ST. CHARLES SINCE 1834	**AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**	Agenda Item number: 4b
	Title:	Seeking Direction Related to Annual Funding for the Visitors Cultural Commission in the Amount of $90,000 in the FY 2021-2022 City Budget.
	Presenter:	Chris Minick and Anne Becker (Chair, Visitors Cultural Commission)

Meeting: Government Operations Committee	Date: February 1, 2021	
Proposed Cost: $ 90,000	Budgeted Amount: $ TBD	Not Budgeted: ☐

Executive Summary (*if not budgeted please explain*)**:**
Representatives of the Visitors Cultural Commission (VCC) will appear before the Government Operations Committee and present results of operations and activities of the nine (9) organizations that received funding during FY 2020-21. Each organization has written a letter to outline the scope of their activities and how they have used the funding allocated to them during this past fiscal year. They have also written about the challenges they have faced as artistic companies during the COVID pandemic of 2020, and their efforts to present their art in new and creative ways. They have outlined plans for the use of future funding from the City, which again will necessitate demonstrating creative ways of presenting their art to their patrons in a prudent and innovative use of the funding provided by the City during FY 2021-22. The letters from each organization are attached to this request.

Budget discussions are currently occurring at the staff level and Committee feedback provided from the annual presentation regarding the preliminary anticipated funding level will be reflected in the budget presented for approval later this winter/spring.

Historically, the Visitors Cultural Commission has received an annual allocation of $90,000 from the Hotel Motel Tax revenue stream. In past years, organizations requesting funding from the City have presented their requests in-person to the VCC Board in May. Due to COVID restrictions in 2020 these presentations did not take place. Applications and requests for funding were submitted in writing and the VCC board made their funding recommendations based on the information provided by the organizations.

In June 2020 the VCC board allocated funding to each organization – a summary of that allocation is attached. The Visitors Cultural Commission is requesting FY 2021-2022 funding in the amount of $90,000, similar to funding allocated in FY 20-21.

Attachments (*please list*)**:**
Letters from Organizations that received funding in FY 20-21
Final Funding Allocation Summary FY 20-21
Letter from Chairperson Anne Becker

Recommendation/Suggested Action (*briefly explain*)**:**

Seeking Direction as to Whether to Include a Funding Request from the Visitors Cultural Commission in the Amount of $90,000 in the FY 2021-2022 City Budget.

January 20, 21

Mr. Chris Minick
Director of Finance
City of St. Charles

Mr. Mark Koenen
City Administrator
City of St. Charles

Dear Mr. Minick and Mr. Koenen,

I am writing this request on behalf of the Visitors Cultural Commission and the community art organizations that receive grants from the city. We hopefully request the funding for fiscal year 2021-2022 to remain at its current level of $90,000. As you will note in the written information from the various funded arts groups their concern to demonstrate prudent and innovative use of their funding amidst the financial stress they have faced during the pandemic. The St. Charles arts community has focused on providing safe and healthy solutions to keeping the arts available to the citizens of our city.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne L. Becker, Ed.D

FINAL FUNDING 20-21

Summary of Average Scores

	Organization	Rating Criteria: Economic impact	Enhance Community Culture	Resident benefit	Enhance St. Charles Reputation			Total	% of Total	Calculated Award	2020-21 Funding Requested	Final Award
	Fineline Creative Arts Center	7	9	8	7			31	12.15%	10,932	15,000	10,932
	Scuplture in the Park	7	7	8	9			31	12.10%	10,887	10,000	10,000
	St. Charles Singers	7	7	8	8			29	11.55%	10,397	12,000	10,397
	St Charles Art Council	6	8	8	7			28	11.16%	10,040	14,400	10,040
	Steel Beam Theater	7	7	7	7			28	11.16%	10,040	20,000	10,927
	Preservation Partners of Fox Valley	6	8	7	7			27	10.66%	9,593	12,500	9,593
	Norris Cultural Arts Center	6	6	7	7			27	10.66%	9,593	10,000	9,593
	Marquee Youth Stage	6	8	7	6			26	10.46%	9,415	19,902	9,415
	Fox Valley Concert Band	6	7	7	6			26	10.11%	9,103	10,000	9,103
	Kane Repertory Theatre	6	6	6	6			0	0.00%	-	-	-
	TOTAL							0	100.00%	90,000	123,802	90,000
										90,000		

Funds to Allocate	90,000	
Remainder to Allocate		-

Evaluation Instructions

Use the below scale and correlate the rating criteria to each organization.

1 = Remote
3 = Moderate
5 = Strong
7 = Direct
9 = Direct and strong

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St. Charles, Illinois 60175
630.584.9443 t
www.fineline.org
Lynn@fineline.org

FINE LINE
CREATIVE ·ARTS· CENTER

December 18, 2020

Anne Becker
Visitors Cultural Commission

Dear Anne,

By March 15, when Fine Line locked down along with all other "non-essential" organizations and businesses, we were already planning for what the future might hold. Not that we were more prescient than anyone else, but we paid attention to the science and readied ourselves for reopening—whenever that could happen—with the appropriate protections and policies in place. We knew of course that programming, class enrollments, and income would be severely reduced, and we planned accordingly, with attention to budgetary constraints and fund-raising opportunities. Since Fine Line reopened, on June 1, there have been no surprises, just the daily rigor of keeping our students, faculty, staff and volunteers safe and accommodating our reduced circumstances.

It was immediately apparent that some events, like the summer arts festival, would be cancelled, but we also saw that some classes, gallery openings, and perhaps even Uncommon Threads (our major event and fund raiser) and the Christmastime at Fine Line show might be somehow reimagined as virtual presentations. We felt then—and are convinced now—that we need to stay in the public eye and go about our business as normally as the pandemic will allow. We also strongly suspect that some of the changes that COVID forces on us will turn out to be useful and lasting. We began by attempting live streaming of gallery openings. Marketing funds from the Commission have allowed us to develop staff and technical expertise over the years so that we felt confident we could do this, though these first efforts taught us more about what we didn't know than what we did. Since then, and with the help of knowledgeable volunteers with access to professional equipment, we have prerecorded and/or live-streamed gallery openings, a folk-music concert, Uncommon Threads, and the Christmas show and sale. Income from these events has been considerably reduced, but they are out there, people are tuning into them through our website and social media, and they proclaim that Fine Line is alive and well and in operation. Since the teaching of arts and crafts is mostly hands-on, on-line classes will always be limited to a few areas, but we are beginning to see how we can reach a wider audience by augmenting our in-person programming with broadband media. The potential for the on-line Dempsey Gallery and Christmas sale marketplaces is particularly interesting.

We expect that we will continue to work under restricted conditions until at least fall of 2021, which gives us the opportunity and urgency to develop our skills in media outreach. Our experience of the past nine months shows that the future of our marketing endeavors and engagement with the community will be, to a great extent, digital. The spatial and temporal distancing made necessary by the pandemic have accelerated this process, which is likely here to stay. We will adapt, and to do so we are already investing in the necessary technology and expertise. This is a crucial moment for us—developing new skills and messages is never easy—and so, more than ever, we depend on our supporters. We are grateful for the Commission's largess in the past and, of necessity, we anticipate a level of funding similar to what we have received in recent years. While we understand the constraints under which the municipality operates at this time, it is also an opportunity for St. Charles to show its support for culture and the arts in spite of difficult circumstances.

Respectfully,

Lynn Caldwell
Executive Director

January 2, 2021
To: Visitor's Cultural Commission
From: Fox Valley Concert Band of St. Charles

The Fox Valley Concert Band of St. Charles (FVCB) thanks you for your ongoing support. Our budget relies heavily on concert fees and collections which stopped in March, 2020. As stated in the 20-21 grant application the monies requested for this cycle would be used for the salary of our conductor Dr. Colin Holman. The monies you awarded us have helped us to retain Dr. Holman which our board considers to be a crucial component of our successful return to the concert stage.

We were pleased that a brass quintet of FVCB members could be organized to perform in the Norris Center's "A Baker's Dozen" before Christmas. We publicized that event to our membership and supporter email lists and via Facebook. Grateful for our association with the Norris Center we also used Facebook to forward publicity for a virtual art show that was presented there. Providing our audience with a virtual performance of the whole ensemble has not been feasible given the physical logistics of gathering 60 instrumentalists together even to rehearse. We are dependent on access to a public school for rehearsal space, percussion equipment and our music library. We will continue to evaluate the possibility for smaller ensemble performances given the challenges of rehearsal space and acquiring literature for those genres.

We want to be optimistic that summer 2021 might be the first opportunity to gather again. Given that the normal income from winter/spring concerts will not occur we will once again request monies to support Dr. Holman's salary. Respecting that there will be less monies to distribute I anticipate requesting $6000 for the 2021/2022 cycle.

We will continue to use web, email and Facebook options to communicate with supporters anxious for the day when we can announce an upcoming performance.

Thank you for your support.

Jan Mamminga
Fox Valley Concert Band of St. Charles.

MYS Survey Response to the Cultural Commission Funding

During the 2020-2021 funding cycle Marquee Youth Stage has maintained robust programming and engagement with our youth arts community, while still following guidelines to prevent and eliminate spread within the studio. We have used City funding thus far to launch and build our Conservatory Musical Theatre program for teens, as well as to continue to offer educational and performance based opportunities for all interested youth in order to continue our mission of empowering youth and broadening the impact of performing arts within the community.

- While following all state guidelines and ever-changing restrictions, Marquee has found ways to continue offering weekly workshops and shows on a smaller scale with reduced cast sizes, along with virtual workshops for those not ready for in-person. We purchased medical grade air purifiers, video equipment and membership for live-streaming platforms for both workshops and shows in order to still continue a variety of engagement opportunities under the new guidelines. Since March 15 2020, we have produced one outdoor production, two indoor masked productions with 30% capacity, one live-streamed only production, along with over twenty workshops and classes and five virtual acting and dance workshops. We also added the Musical Theatre Conservatory program, which was launched in September and continued through November, focusing on masterclass training for teens in musical theatre. Conservatory will resume early next year, followed by the Conservatory Ensemble musical production of Into the Woods by summer of 2021.

- For 2021-2022, we hope to build on our existing offerings by adding on-camera and behind camera instructional programming and will need editing software and hardware that can handle editing and graphic demands for on-camera video production as well as archiving for streaming of live shows. We will be seeking funding for technology related purchases and marketing materials.

We are thankful for the opportunity to continue serving residents of St Charles and the surrounding communities with the help of the Cultural Commission and our community. We value the safety and social/creative health of students and will continue to work within the parameters while still finding ways to embrace and grow our mission with the current times. The light at the end as we turn the corner, is that our youth are more engaged than ever, and we have learned how to better incorporate technology--thus broadening our reach and impact in ways we otherwise may not have tried if it weren't for the unique opportunities and challenges posed by the pandemic.

St. Charles Park Foundation
213 Walnut Street
St. Charles, IL 60174

December 21, 2020

Anne Becker, Chair
Visitor's Cultural Commission
City of St. Charles
2 E. Main Street
St. Charles, IL 60174

Dear Ms. Becker,

Please accept this letter as a response to your request providing a narrative outlining the current and future plans for continued funding.

The St. Charles Park Foundation used the full amount of generous funds from the City's Visitor Cultural Commission agreement, dated May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020, as originally planned to support the 2020 Sculpture in the Park exhibit. The Foundation is planning to use the funds from the agreement dated May 1, 2020 to April 20, 2021 to support the 2021 exhibit. The Foundation also plans to request continued financial support for the 2022 exhibit when applications are accepted in spring 2021.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions of physical distancing, installation of the 2020 exhibit was expanded a couple of weeks and began with a full show in June. As a result, the exhibit was extended through the end of October instead of September. In addition, a reception honoring the artists was postponed until September instead of June.

Neither one of those factors affected the impact Sculpture in the Park had on the St. Charles community and beyond. In fact, park district officials estimate that parks were enjoyed by a substantial increase of visitors due to COVID-19 since many people of all ages were eager to get outside to breathe fresh air, exercise and be surrounded by nature or open space. Park District staff were very busy, especially at Mt. St. Mary Park, by more frequently cleaning the new flushable restrooms and emptying garbage receptacles. The Sculpture Committee reports for its website analytics a 13% increase in overall pageviews, an 11% increase in new users and a 44-second increase in the average duration of time spent on the site itself.

The Sculpture Committee with financial support from the Park Foundation and administrative support from the Park District plans to move forward with its usual plans for the 2021 sculpture exhibit. The $10,000 funding from the VCC allows committee members to acquire 10 pieces of unique artwork to feature on display from May to September in Mt. St. Mary Park. A call for sculpture submissions went out via email in early December, and a mailer postcard will be sent in early January. The entry deadline is February 5, 2021.

We are very grateful for the VCC's continued support of this much enjoyed and free exhibit of original and unique sculptures against the backdrop of nature's beauty.

Yours truly,

Erika Young
Sculpture Committee Member
St. Charles Park Foundation Liaison

December 28, 2020

Ms. Anne Becker
Chair, Visitors Cultural Commission
City of St. Charles
2 Main Street
St. Charles, IL 60174

Dear Ms. Becker:

On behalf of St. Charles Singers music director Jeff Hunt, our board, and musicians, please accept our heartfelt thanks to the Visitors Cultural Commission for your generous support of the choir. The funds received this year ($10,397) are part of our general operating budget. This gift has provided financial security in a year when we experienced significant loss of income such as ticket revenue and donations from individuals.

FY 2021 VCC funds received to date have been applied to a webcast of the choir's traditional Candlelight Carols concert. As fall arrived, and no end to the pandemic was in sight, the board determined to go ahead with the well-loved concert, but to present it as a webcast concert. The St. Charles Singers had learned something about the recording and videography process in July 2020, when we filmed a suite of music outdoors at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. This project, titled "Courage to Sing" was the choir's first foray into videographing performances. The songs have received 924 views to date on YouTube, and the experience was documented as part of an article published in the Winter 2020 Chorus America periodical, *The Voice.*

Simultaneously, in summer 2020, the American Choral Directors Association released findings about the unique challenges to singers regarding the spread of Covid19. Some of this research was discouraging, but it offered much needed guidance about safe singing.

Armed with new knowledge and an introductory experience, we planned for the Candlelight Carols concert. There were challenges. Air circulation at Baker Church didn't meet the requirements. The choir moved rehearsals to Baker Community Center, which proved to be a good space to meet the needs. Four ensembles of 12 singers each rehearsed with windows and doors left open. Following each practice, the room was vacated for 30 minutes of air circulation, then the next ensemble came in. Temperatures were taken, singer masks were required and singers were distanced at 10-feet apart. Several songs performed by an ensemble of twenty-five were rehearsed at St. Michael Church in Wheaton, a large space with excellent acoustics and a newer ventilation system. The webcast was successfully released on YouTube on December 6, 2020. As of this writing the St. Charles Singers Candlelight Carols has received 3,338 views. Four songs from the performance were recently featured on the "New Music in Chicago" program on 98.7WFMT. The music will remain posted on YouTube through December 31, 2020. https://youtu.be/rUg-EvbY7K8

Our choir never intended to present music in this way, but we have gained insight from the experience, and have significantly grown our audience. As soon as can be safely done, we will return to live performances at our home venue of Baker Memorial Church, and look forward to drawing regular and new audience to St. Charles for future performances. Recent marketing data tells us that that webcasting will play a role in the choir's future presentations.

In spite of the success of Candlelight Carols, SCS doesn't intend to prepare another webcast in the coming months. These are difficult to plan, knowing that mitigation levels can change at any time and, as the number of people who have contracted the virus increases, we feel that we can no longer risk bringing singers together, even using the safest practices. Given the recent development of vaccines, we are optimistic about our next planned events. We will host the Sing! Workshop for Teens and the corresponding Conducting Lab for college level choral music majors in July of 2021.

We will produce Mozart Journey concert XVI in June of 2021. The Journey's grand finale will take place in August. Mozart XVII, will be the final concert of this 11-year, seventeen-concert undertaking to perform and record the known genre of W. A. Mozart's sacred choral works. *Requiem*, the best known of the sacred compositions, will highlight the festival week-end planned for August 26 – 29, 2021. The concert will honor the memory of Doris Hunt, and will include the world-premiere of "Cello Songs", by Grammy winning composer Jake Runestad, and dedicated to Mrs. Hunt's memory. The festival will conclude with a gala celebration . All Mozart Festival events will take place in St. Charles.

The remaining VCC 2021 funds will be applied to the Sing! Workshop and to the Mozart Journey's conclusion. If, in summer of 2021, existing mitigation limits the choir, we will delay performing the Mozart Journey, and will instead seek another opportunity for webcasting choral music to our audience.

We are cognizant of the losses that the VCC has incurred this year, and realize we cannot count on funding amounts equal to the generous grants we have received in recent years. We hope you feel, as we do, that the choir enhances the city artistically, and brings foot traffic to retail and restaurant establishments. Considering both the cut backs the VCC must face and the choir's role as one of St. Charles' premier cultural arts agencies, we anticipate requesting $8,000 for fy 2021.

We want the city and its residents to know that the St. Charles Singers appreciate the support we have received from the VCC. We are grateful to perform in a locale that embraces the arts.

Sincerely,

Kay Kendall
Executive Director
St. Charles Singers, 630.747.7173

January 11, 2021

Ms. Anne Becker
Chair, Visitors Cultural Commission

Dear Anne:

Thank you for your recent letter asking about our recent and planned activities, relative to our funding through the Cultural Commission.

The Norris has been a cultural cornerstone of our community since opening in 1978. The cornerstone, as you know, is the first stone set in building a masonry foundation. It determines the position of the entire structure, and is something to build on.

Over the years, The Norris has not been content in simply providing a cultural footing. We have continued building on that foundation – changing and growing with the times while staying true to the vision and mission of our founders, Dellora and Lester Norris, to provide the finest cultural arts experiences to audiences and patrons of all ages and from all walks of life. The pandemic created new challenges that we faced head-on through the last half of 2020, and that are continuing as we plan our events and exhibits for 2021.

First, let's look at a summary of what the Norris Cultural Arts Center accomplished in 2020, supported in part by funding we received through the Cultural Commission.

We planned to present three varied and engaging series of events – a 4-concert Saturday night series at the Baker Community Center, a 4-event Wednesday afternoon series also at the Baker Center, and a 4-event Sunday afternoon series in the Norris Gallery. In addition, we invited the University of Wisconsin Varsity Band to perform at The Norris, and had a full schedule of Fox Valley Concert Band performances on the calendar. And our art gallery was scheduled for a typical year of four exhibits.

Through early March, we had hosted two of the four Sunday afternoon events. We had launched both Baker Center series, hosting one Wednesday afternoon event and two Saturday night concerts, all well-attended. We also hosted in the Norris Theater, the U. of Wisconsin band as scheduled on Feb. 28 to an audience of more than 500 and on March 1, to an audience of more than 300, the Fox Valley Concert Band performed one of its scheduled season concerts.

From mid-March until early September, public health restrictions led to our canceling or postponing the remaining scheduled events. We finally were able to host a Saturday night concert in early September at the Baker Center as part of St. Charles Jazz Weekend. We were limited to 50 seats, which we sold (and could have sold at least another 50) to an eager and enthusiastic audience. We also presented two of the three postponed Wednesday afternoon events in late September and late October, again limited by COVID-19-related restrictions. Faced with a new round of limitations, effective in mid-November, we realized that we could not present any live events until we at least get back to the 50-audience-member level of restrictions.

In early October our board agreed to produce "A Baker's Dozen Holiday Festival," a free, 13-day online holiday festival, featuring brief performances by local singers, bands, ensembles, dancers and actors. It seemed like a big job, and turned out to be just that. But we did it. We video-recorded 13 performances in two sessions during November at the Baker Center. We also invited Mayor Ray

Rogina to start the series with a reading of "A Visit from St. Nicholas," and to serve as virtual host of the series by introducing each subsequent performance. The series ran online from December 12 through 24, available for viewing on a new Norris channel on YouTube and on the Norris website (into which we have integrated a new section for delivering video content).

The videos cumulatively attracted 5,000 views and uniformly positive feedback from performers and viewers alike. The festival provided a much-needed opportunity for the performers who, for the most part, had been inactive since March. And it uniquely showcased St. Charles as a hub for the performing arts – even in the midst of a pandemic. The Norris offered the videos as a gift to the community, but now that we have a video content solution for our website, we can start producing pay-per-view programming during 2021.

In fact, we plan to video record all future events for broadcast on The Norris website. This is a major commitment on our part, and we will use some of whatever funding we receive through the Cultural Commission to help defray the expenses of producing and presenting these videos.

Also, in 2021, we expect to relaunch all three of our event series, and have reserved dates at the Baker Center for the Wednesday and Saturday series. We also have the annual Watercolor art exhibit scheduled for early 2021 at the Norris Gallery, and expect to use the gallery throughout the rest of 2021 for the annual Vicinity exhibit and exhibits presented by local artist groups.

Using the Baker Center as a Norris venue has already proved to be a good decision. It's a wonderful place to host the types of events we like to present, and we've had nothing but praise from both audience members and the performers whom we have presented there. We have four years remaining on our agreement with the Park District to use the Baker Center auditorium rent-free, in partial repayment of the $180,000 capital improvement we paid for when we designed and installed theatrical lighting and sound systems in the auditorium.

We also look forward to creating new ways of engaging our audience and supporters, to respond to their concerns and expectations, and to effectively communicate with them as we produce new events, both live and virtual. As we continue adapting to "the new normal" and beyond, we renew our commitment to transparency, open communication and responsiveness in assuring the safest and most welcoming environment. We look forward to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service in support of the arts.

We greatly appreciate the support we have received from the Cultural Commission over the past years, and we take seriously our purpose in making the best possible use of those funds.

Sincerely yours,

NORRIS CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

TO:	Anne Becker, Chair - Visitors Cultural Commission
FROM:	Kathy Hill, Executive Director for the St. Charles Arts Council
DATE:	December 22, 2020
RE:	Brief narrative outlining fund use during Covid-19

Per your request, this is a summary of how our $10,040 grant from the VCC is being used. Our expenditures are actually consistent with the plan outlined in our application, as it was written during the pandemic with an expectation that the world would be "shut down" until at least early spring 2021.

Our grant application indicated that $7,000 would go towards operating costs of the Arts Council; this is how funds received to date have been spent. With these funds, we have been able to continue efforts to support and advocate for all arts organizations in St. Charles. We regularly share information about local art events, have an active artist engagement on our website and continue to keep the arts and culture in our community in the forefront of people's minds.

The remaining funds from the grant will help cover additional costs for visiting artist Amanda Browder when she comes to install her fabric art installation. We are excited about this splashy community art project that we're bringing to St. Charles in 2021.

Thank you for this opportunity and for the support that you have shown to the St. Charles Arts Council.

January 8, 2021

Dear Anne—

Steel Beam Theatre has offered numerous programs to help us stay connected to our audience and to reach out to new audience members in physically distant locations.

These have included:

SBT Short Takes Showcase Series – we invited members of our theatre community to share video clips of themselves performing short pieces—either a song, a scene, or a remembrance what the theater has meant to them. We then compiled these into seven videos with an introduction by a board member. We released the seven videos periodically between May and September to keep our name alive in the community.

Women of Steel Streaming Series – we have held monthly performances by actors/storytellers who portray historical figures, including Mae West, Hamilton's Women, Beatrix Potter, and Jane Austen. We began these in September, and they have been successful in spreading our name to new patrons.

Online classes – as an alternative to our summer youth classes and camps, we have offered several virtual youth classes.

Sing-along with Santa – we conducted our traditional Sing-along with Santa virtually this year, to the delight of children and their parents.

The revenue from these offerings have not begun to replace our normal operating income. Therefore, in addition to funding the above offerings, we have used the money from the Cultural Commission to help pay our ongoing rent and utilities expenses.

Due to the continued uncertainty due to COVID-19, we anticipate ongoing struggles financially. Therefore, in 2021 we anticipate requesting an amount similar to 2020 to produce programs like those listed above as well as help defer ongoing operating costs. We fully understand the impact of COVID-19 on the Visitors Cultural Commission budget and appreciate any money we receive. We believe that Steel Beam Theatre is a valuable asset to St Charles and hope to continue to receive your support.

Sincerely,

Joe Billquist

President
Steel Beam Theatre

Marge Uhlarik-Boller

Artistic Director
Steel Beam Theatre

PRESERVATION PARTNERS of the FOX VALLEY

City of St. Charles Visitors Cultural Commission
2020-2021 Funding Usage Narrative

How has City Funding been used thus far during the 2020-2021 funding cycle, allowing you to remain active and engaged with your audience? What changes have been made to remain engaged during the months of the COVID-19 Pandemic?

At the Durant House Museum Garden, we created a new outdoor historical education program.

We recruited new volunteers with the assistance of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County for weekly garden management (Monday and Thursday mornings from April through October). Staff and volunteers spent hours planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, researching, and discussing historically appropriate gardening means and methods. Additionally, staff and volunteers introduced new crops to the garden, focusing on plants that would have been in the Durant family's garden in the 1800s. Historically accurate plants included:

- *Broomcorn* – a sorghum plant that, when dried, makes up the bristles of a broom.
- *Walking onions* – a perennial species that reseeds itself by growing a bulb at the top of the plant. When the bulb becomes too heavy to stay up, it falls, allowing the bulb to form roots into the dirt. A new onion plant grows from the fallen bulb, giving the impression that the onion plant "walks" to propagate new plants.
- *Herbs* for both food preparation as well as medicinal use, including various types of mint, comfrey, dill, oregano, and more.

Expenses incurred:

- Developed and added new signage at the garden entrance to interpret the site when volunteer docents are unavailable (refer to *Supporting Material* section on page 5).
- Repaired garden fence and entry gate to improve safety and security of the garden
- Purchased and planted historically accurate plants, including:
  - Seeds and live plants for the vegetable garden,
  - Native species of fern for the area immediately surrounding the Durant House Museum,
  - Native species bushes flanking the entrance to Pioneer Sholes School.

Next steps:

- Planning the garden layout for summer of 2021
- Purchasing heritage seeds from reputable seed companies
- Recruiting volunteers
- Spring garden preparation and planting kick-off with volunteers (April/May).
- Update signage with details of the 2021 garden plan

Durant House Museum Garden 2020 - Broom Corn

Seeds received from Master Gardeners at U of I in 2015. Planted three varieties - black, gold, and red.
Harvested October 19. Plan to assemble brooms in November.

June 10

July 1

July 27

August 20

September 10

September 21
Bending the stakes to allow the stiff stems to remain straight and compact

October 9

October 19

October 19

PRESERVATION PARTNERS of the FOX VALLEY

Museums transitioned to new approaches for site interpretation.

Self-Guided Tours
Open hours to the public were adjusted to allow for safe social-distancing and occupancy. Due to the concerns of the volunteer costumed docents to educate visitors in-person, we developed a **self-guided tour brochure** (see image below) for visitors. The brochure included a floor plan of the Durant House Museum, description of each room, and a "seek-and-find" game. Self-guided brochures were available to visitors as either paper one-time use or laminated for ease of disinfecting between uses.

Private tours
Our annual school tours are very popular with local elementary schools and usually account for the largest number of visitors to the Durant House Museum and Pioneer Sholes School. The cancellation of all school field trips meant that hundreds of students were unable to experience our museums in person. Therefore, PPFV offered educational experiences for smaller groups by appointment, including:

- Home school groups,
- Public school and private school teachers,
- Parents and grandparents requesting museums be open for their family only.

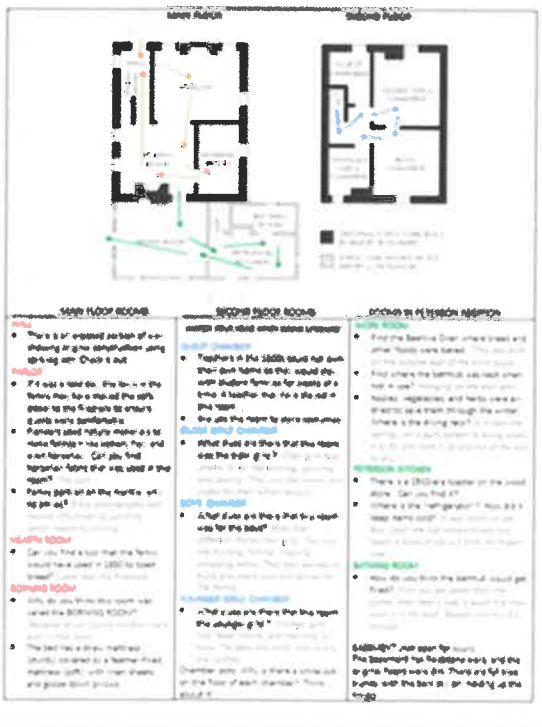
Expenses incurred:

- Design, printing, and laminating of the self-guided tour brochures.
- Craft supplies for small group educational experiences.
- Staff time to develop and implement the self-guided tour as well as safe activities for visiting groups.

Next steps:

- Develop and offer an online scheduling tool for small groups, with a calendar of available dates and times.
- Create historical education tools for use in the classroom (public, private, or homeschool), available to loan out for hands-on education.
- Develop and make public lists of games played by students in the 1800s and what supplies would be needed to play them so teachers and families can engage with the sites remotely.
- "Then and Now" video with accompanying printed material with examples of how commonplace items have changed over the years.
  - To accompany the video and printed material, PPFV would like to assemble a History Box filled with interesting items and stories that describe each.
- Advise educators in St. Charles School District 303 and surrounding districts regarding the availability of these new resources.

Side One



Side Two

PRESERVATION PARTNERS of the FOX VALLEY

We unearthed and revived past programming.

Following an inquiry by a member of the community, we located a treasure trove of information called the *One Room School House Oral History Project*. The project lasted from 2001 to 2004 and consisted of interviews of twenty-seven individuals who taught in or attended one-room schoolhouses. The interviews were done on VHS tapes and recorded on audio cassettes. We viewed over 30 hours of interviews and have begun transcribing the information to share with visitors.

Expenses incurred:

- There was a 2020 cost of $168.00 for the conversion of VHS tapes and audio cassettes to MP4 and MP3 files for long-term digital storage. Additional costs to transcribe the interviews to written form will incur in 2021.

Next steps:

- Prepare the material for publication on our website and YouTube.
- Host an event to notify the public of the Oral History Project.
- Provide a way for others to submit their own story of one room schoolhouses.

In addition to the examples noted above, PPFV was able to adapt to the conditions of 2020 in two additional significant ways.

Adventure Lab Geocaching

The *Passport to Adventure*, a long-standing and extremely popular summer program for children and families in Kane and DuPage counties, was cancelled this year. The Passport books - printed by the Kane DuPage Regional Museum Association (KDRMA) - were not printed because many of the Passport participants' sites were closed due to the pandemic. However, KDRMA offered an alternative activity, a geocaching app program called Adventure Lab. Link to their site: http://www.kdrma.org/kdrma-geocaching-adventure.html

Our St Charles Museums, with GPS coordinates in the app, offer visitors activities to do and questions to answer as they navigate around each site. When tasks are completed and correct answers are entered into the app, that accomplishment gets added to their own Adventure Lab Journal. All activities could be completed outside the Museum and by anyone using the free app. Visitors who participated in the Adventure Lab commented positively on our activity, beginning in July 2020, as soon as the Adventure Lab was live. We are continuing to receive positive comments from Adventure Lab users (most recently December 2020). The app extended visitors from primarily local school-age children to a more expanded group of adults and visitors to St Charles from out of town.

Expenses incurred

- A $510 fee is required to participate in the Passport to Adventure program.
- For 2020, the fee was used to cover expenses related to participating in the Adventure Lab app

Next steps

- Plan to participate in the KDRMA Adventure Lab geocaching app in 2021
- Will modify our posting to ensure a fresh experience for all visitors

Google "Street View Tours"

In an effort to offer high-quality Museum tours virtually, PPFV invested in a program offered by Google through a third-party company. A professional Google photographer walked through the Museums with a camera that took 360° still images from a variety of angles at the same time. The exteriors of the Museums were documented, and the interiors of all public spaces were photographed as part of the 360° tour. Additional still shots were taken for future promotional use for our sites. 360° views have been posted to our Google listings for the Pioneer Sholes School and Durant House museums, allowing visitors to experience the museums from the comfort of their homes.

Expenses incurred

- An $1,815 fee for the video production was incurred for Pioneer Sholes School and the Durant House Museums.

Next steps

- We plan to use these 360° walkthroughs to create a clickable interactive visiting tool to enable visitors to engage with artifacts remotely. We anticipate that the ongoing development and implementation of this platform will incur significant fees for which we have not historically budgeted.

PRESERVATION PARTNERS of the FOX VALLEY

What level of funding do you preliminarily anticipate requesting for fiscal year 2021-2022 and how do you plan to utilize that funding to assure your group's continued engagement with the community given the challenges resulting from the COVID pandemic?

At PPFV, we have been fortunate that our annual income has not historically relied solely on museum admissions. For a year that has required us to alter our operating standards and cancel most in-person events, we have managed to weather the storm relatively well. However, our funding relies very heavily on operating agreements we have with the Forest Preserve District of Kane County and the funds received from the St. Charles Visitors Cultural Commission. On average, the **funds received from the Visitors Cultural Commission and Forest Preserve District account for almost 60% of our total income for the year.** With the impact of the pandemic on funding for these public bodies largely unknown for the long-term, PPFV has considerable concerns that the financial impact of the pandemic on our organization will be much more long-lasting than 2020 and 2021.

Additionally, visitor attendance at historic house museums has seen a decline throughout the country over the last couple of decades. Here in Illinois, curriculum changes in 2005 reduced school tours to the Durant House, Beith House, and Pioneer Sholes School Museums by roughly 70% by 2010. This reduction in school tours has remained consistent for the past ten years. Visitation to the Durant House's special events throughout the year has increased, but visitation to the Beith House has waned. PPFV interprets this to mean that, to accommodate the change in visitors' interest, **the manner in which our sites function must change.**

In the late summer and fall of 2020, PPFV solicited estimates from two architectural firms to perform assessments of the Beith House Museum for a capital improvement plan. PPFV has applied for funding from Landmarks Illinois (http://www.landmarks.org/) to perform the condition and feasibility assessments but has not received word of the funding award as of the date of this report. The Beith House currently operates as a "Preservation Study House" on the first floor, where we educate visitors how buildings were built and decorated in the 1850s in the Fox Valley. The second floor consists of staff offices, a small library, and a meeting space. **There is no heat source in the largest of the rooms upstairs**, rendering it virtually useless during the winter months. Additionally, the house's electrical system is undersized and has not been updated in well over 50 years, making daily business operations potentially hazardous due to the overloading of the electrical system. PPFV is in dire need of funding to update the electrical and HVAC systems in the Beith House. In conjunction with the updating of the building's systems, PPFV plans to reimagine the interpretive and office spaces within the Beith House to provide more community-focused spaces for use by the general public. This project is still in the very preliminary stages of planning but will be a colossal undertaking that is imperative for the continued relevance of this important St. Charles Historic Landmark.

With these considerations in mind, **PPFV plans to request $10,000 for the 2021-2022 fiscal year**. This is in line with past funding received ($9,593 in 2020). The full future financial impacts of the pandemic to our organization are as yet unknown and have the potential to be devastating to us. We intend to adjust by changing our sites' relevance, adopting new technologies, pursuing new funding strategies, and more, but fear that the bread and butter of our funding will be severely hampered in the long-term because of the pandemic.

We are extremely grateful to the St. Charles Visitors Cultural Commission's support in the past and appreciate the care with which the upcoming funding cycle's appropriation is being considered. Despite the turmoil of the past year and uncertainty for the future, we look forward to new adventures at our sites and in our community in the years to come.

PRESERVATION PARTNERS of the FOX VALLEY

Supporting Material from Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley

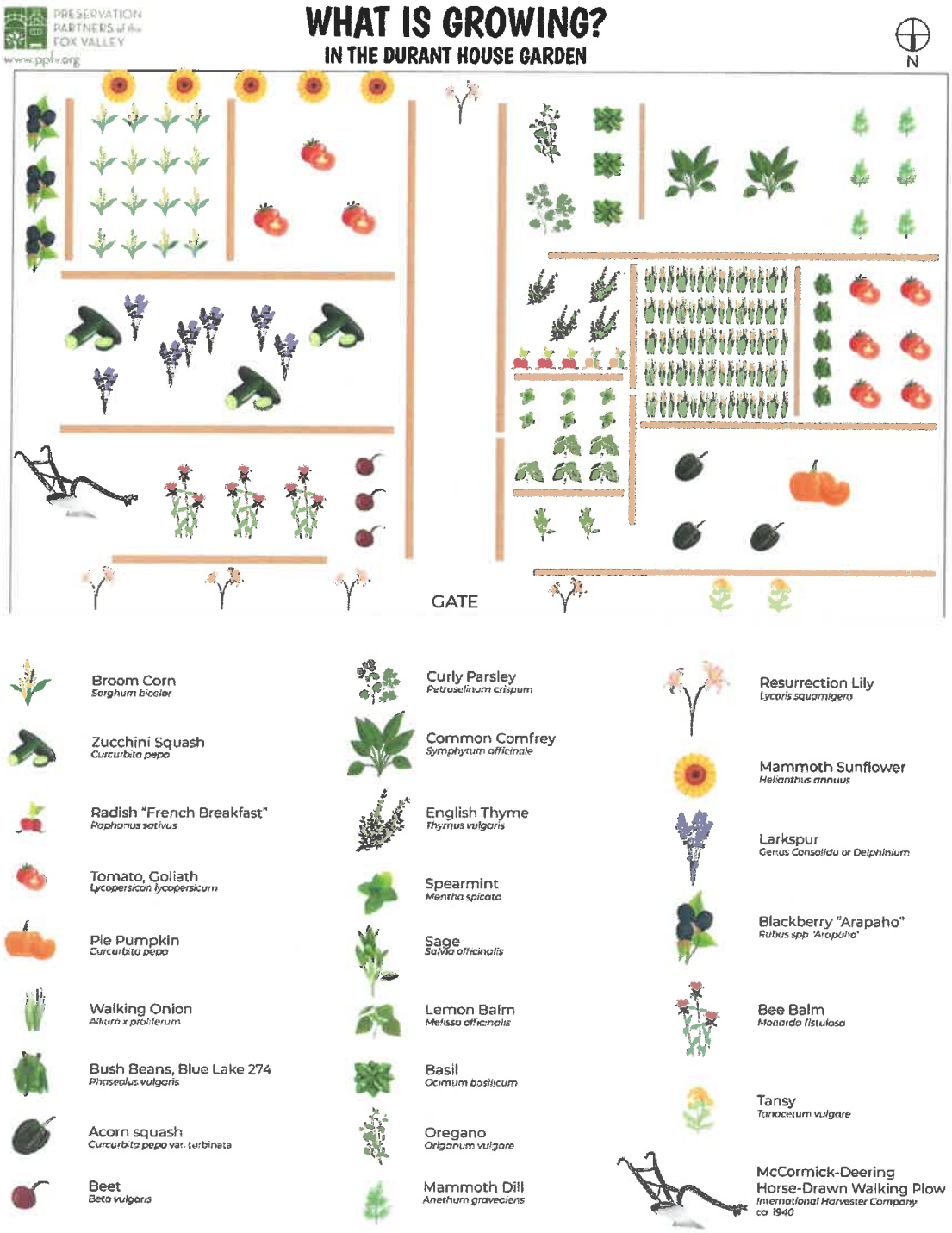
Please refer to these items for additional explanation of the activities PPFV has invested in in 2020

Google "Street View Tours"

Link to view the Durant House Museum
https://goo.gl/maps/tFXZkE6iymkJzU3y6

Link to view the Pioneer Sholes School Museum
https://goo.gl/maps/fZTyNbPFxUZg1HvD8

Durant House Museum Garden Signage



Visitors Cultural Commission

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FOX VALLEY CONCERT BAND

- Brass Quintet performed in the Bakers Dozen at Christmas

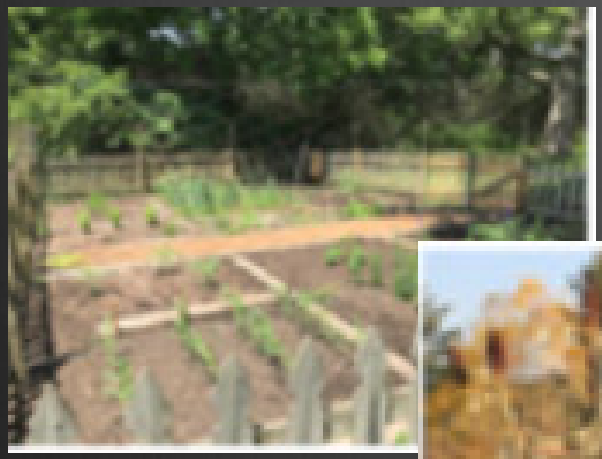
MARQUEE YOUTH STAGE

- Weekly workshops and shows on a smaller scale with reduced cast sizes, along with virtual workshops
- Purchased medical grade air purifiers, video equipment and membership for live-streaming platforms for both workshops and shows.

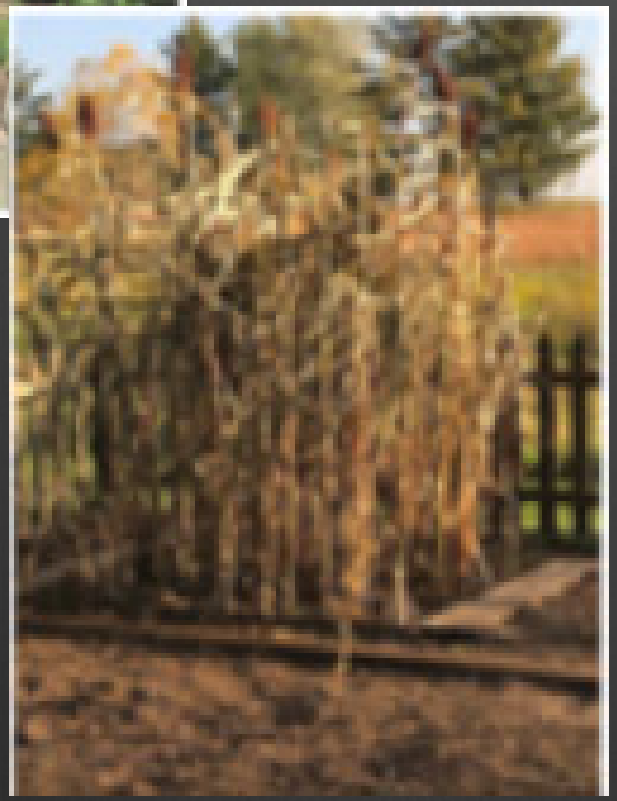
NORRIS CULTURAL ART CENTER

- Jazz Night with limited seating
- “A Baker’s Dozen Holiday Festival,” a free, 13-day online holiday festival, featuring brief performances by local singers, bands, ensembles, dancers and actors. The series ran online from December 12 through 24

PRESERVATION PARTNERS



July 1, 2020



October 9, 2020

- Durant House Museum Garden
- Self –guided and private tours
- Preparations for 2021:
  -Adventure Lab app
  -Google Street Tours

ST CHARLES ARTS COUNCIL

- Active Artist Engagement On Website
- Support And Advocate For Arts In St. Charles
- Fabric Art Installation

ST. CHARLES PARK FOUNDATION 'SCULPTURE IN THE PARK'

- Acquired 10 Pieces Of Unique Artwork To Feature On Display From May To October In Mt. St. Mary Park.

- Increase In Park Activity As Well As Increase In Website Analytics

- Short Takes Showcase Series
- Women of Steel Streaming Series
- Online Classes
- Sing-along with Santa

STEEL BEAM THEATER

FINE LINE ART CENTER

ST. CHARLES SINGERS