

## ***City of St Charles***

### ***Cultural Commission Meeting May 18, 2015 Century Station Training Room 5:15 PM***

Call to Order at 5:17 PM

Present: Anne Becker, Catie Barron, Jim Collins, Jodi Manthei, Jamie Swenson, Stu Ainsworth, Father David Peck, Kathy Melone (arrived 5:30pm)

Absent: Larry Maholland

Also Present: Chris Minick, City of St. Charles; Carylie Forte, City of St. Charles; Representatives of Steel Beam Theater; Fine Line Creative Arts; St. Charles Arts Council;

Anne Becker began the meeting asking if anyone would like to be chairperson of the VCC, and Jim Collins said that Anne has been doing a great job so why change what isn't broken.

Chris said they needed to make a Motion to Approve Anne Becker as VCC Chair. Jim Collins made a motion to approve Anne as Chair, and it was seconded by Catie Barron. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Catie Barron then made a motion to approve the Minutes of June 23, 2014, and it was seconded by Jim Collins. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Anne opened the floor to Public Comments:

Donna Steele of Steel Beam Theatre said she was grateful for the City's support of the arts and for helping to sustain it.

Sue McDowell of St. Charles Arts Council wanted to echo everything that Donna said and it is wonderful to get the help and effort for the arts in the city.

Anne mentioned that she received a letter from City Administrator Mark Koenen regarding the ramifications of possible cuts to the tax revenue that the City gets from the State. She asked Chris Minick to update the group:

Chris said the LGDF (Local Governmental Distributive Fund) accounts for the income tax revenue the State shares with the local municipalities. The City receives roughly 3.2 million dollars a year of income tax distributions from the State of Illinois. Gov. Rauner's budget speech proposed a 50% reduction of the state income tax distribution that is shared with municipalities. So that would mean a loss of about 1.6 million dollars to St. Charles' General Fund. Our current budget does not reflect the anticipated loss of those funds. Minick noted that it is a proposal at this time, and has not been enacted into law yet. It has to go through both houses of the legislature and be passed by the Governor as part of their budget package. The belief is that something will be passed, the level of that is still unknown at this time. A plea in opposition to this was made by Mayor Rogina, City Administrator Koenen, and other representatives of local municipalities that went downstate to state the case against losing these funds

to budget cuts. The State's fiscal year begins July 1, but Minick stated it is likely any cuts will not be passed until early to late Fall. Minick stated that one of the items at that evening's Government Operations Committee meeting was a proposal for a 10% reduction of funding to the groups receiving Hotel/Motel Tax distributions. That would include the VCC, The History Center, St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Pride of the Fox/Riverfest. Also, the Downtown Partnership receives funds from SSA1-B and there is a proposal of a 10% reduction from that.

If the 10% reduction holds, the amount that the VCC would be looking at in total would be about \$80,400, instead of the previous year's \$89,400. Anne mentioned she had drafted a letter of appeal that Mark Koenen would be reading at the City Council meeting that night. She offered ideas to the Council to consider, rather than using the 10% reduction:

- Pro-rating the reduction amount
- If the State doesn't cut the budget, would we even have to deal with a 10%?
- Can the 10% cut only apply to this year?
- Would elected officials be willing to take a 10% cut?

Anne stated that a communication would be sent to all the organizations applying for funding to let them know what the status will be re: the Funding for FY 15-16. Catie asked for a clarification of what would happen if the State does not pass the law, will the 10% reduction still go through or would they get the funds back? Chris stated that his opinion would be to try to retain the amount at \$89,400 for FY 15-16, or apply the difference to next year's funding level.

Anne asked if there were any other comments.

Chris said anyone is free to attend the Government Operations Committee meeting at 7:00pm.

Anne said the presentations would get started and apologized for the delay.

**Fine Line Creative Arts Center** - Executive Director Lynn Caldwell started by thanking the commission for its past support. Some of their highlights are:

Fine Line Arts Festival with a dinner special Raku glazing and firing;

They put in a new entranceway

2 Galleries - printmaking show in the Gallery now.

Workshops – Fabio Cembranelli from Brazil with a September workshop on watercolors and from Santa Fe comes Gasali Adeyemo workshop on African batik dying.

Because of many guest workshops, they have seen an increase in out-of-towners coming in for classes and that has converted into an increase in hotel and dining revenues.

New collaboration with Park District. Fine Line is primarily an adult education facility and they do high school field trips but they get calls asking for kid's classes, so they have partnered with the Park District to teach classes there in the Fall.

Weaving class for the visually impaired is in its 6<sup>th</sup> year and have added more people this year, as they have been told it is one of its kind type of class for the visually impaired.

Coming up in the Fall is "Uncommon Threads" which boasts over 500 participants and supports both Fine Line and those artists who participate as well.

Caldwell then introduced VP of Fine Line, John Abel. He commented that Fine Line is launching a major strategic planning effort addressed toward economic development. Fine Line hopes to become more widely known as a fine arts education and exhibition center. The VCC's grant has been extremely helpful with outreach and they want to increase that this year with the funds received.

Kathy Melone asked about their visually impaired program – are they considering other, similar partnerships? Caldwell said they try to teach more than the basics, and allow these folks to do more

than plain weave. They also want to hire a videographer to highlight their growing business on the website and on social media.

Anne asked if they wanted to speak about their collaborative partnership with Water Street Studio and Side Street Studios in Elgin to create an “arts center crawl” that residents and visitors can check out what is happening between Batavia and Elgin with the Arts groups. Still in the works.

**Fox Valley Repertory** – presenting were: Colleen Tovar (Managing Dir) and John Gawlik (Artistic Dir)

FVR has been in St. Charles since 2004, with programming every weekend. Thursdays are senior matinees. They have 5 subscription shows that run from 8-10 weeks on every weekend. On off weekends they have music programming, and a performing arts academy that runs four quarters per year with 12-15 classes per quarter, and about 20-25 summer camps each season. They employ Chicagoland actors, directors, designers, etc., as well as partner with local businesses to produce and promote their art. Through their Arts Academy they are able to employ local teachers and casting directors from Chicago to work with their young talent. They also have youth ensemble programming and just cast Beauty and the Beast to run in July to August. They go through the full process of tech and dress rehearsals, and 2 weekends of performances to get the full experience of being in a show.

John Gawlik spoke to the community and economic impact of FVR and thanked the commission for its past funding generosity. Their audience comprises all ages and the impact is that seeing a story told on stage is part of their mission to reflect on life and the community. So they track the ticket buyers demographic through various means and see what they are buying, as a way to find the trends and the viewing preferences of their audience. On the economic side, they can track if the ticketholder is buying a package at Pheasant Run and is staying overnight or for a dinner package, and in doing so, those sales taxes are going back to the City in revenue, over the course of the year. Gawlik asked that the VCC keep in mind the FVR’s substantial impact on both the artistic and economic sides to the community as they consider funding decisions for FY 15-16.

Father Peck commented how important the public speaking aspect is to a young person’s development. Tovar said they have seen the impact, especially as they approach the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their arts academy. They’re getting a lot of kids coming back afterwards to say how much their participation in their classes has stimulated opportunities in other areas of life.

Catie Barron asked how the relationship is going with the new owners of Pheasant Run. They feel a much more positive energy with the new staff, but still catching up a bit from previous years of prior owners being in receivership. Jodi Manthei asked if the new owners understand that their revenues were down before they came in, and so are they helping them with the revenue stream? They’re seeing a shift away from the thought that Pheasant Run is in receivership, so if we buy a theatre ticket, will the performance go on? That has changed for the better. Subscription sales are going up. The new owners are invested in FVR’s product.

Stu Ainsworth asked what else would they do with the 20K funds they are asking for? They need to rededicate funds back into more advertising with entertainment packages and with enhancements to production values, which takes more money.

**Preservation Partners** – presenter was Elizabeth Safanda

Elizabeth Safanda talked about her handouts – 1) showing the cosmetic changes to the historical building (166 yrs old) they use on Indiana St. With changes to front steps, windows and landscaping refiguring, they're updating and being good stewards with maintaining the building. They received 5K from the Kane County Riverboat Fund to use towards these building upgrades. So they're being good stewards.

2) Pottawatamie Golf Course – in keeping with their theme from last year focusing on “places that matter”, they found out the unique nature of the course, designed by Robert Trent Jones, and that there is a golf hole right on the river, and that the park itself was built by the WPA and has endured for 80 years.

3) Moving Jones Law Office to Langum Park which the City took responsibility for moving.

Advocating for redevelopment of the Judson House, which is now going to happen.

Related to education – There has been a significant drop-off in museum attendance, due to the attention being made in schools on constant testing. So the field trips have been significantly reduced. So they are working with schools to come to the Durant House and they will do a lesson right there. So they're trying to get schoolchildren attendance back up to where it used to be.

Jodi asked about the salary and benefits budget – what is the structure? 4 PT employees, and no FT employees, and many volunteers at all sites. There are no benefits with the salary, but their salary compensation is much higher than most others.

Father Peck commented the importance of teaching the history of this area to kids, and it shouldn't be taken for granted.

**St. Charles Arts Council** - Elizabeth Bellaver, Sue McDowell, Diana Brown

Elizabeth said they came tonight prepared to take questions, as opposed to rehashing what the board already had received in the application materials. They wanted to focus on some important things that they're doing, and have done. Their mission is to support and promote the arts in St. Charles. That involves increasing the amount of arts-based programming in St. Charles and finding ways to help underserved artists and markets, and support existing arts-based programs.

ARTSFest/St. Charles is in Sept. and aims to allow people to learn about all the businesses that are participating in and supporting ARTSFest. SCAC is asking for funding to help with that, specifically, and in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century tools and capabilities in social media, which would typically involve younger audiences. This is an evolving aspect of what they want to accomplish with nurturing interest in the arts. Creating an App for the arts in St. Charles; and promoting cultural tourism via the ARTSFest. They also want to underwrite new programming, and with non-traditional partners, like the initiative “the Arts Celebrate Veterans” – a multi-discipline event to tell veteran's stories of service and sacrifice.

They're still 100% volunteer driven and gaining with younger volunteers and artists. Keeping this audience in mind is a goal, when trying to figure out programming for these audiences.

Diana mentioned another of their major goals is to support local artists and give them a voice and a venue to display their art.

Sue said that even though she hasn't been to a VCC meeting in awhile, it may seem redundant at times, since everyone here is already a proponent of the arts, but maybe the Arts Council should present last,

since they are the “umbrella” over everybody, trying to help everyone achieve their artistic goals in St. Charles – that’s our mission. We can magnify everyone’s efforts with cross marketing and cross promotion, using social media, etc. – can make everyone stronger. The SCAC is in its fifth year and thinks they’ve already done a lot, and have a lot more to do to build the arts in the community.

Father Peck said the interactive element can make it more appealing to the younger audiences.

Anne Becker said she was curious about the “umbrella” metaphor that Sue used about the other arts organizations under the St. Charles Arts Council. Would this apply to new groups springing up in the City, specifically groups that the Arts Council may have helped in the past, but that didn’t stay the course? Elizabeth wanted to clarify that Sue’s reference to “umbrella over the other arts organizations in the City” was that they are trying to create events where everyone is tied in, and promote each other. To provide them the opportunity for a broader reach across the arts spectrum.

Anne stopped to clarify that her question was – are you noticing that these groups that the SCAC has helped, are becoming independent? Elizabeth said they support by raising the profile of some of these small groups, but not in giving funds directly.

Jodi asked to clarify if the funds they are asking for would develop the App to promote the “Arts in St. Charles.” Elizabeth said the developer that was working on it had left, and so they will have to start again with a new person to develop it. The app’s range is still in question.

Their goals using social media were met last year and they will continue to use social media to promote arts in the City.

**Steel Beam Theatre** – presenter was Lori Holm, Education Coordinator

She expressed their gratitude for the financial support of the commission. She also spoke about tourism, culture and history in the arts and the human element and how storytelling can create the sense of connection of ideas, and of other people we are not familiar with, but come to learn about through the arts, and the dramatic arts. She used the idea of how children can share stories by learning about their community and getting a sense of ownership of what is around them. Her emphasis was on using acting class as a safe place in the arts. It empowers them.

One of their programs – iMProv – has been successful in its first year and has been important is the young actors who are just learning to express themselves via this program.

Father Peck said he had tried to get on their website over the weekend but it was down when he tried.

**Norris Cultural Arts Center** – presenter was Mark Smith, Marketing Consultant

Thanked the commission for all the support they have given the Norris Center over the years. They have accomplished pretty much everything they had outlined last year at their presentation. Some of these were: One man arts show - Nick Freeman – lecture and open house; Arts Auction; “Music in the Gallery” series (for smaller ensembles); they’re using the gallery for more intimate musical presentations. They have 3 more concerts for their season (have completed 3 so far). They’re building their audience slowly and are committed to sticking with this series, on Sunday afternoons. Fox Valley Concert Band uses the space and they’re the resident ensemble. They have a co-production approach to this where they split the proceeds, but it isn’t an actual moneymaker for them. But they feel it is necessary to provide this service to the community and are committed to continuing it. They have purchased a piano for the Gallery and so it will be used this Sunday for the first time.

They have established through the Community Foundation the Norris Fund for the Arts. Which allows them to do fundraising, but have it all monitored by a third party – the Community Foundation.

Catie Barron asked if Mark could explain the relationship they have with the Fox Valley Concert Band as it pertains to space. He refers to it as a co-production. They have an agreed upon fee with them, and is basically drawn from the donations they get. But it doesn't cover much of the costs. They do not pay rent, but the fee comes from the donations they receive. They would welcome establishing a relationship with another resident orchestra. Mark welcomed any suggestions. Mark mentioned they have resolved issues with the School District. The Board no longer has any say in managing or directing use of endowment funds. They are a tenant in the building now, not a property manager as they had been previously.

Jodi asked how many Sundays – 5 band concerts, 6 Music in the Gallery, and hope to expand to 8-10. Art show receptions, and adding lecture series. They have one at least every Sunday. They have very little money for promotion, but use their website and direct mailings as much as possible.

**Sculpture in the Park** – presenters were Julie Miller-Longo (Pres.); Tony Stancati (Treasurer); Erika Young (STC Parks)

A PowerPoint presentation was used during the talk.

Julie said the experience of seeing all the sculptures in the park is fantastic one for many people who walk through Mount St. Mary Park. It's a draw for tourism - and visitors come to the City for that and then can partake of other sites in the City. Highlights:

Artist Reception in June – visitors can speak with the artists about their work and enjoy the sculptures that are presented. Artists have an opportunity to promote their art and perhaps find buyers for their pieces.

Tony Stancati spoke about their goals to feature striking sculptures and providing a forum for regional artists to display their talents. Encourage enthusiasm in the downtown area, and to purchase a piece for the permanent collection, which is an incentive for artists to bring sculptures to the park. There are 24 unique sculptures this year (16 of those from the Midwest). One of their goals is to attract sculptures of various sizes – large and small.

Anne Becker asked if the artists pay an entry fee. Yes, they pay an application fee of \$25.00 to enter into the system. This year, they raised \$360.00 through application submittals.

Jodi asked about their listed assets of \$160K. What is the purpose of those funds? Julie said the assets are at \$135K (as submitted in the appl.) and are pieces of property held by the Park Foundation (easements and parcels in Fox Chase Park area), and are not revenue generators. The bulk of the funds that Sculpture in the Park uses annually come from the VCC.

Father Peck stated that the Park is very contemplative and you can stand there and get an impression of the artist and the work, and become curious about what the next piece will be.

Catie asked if they plan on generating donations to the Park. That is something they could possibly do in the future through advertising.

**Fox Valley Concert Band** – presenters were Colin Holman (Music Dir); Susan Tarson (Development/Grant Writer); and Suzi Crookshank (Pres.)

The used a PowerPoint presentation during the discussion.

One of the things they do in the course of the year is share the stage with a middle school ensemble (this year it was Kimball Middle School in Elgin), and in so doing, they hope to share with young people that music continues after school, and that they get a chance to play with professional level musicians (FVCB must audition for spots). They encourage and mentor these young musicians, and also have an internship program whereby they instruct and mentor young musicians (who must audition and perform with the FVCB), leading to scholarship incentives to continue studying.

They also collaborate with other area organizations which stimulate cross promotion of activity amongst the audiences that typically seek out these other arts and music organizations.

Funding comes from various sources, including FVCB band members, as well as the Illinois Arts Alliance, the Visitors Cultural Commission, the Norris Cultural Arts Center, Geneva HS (which allows them to use space for rehearsals); and from various other sources: corporations, patrons, local businesses. It means a lot and they could not do what they do without the support of all these folks.

Stu asked why they do not charge admission to their concerts? Colin said that they are very proud of the fact that they give free concerts, and it's important to the ensemble, as a whole. Also, there is a different series of mechanics that are required to bring a ticketed, live audience in, than it does to bring in an audience that knows it is coming to hear them for free. The ticketed audience raises their expenses and makes it harder to budget, having to raise their expenses, but not knowing what their income is going to be, from year to year. They have successfully managed their budget all these years, while not having to charge for tickets to performances, which Colin feels is extraordinary and they are very proud of that fact.

They held their 3<sup>rd</sup> Gala this past year and were able to raise more money and be innovative. They've updated their website.

**St. Charles Singers** - Jennifer Hunt Kesner (Marketing) and Stephen Wright (Treasurer) presented

They presented a DVD of a performance by SING! youth choral group, which is an annual workshop.

Jenny said they are very appreciative of the commission's funding and that they take the time to listen to all the organization's pleas for funding. The current season is winding down and past performances included: Mozart Journey; Annual Candelight Carols; and were conducted by conductor Craig Hella Johnson. Jenny wanted the commission to see that with SING! , which comprises 6 to 7 choirs that are formed during the summer, the St. Charles Singers do more than just perform themselves. They do these SING! workshops to carry out their mission to foster young choral singing. Many of them go on to continue singing choral music after participating in the workshop. They have been putting this program on for seven years now.

Jamie asked how the kids are chosen to participate and they only have to sign up for the program to be involved. St. Charles Singer members act as clinicians during the summer workshops.

Anne asked where they are housed during the day's activities, and they stay at Baker Church during the entire day. The \$60 enrollment fee covers the costs of the clinicians, so it is a break-even situation.

Anne led a brief wrap-up: next meeting is June 8 at 5:30pm in the Training Room. Anne asked if the commission members would take a look at the funding sheet that Carylie gave them and make some suggestions for the funding allocations in preparation for the discussion on June 8.

Catie Barron made a Motion to Adjourn and it was seconded by Jodi Manthei . The Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52PM.

Minutes prepared by Carylie Forte.