

City of St Charles

Cultural Commission Meeting

June 2, 2014

Century Station Training Room

5:30 PM

Call to Order at 5:31 PM

Present: Anne Becker, Catie Barron, Kathy Melone, Jodi Manthei, Jamie DeBeir, Charles Brown, Guy Bellaver, Stu Ainsworth (arrived 6:30pm)

Absent: Jim Collins

Also Present: Chris Minick, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles; Mark Koenen, City of St. Charles; Representatives of Steel Beam Theatre

Anne Becker began the meeting with some announcements:

Thank you to Carylie for emailing to the members electronic copies of all the materials from the organizations requesting funding.

Thank you to Chris for preparing the funding allocation schedule, which is very helpful.

Anne and Jodi and Catie went to the Orientation Session for all City Commission members to update them on Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information laws as administered by the State. Examples: no texting between members during a meeting; or if out socially as a group, do not talk about any of the issues regarding the commission. If 3 or more together, might be construed as an official meeting. Chair Becker noted that Cultural Commission meetings are open meetings according to the Open Meetings Act and welcomed the representatives from the Steel Beam Theatre.

Anne introduced the newest members of the VCC – Catie Barron and Jamie DeBeir.

Fox Valley Repertory : Review of company highlights: in-house theatre company at Pheasant Run and with the changes in ownership of Pheasant Run, it has been a challenge and has effected on how FVR has functioned during that transition. The new owners have experience working with entertainment companies, so that could work to their advantage in the coming year.

Last year they ended in the red. They have done corrective financial work in the past year.

The funding they are seeking will go into current and future productions.

They look for shows that will work well in their smaller space and will offer something new for their audiences. Who comes to FVR? - 250 events and over 38,000 patrons came through their doors. Nearly 95% of their ticket buyers come from within 30 miles of their theatre location. St. Charles residents comprise the largest part of their subscription base. They've seen a 50% increase in new subscriptions from last year.

Also there is a focus on education and youth performances/daytime school programs. In 2013, 3,700 children had attended their daytime school programs (\$8.00 per ticket). Also, they're helping to round out the arts education of these kids with summer camps and activity classes, and offer a professional training program for aspiring talent.

St. Charles Singers: They presented a dvd that included choral performance, along with testimonials by director, board member, and others. Their patron list (database) is represented by 178 communities that have come to their performances.

“SING” is the workshop for teens - 50-60 teens participated from 22 area high schools. It was asked if the 4K requested is to market STC Singers to more high schools? It was noted that it is also for payment to the 12-15 clinicians and accompanists who are at the workshops and one-on-one training.

Preservation Partners: discussion centered on their current program called “This Place Matters” – and they’ve chosen 24 buildings that are “off the beaten path” and may have been forgotten as those that should be preserved as part of historical legacy. There will be a vote on this via their website. The funding they receive from the commission helps to get these programs off the ground, since many of the things they do are free to the public. June 28 is their annual bus tour, which garners good revenue and support.

Norris Cultural Arts Center – re: the Art Gallery, the plan is to use the funding to focus on and promote more uses for their Art Gallery (for more varied events), such as “Music at the Gallery” concerts and art exhibits. They view the funding they would receive from the VCC as a way to show patrons that they are a respected cultural organization in the City. They’ve worked out an agreement with the FV Concert Band to present small ensemble concerts in their gallery as a way of defraying any increase they were going to ask of them for guarantee for their concerts. They’ve been losing money on the band and orchestra concerts, and that’s where the VCC funding has helped a lot. Their costs range for crew (house and stage) \$700-\$800 to present Fox Valley Concert Band at their venue, and they only get about \$500.00 in revenue at these performances. They would like to continue to present them and get a better balance with them presenting in the Gallery, and price them low, but still cover their costs. Makes for good collaboration efforts between these organizations. They lease their offices and pay to use the Norris Theater. So they’re coming up with more strategic uses for the Gallery.

Fox Valley Concert Band - Approximately 80 members in their group, which is audition-based. They perform with middle and high school students, offer scholarships to further music education and collaborate with other organizations, like the Fox Valley Repertory.

Question: Has performing at the Norris Cultural Arts Center helped to increase their audience? Yes, it gives them a “home base” so patrons will always know where they are. Still doing the July 4 Park District fireworks program as well. They will continue to stand by their mission of providing free concerts to the Fox Valley area. Feel they are minimizing their risk by not spending additional funds by marketing and selling tickets to their performances. And still, their audiences are typically between 200 and 300 people, and often more than 400 people. Their model is very successful right now.

Steel Beam Theatre – Representative of their board spoke about the costs of doing what they do. They are aggressive at searching out sources of support, with fundraisers and the Haunted House at Kane County Fairgrounds, but they are stretched about as far as they can go on those sources. Costs of doing business: discussed the significant rent on their facility, the increased competition from FVR re: children’s programs has limited, somewhat, their ability to secure funds in the amounts they would like. In SBT’s vision of the theater arts presence in downtown St. Charles, the more theater in the town, the better. Costs of being able to market to younger audiences is higher, because that audience responds to technology-based marketing strategies, which takes money to support. They are shifting a bit to provide more programs for children, with rehearsals every day to give a sense of what professional actors do. They want to reach middle schools with programs that have a “social slant” that can speak directly to them and bring awareness and enlightenment – the “I Am Prov” improvisational programs.

There was discussion about the amount owed on the loan for their build-out. Also there was discussion of staff salaries and the total administrative expense ratio as a percentage of SBT's budget.

Fine Line Creative Arts – In the last year they finally saw the finish of their new entrance drive with highly visible signage. They also hired a new PR/Marketing manager which has helped to pack the gallery openings this year. They are seeing more people coming from farther away to attend their events. New board president Ellen Ljung talked about expansion of Raku Day and draw more people. They're using social media which is increasing visibility and awareness to their artform. Will be talking with Water Street Studios and Side Street to talk about their next collaborative effort. Funding would support promotions and advertising, and expand printing and distribution of schedules of special events to expand their audience and bring in more revenue to the City. Planning 30th Anniversary celebration this year which they hope to bring in more visitors to St. Charles. Tours of the new Prairie as well this year.

Sculpture in the Park – There is a sculpture committee that runs the program in cooperation with the Foundation and the Park District. This event runs May – Sept. each year. They solicit and select sculptures nationwide as well as locally and regionally. They're voted in and are judged by the judging committee and one sculpture wins "judges favorite." Installations of the sculptures are handled by the Parks dept. They have recently switched from a breakfast event to a wine and cheese reception for the artists and awarding of the winning sculpture in order to increase attendance and public awareness of the exhibit. Their main operational costs are for raising funds to increase the stipends that are awarded to the artists in each year. They try to purchase one piece each year. They would like to boost a nationwide presence with this event. They don't use taxpayer money for any of the costs associated with this event.

St. Charles Arts Council – to serve and support the City's cultural arts activities and organizations. In order to increase the exposure of the City's arts organizations, they feel a greater social media presence is warranted, and need to hire a social media coordinator (as a 1099 contractor) to accomplish that. This is the biggest portion of the increase in funding. Under the umbrella of Charlie's Events, the arts council is bringing in other artists outside the realm of the already established arts organizations. Point was made that the mission of the VCC is to support sustainable, ongoing local groups. It was noted that many funding recipients have gone through the 3-year time cycle to qualify for independent funding and taken the extra steps to incorporate as a 501(c)(3) entity. Want to ensure that these groups want to come and stay and are qualified to apply for funding under their own auspices rather than relying on SCAC to continually provide funding. .

Water Street Studios/Print Lab – Build-out of their facility last year helped allow artists to create larger art pieces within their facility. Art Flow is their outreach program, working with Lazarus House. They are unique to the area and have the equipment to allow artists to create their projects. Last fall, they were able to have programming and classes, for children and adults, in printmaking, painting, small sculpture, and in use of their specialized equipment. They will expand classes this summer. Members from all across the region now come to use their space. They hosted the Chicago Suburban Arts Conference this past spring, and would like to bring that back here, as it drew many more people to the area for this event. They were able to coordinate this event with businesses on the Plaza, particularly SBT and restaurants to expose the attendees to more STC facilities. It was noted that this aspect of the Conference was very well received and they would like to pursue this again.

STC Underground – The Teen Center is free to St. Charles (D303) youths and provides those with a lack of opportunity to come to their facility and participate in events and utilize computer/technology. Their teens are very specific to the Underground - currently at 760 members and are growing. Right now, they need funding to be able to purchase new art supplies, which currently are quite dated. They want to keep this part of the program going, so the arts and crafts need to be updated. Question was posed – “why not ask the Park District to fund them for some of the items they need?” They are now funded by the Park District (not to be confused with the Park District Foundation), as long as they show they can sustain interest in the program.

Kathy Melone made a motion to approve the Minutes of June 18, 2013, and was seconded by Catie Barron. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

General discussion regarding the funding process was held after the presentations and commission members were encouraged to devise their own allocations for the funding models and submit them to Chris Minick prior to the next meeting. The amount of the funding for FY 14-15 was also discussed with Chair Becker requesting of Chris Minick if the Commission could have an additional \$600 to bring the amount of funding to an even \$90,000. Minick related that he would check with City Administrator Koenen and have an answer at the next meeting.

The next meeting was set for June 23 at 5:00pm at Century Station Training room.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte