the indoor sculpture show in the gallery and will be installing their outdoor sculpture shows to be ready by May 12. Looking for more collaborations to bring visibility to the arts in St Charles. One example is the Arts Ramble, which is a self-guided arts tour from Elgin to Aurora. Over 30 artists at 13 locations participate. Fine Line is one of the nature hubs with over 400 people at their campus to view the displays. Despite two years of a pandemic, class attendance is only down about 10%. Sharon Spero asked about the Ramble attendance numbers at Fine Line. There were over 400 visitors who came to their campus, specifically for Fine Line's art works.

Preservation Partners – Executive Director, Kelsey Shipton and Director of Durant House and Shoal School Museums, Debra Corwin presented. Goal is to engage the community in the activities of all the properties included under the Preservation Partners umbrella. Hosting public activities like Bread and Butter Day and hosting private tours as well. Schools are coming back

with school tours but they've made up with the lack of those public tours with private tours, plus home school groups are taking tours. They also collaborate with Kane County Forest Preserve on historically focused "sense of place" tours, such as the history of Leroy Oakes and going back to the native Americans on that land. They can capture who and how many people attend by having them log/sign in with name and their location. Special events celebrating local history and advocating for historical structures within St Charles. Last summer they hosted their first wedding at one of their sites. That could potentially be a revenue generator. They will host a Farm and Table fundraiser at the Durant House. "Reliving the Roaring Twenties" is an upcoming program they will host at the Beith House to celebrate treasures of the Fox Valley, recreating a walking tour of what St Charles would have been like in the 1920s. Funding would help to advertise these upcoming programs and to draw more people to the downtown area. Looking to make the Beith House a space to engage community use, not just as a house museum.

Marquee Youth Stage – Connie Flores presented with two Marquee student performers. Their mission is to broaden the reach and impact of theater to youth of all ages. Emphasis on youth theater is important for gaining valuable skills to becoming an adult. As evidenced by the experience and impact shared by each student who spoke, the confidence and public speaking skills they've learned while performing with MYS has allowed them to grow and mature in their ability to just speak in front of groups. The experience supports the whole person and enables problem solving beyond the usual experience of a typical youth. Over the past 10 years they've had more than 600 students (from 35 towns) enrolled in performance classes and try to build community culture to the students who have come through MYS. They enhance St Charles' reputation by continually striving to empower youth through their programming and trying to find ways to make a difference in the lives of youth on and off the stage. What makes them unique is that they put youth theater first. They also have an internship and youth mentoring program where these teams continually learn and get advice about their craft from other theater professionals. This funding would help to pay wages for contractors and educators and technical and support staff. Spero commended them on their hard work the last several years in growing the youth theater. Becker asked about mentoring and internships. They have coaches who assist students with obtaining scholarships for theater majors.

Kane Repertory Theater – Managing Director Avery Brown and Artistic Director Daniil Krimer presented. Why is theater important and why Kane Repertory Theater? The experience of being in an audience with people you don't know and can have different views, but theater can span the opposing sides and can create a community that is closer and more cohesive. The company was founded in April 2019 and just as they were getting started, Covid pandemic hit. They were forced to halt production of their next play in early 2020 and pioneered some virtual content connecting some acclaimed actors and playwrights. Because of their theater connections in Chicago they have a network to tap top talent to perform in their plays which may not come to St Charles otherwise. In this organic pandemic moment they were able to create a virtual world premiere (Eric Roberts starred). They also decided to revisit a Shakespeare in the Park and partnered with the Park District to present. Funding from the VCC would help to continue to pay professional actors to perform in St Charles. They're commissioning a world premiere play with a published playwright and will be working with the Q Center for overnight housing for out of town attendees.

Break at 7:12pm
Resumed at 7:25pm

Norris Cultural Arts Center – Mark Smith presented. Have been in St Charles for about 45 years. The 2020 pandemic wiped out the successful Gallery concerts at Norris. They instead took advantage of the Baker Community Center as their performing venue. Their monthly Saturday Night Lights concert series and their Wednesdays at One performances built loyal

audiences for those. The majority of their performances are free, along with a couple of season sponsors. There is the art gallery with three or four exhibits which last from six to eight weeks each year. They do get out of town attendees to the concerts and the exhibits which in turn bring in revenue to other local businesses to add to the economic value of their artistic contribution to the city. The Baker's Dozen holiday festival is online and presents 25 individuals over 12 days showcasing their artistic talents. But the costs for these artistic programs are not entirely covered. It is a collaborative creative effort that reaps rewards for everyone involved. This is one of their goals – to collaborate with other arts organizations in the city, as they did with Kane Rep Theater, to help them partner with the Park District and present Shakespeare in the Park. The Saturday Night series has the upcoming Judy Garland Centennial concert and is a ticketed event.

Steel Beam Theater – Joe Billquist and Catie Early presented. Thanked the commission for their past support and funding. Have been in town for 21 years and proud to support the downtown. In the past year they have re-invested in their theater. They upgraded the HVAC at cost and replaced all their theater seats via reclamation efforts from the Studebaker Theater's seats. Catie Early is the new Managing Director and has reinvigorated their children's program and by collaborating with Rising Lights Project in Geneva. Educating children in theater is a great way of bringing back to the community. Recently, three of the children's song and dance revues were sold out. By partnering with Rising Lights they are creating it as inclusive as possible with an ASL interpreter on the stage. This is a way to ensure that anyone can come and feel included in these children's shows. They'll be hosting an improv camp, an acting camp and a beginning technical theater camp, in collaboration with Children's Theater of Elgin. Becker asked if they had raised prices since Covid. They have not during this period while trying to rebuild their audiences. They also offer theater internships at Steel Beam for additional training for those who want to continue with the theatrical profession, post high school. Funding is needed and requested to offset staff and actor wages. Looking to bring back their annual fundraising gala as well.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Stahulak, seconded by Amenta to adjourn the meeting at 7:54pm. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.