

**CITY OF CORVALLIS
MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION
DECEMBER 19, 2012**

Attendance

Brenda VanDevelder, Chair
David Huff
Elizabeth Westland
Shelley Moon
Larry Rodgers
Karyle Butcher

Staff

Karen Emery, Director
Mark Lindgren, Recorder

Visitors

Corey Pearlstein, Majestic Theater

Absent/Excused

Rebecca Badger, Vice Chair
Patricia Daniels
Joel Hirsch, Council Liaison

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations
II. Review of Minutes	X		
III. Visitor Propositions	X		
IV. Arts Organization Presentation- Majestic Theater	X		
V. City Council Goal Setting			Motion passed that the commission forward to the City Council a proposed Council goal to provide a professional market study or environmental scan of arts and culture in Corvallis to assist strategic planning for the Arts and Culture Commission.
VI. Spring Stakeholders Meeting	X		
VII. Commission Member / City Council Liaison Updates	X		
VIII. New Business	X		
IX. Adjournment	X		The next Arts and Culture Commission meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m, January 16, 2013 at the Parks and Recreation Conference Room.

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

- I. REVIEW AGENDA/CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Brenda VanDevelder called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Karyle Butcher said that committee assignments needed to be discussed at the next meeting. She related the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition had asked the Commission to develop an arts and culture statement to insert into its new goals, strategies, and planning document; she asked that the Commission work on it in January.
- II. REVIEW OF MINUTES.**
David Huff moved and Elizabeth Westland seconded to approve the November 28, 2012 minutes as presented.

III. VISITORS PROPOSITIONS. None.**IV. ARTS ORGANIZATION PRESENTATION- MAJESTIC THEATER**

Majestic Theater Management Executive Director Corey Pearlstein said he was interested in learning more about the commission. He said the theater served a wide range of activities of about thirty large and small organizations last year. Many local groups cannot afford larger or more expensive venues. The theater has long had a partnership with the Corvallis Community Theater (CCT). By 2013, the reorganized theater will have been around for 22 years as a result of the City and Parks and Recreation.

He said there are challenges in sustaining the organization, since many of the smaller groups that the key mission is to serve by providing a platform cannot pay fair-market costs. There has been an ongoing debt of about \$40,000 over the last five years, which is a sustained challenge that must be addressed. He said the facility must raise prices 40% in the next year, but many user groups will have difficulty paying it.

He said that there was not yet a culture of giving to the arts or art philanthropy in the community. He said there has been an investment in capital building campaigns but not in programs, audience development, or capacity development. He said the facility operates at 45% of its potential capacity. He said it could take a long time to educate on the value of the facility, but in the meantime, it has been spending down its cash reserves. He said one challenge is properly harnessing volunteers. He said the economic recession was part of the problem, but the community must have a conversation about solutions.

Butcher said that she guessed that many community arts organization directors would share a similar story. She said the commission saw its role was to develop an arts and culture critical mass, help the arts community speak with one voice, develop a culture of tithing to the arts, and is trying to put a dollar value on the arts and culture in the city. Pearlstein said there was about \$700,000 of committed donor will to the arts and culture in the city every year, but arts and culture groups need somewhat more than that to continue operating as they have, and we have to talk about the relationships of the arts groups in the context of that funding disparity and how to educate donors on how to expect and demand more from nonprofit institutions.

He said that to help foster cooperation and partnerships, he'd chosen a database for the Majestic designed to integrate with other organization's databases in the future; that could help avoiding scheduling competing events on the same night, for example. He highlighted multiple levels of capacities in arts groups, saying there were multiple executive directors but no development directors. Butcher agreed with the fragmented work programs of many arts organizations. She said relatively little was funded by the city.

Rodgers asked about the product that the Majestic offered that was an advantage compared to other facilities, and what it brought to the table that was attractive to City taxpayers and donors. Pearlstein replied that the economic advantage is people don't have to drive to Eugene, Salem or Portland for stage performances; it keeps that money here and gives more reasons for people to spend time in downtown Corvallis. It serves as an access base to many local users and makes downtown Corvallis more attractive. He stated that he brought a professional curatorial background to choosing performances.

He estimated that there were between \$80,000 and \$180,000 or more in cost savings available by combining or sharing arts organizations operations and FTE's. By working together, they can do more

effective, broader outreach. He noted that simply increasing attendance by 20% or so would create the revenue that would obviate the need for major grants or assistance to the facility. He said by becoming more stable and a bigger destination, city venues can eventually attract bigger national acts.

Butcher asked how he saw arts groups coming together; Pearlstein replied that groups working on the Year of Culture met with VisitCorvallis, which will be working with a number of artists to build and expand a web landing page platform. Butcher asked about the relationship about the half dozen largest organizations and the commission. Huff said the groups are seeking to at least know what they are all doing.

Butcher asked about the role of the commission; Huff replied it could provide legitimacy for arts groups' activities; he noted the first ACC networking event helped bring them together. Westland asked whether cooperating groups (the Corvallis Arts Center, Benton Historic Society, Majestic Theater, the Whiteside, DaVinci Days, Fall Festival, VisitCorvallis and the ACC) were making an effort to reduce conflicts in programming. Pearlstein replied there may be more venues than can be supported programmatically or by donors; the groups can't really control each other's scheduling decisions. He suggested a "micro" Leadership Corvallis-type training over about six weeks intensive for arts and culture leaders, getting them in a room to understand their roles and responsibilities, and sharing vocabulary and tools.

Butcher said the commission didn't want to duplicate the groups' efforts and it could work more on advocacy. Huff said the commission could help create a sense that the city supports arts and culture; that can usually be measured by the money that a city directs to arts and culture. Pearlstein said there was potential for arts groups to share resources. He said the commission could help lead a consensus of opinion that could spur people to action.

VanDevelder related that new Economic Development Director Tom Nelson met with the commission last month and said he was very interested in staff and aggregate arts and culture economic impact data. She asked if arts groups needed help developing that information; Pearlstein replied that it is very complex and is not an expertise that arts groups have; the commission could help to develop surveys; and it could help to have a uniform approach that is simple and repeatable. Butcher said there are pieces of the Americans for the Arts survey that could be modified. Pearlstein said economic development was important for the long-term vision, but in the short term, he was more concerned with immediate fundraising and will probably have to cut back staff hours; he's already donating some of his staff time. Butcher related that Nelson said he'd like to promote arts and culture in context of economic development, *if* he had the data to back him up. Pearlstein said this is the year the community must decide whether to fund the theater for the future.

Shelley Moon noted that independent artists and African Americans tend to be forgotten; they need to be supported and nurtured. Pearlstein agreed that the Majestic Theater was designed to provide a platform for diverse and upcoming individual artists, and needed help advocating for that. Pearlstein agreed that it was important to create formats to keep that talent here, and help them succeed and express themselves.

V. CITY COUNCIL GOAL SETTING.

VanDevelder asked Director Emery about the proposed Parks and Recreation District; Emery replied that the proposal would remove some services to a new, dedicated district. It would transfer City property to the district, and there would have to be a conversation about the city-owned Arts Center and Majestic Theater. Staff presented a feasibility study to the Council in November; the Council asked for more detail on the revenue within a boundary defined by the school district; staff will also explore using

the County as a boundary, as well. The County Natural Areas and Parks Department could become part of the district, as well. The Council will make a decision in February. It is very complicated and must be approved by voters. She said the department faces huge challenges in funding, even though people strongly support Parks.

Butcher related that a group of citizens met to discuss how to get the best park services bang for the buck; they felt that confining the Parks and Rec district to only the 509J school district boundary limited the potential savings of the district proposal. She said there was an issue of tax compression. The district would take part of the capacity, and allow the city and county to shrink their tax rates.

In discussion on Council goals, Butcher highlighted the “1% for Art” Program for new construction that the City never formally approved. She said it may apply to remodeling, too. Rodgers advocated working with the arts and culture community as it actually is; the commission will be hamstrung until it can get the data to better understand conditions. He summarized the commission needs a lot more information that must be professionally accessed.

VanDevelder highlighted the arts and culture mission from the economic development plan; she noted that tourism was also missing from the plan. She noted that tourism and arts and culture were married in many communities.

Rodger said he wanted the Council to demonstrate whether they had skin in the game, noting that the arts was absent from the economic development plan. He said he wanted a Council goal to test that commitment, by underwriting a full-fledged study by professionals that shows how the arts matter financially. Pearlstein noted that City support could help obtain a grant to fund that study. Rodgers said the goal is for a much more foundational study of the economic and community-building role of arts and culture; the study must be professionally done. Huff summarized that the goal was to fund the study of the financial impact of arts and culture.

Emery said the Council goal proposal was due by January 4, 2013. Butcher suggested the “group of six” arts groups meet to further discuss it. Rodgers said that the city must have a big-picture aspirational goal that outlines what it is willing to consider, and the role of the commission in the future of the arts and culture. He suggested the aspiration be “to create the most interesting cultural destination in the Northwest outside of the urban areas of Portland and Seattle”; and to outline what steps were needed in order to make that happen. That could include determining what kind of performance venues were needed, tourist opportunities, etc. Rodgers said that if the City doesn’t fund the goal, he didn’t see the point for the commission to continue.

Butcher concurred with Rodgers, saying that previously commissioners said they weren’t ready to talk about a strategic plan, but now it’s time to do it. Emery said she’d previously proposed a strategic plan for the arts and culture in the community, but it was not acted on. Pearlstein highlighted the difference between participatory arts versus tourist destination arts. VanDevelder related that the mayor hoped that OSU could bring resources to bear to help develop the strategic plan. Rodgers said the study just needs human capital, not necessarily additional money. He advocated that part of the investment the City already makes in the arts go to underwrite a study so that the commission could work more effectively.

Westland concurred with Rodgers that we need to understand where we are now before we can decide where we want to go with arts and culture. Rodgers added that he was also interested understanding in the market of users; that helps arts groups understand what the local funding base is, and also sets out the aspirational horizon. Butcher said she understood it as an environmental scan of local arts and culture, as well as a commission statement that “we believe the city should look like this”. Rodgers

suggested the goal should be that within the next year, the City go through a process to create a data-based foundational understanding of both the current arts and culture circumstances as well as its future economic potential. Butcher said some of a market study could come from the Office of Economic Development. Rodgers said the study should look at both the OSU student market as well as the retirement trend. Butcher noted that economist Bruce Sorte already has information on market leakage to Portland and Eugene.

Huff moved that the commission forward to the City Council a proposed goal to provide a professional market study or environmental scan of arts and culture in Corvallis to assist strategic planning for the Arts and Culture Commission; Rodgers seconded, saying the commission would trust VanDevelder to wordsmith minor changes. Motion passed.

- VI. SPRING STAKEHOLDERS MEETING.** Discussion postponed.
- VII. COMMISSION MEMBER/CITY COUNCIL LIAISON UPDATES.** None.
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS.** None.
- IX. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.