



Denver City Council

Joint Public Amenities and Economic Development Committee
Meeting Summary

Date: Feb. 21, 2006 Time: 11:00 a.m. Location: Council Conference Room

Public Amenities Committee

Members Present: Lehmann, Johnson, Linkhart, Robb

Members Absent: None

Economic Development Committee

Members Present: Lehmann, Garcia, Johnson, Linkhart

Members Absent: Hancock, Brown, Faatz, Wedgeworth

Other Council Present: Boigon

1. City Park Tennis Courts – Information Item

Helen Kuykendall, Parks & Recreation, said that East High School has been using the City Park courts for several years to augment its tennis program. During the campus master planning process, the idea emerged to use land occupied by the school's courts for other uses and share the City Park tennis courts. Under the proposed agreement, Denver Public Schools will use bond funds to construction two additional courts at City Park. The agreement covers construction, maintenance, and shared use of the courts.

2. Mayors Awards for Excellence in the Arts

Tina Poe-Obermeier, Interim Director, Office of Cultural Affairs, said that anyone is welcome to submit nominations for the Mayor's consideration. The winners of this year's awards were at the meeting and were introduced:

- Ron Henderson, co-founder and artistic director of the 28-year old Denver Film Society.
- Maruca and Daniel Salazar, both artists, activists and founders of the Chicano Humanities & Arts Council. Maruca works with DPS and is a long-time member of the Denver County Cultural Council.
- Shadow Theatre, founded eight years ago by Jeffery Nickelson, a stimulating African-American institution.
- Eleanor Caulkins and her late husband, George, are being presented the first Mayor's Cultural Legacy Award for their lifetime contributions to Denver's cultural community.

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3. Denver County Cultural Council (DCCC)

Committee Action

The Committee requested that the DCCC:

- Schedule discussion with Council on the requirement that 51% of a group's activities be in Denver;
- Approach Channel 8 and Deproduction (new public access TV provider) about taping and airing Tier III productions.
- Work with the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs on the issue of Tier III venues and joint marketing.

Summary of Discussion

Jane Potts, Program Manager, Martin Robbins, DCCC Chair, and Steven Reiquam, the latest City Council appointee to the DCCC, reported on DCCC activities.

- A full report on 2005 activities and 2006 grant applications (due 2/28) will be presented later.
- DCCC will have two openings this fall; members are contacting a wide variety of organizations to attract a diverse group of applicants in order to even better reflect the population of Denver.
- City Council members are asked to encourage their constituents to talk about DCCC in their communities and encourage people to apply for appointment.
- As in past years, attendance at Tier III performances increased in 2005.
- Tier III outreach to schools is an important element for DCCC, and over 100 Denver elementary and high schools participated.
- CSAP is changing curriculum and electives, often art and music, are being eliminated; several groups are developing programs based on the CSAP core curriculum.
- Bluff Lake Nature Center continues to serve increasing numbers of school children.
- Finding quality, affordable venues continues to be a major problem for Tier III groups.

One of the major topics of discussion was that DCCC funding is contingent upon a group presenting a majority (51%) of performances and activities in Denver, which is a requirement contained in the ordinance (attached). Some of the comments were:

- The 51% requirement is constantly debated by DCCC, but only City Council can amend the ordinance provision.
- Several organizations based in Denver have trouble meeting the majority standard, partly due to lack of affordable venues and audience.
- Tier III funds are used by some counties to underwrite local performances by Denver-based organizations, such as The Denver Brass.
- Some Denver-based groups tour regionally and barely manage to meet the 51% in Denver requirement, such as the David Taylor Dance Group.
- DCCC cannot provide funds for a Jefferson County-based group to perform in Denver.
- DCCC funds several successful, worthy groups that will never move into Tier II but need more than the funding DCCC can provide.
- It is partly a question of funding emerging versus established organizations.
- DCCC applicants consistently request more than the available funding, and this year, SCFD certified 8 additional groups as eligible for DCCC funding.
- Perhaps the ordinance should require a certain number of performances rather than 51%.
- City Council needs to see number of Denver performances and number of attendees.

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4. Denver Office of Cultural Affairs – Strategic Plan

Tina Poe-Obermeier, Interim Director, Denver Office of Cultural Affairs (DOCA), said that 81 applications for Director were received, the search committee will forward three to the Mayor, and the plan is to have a selection by April 1. The Commission's long-range strategic plan addresses the Mayor's goals for DOCA:

- increasing access to the arts;
- increasing diversity in programming and in audiences;
- building the capacity and stability of Denver's cultural organizations; and
- establishing Denver as the cultural capital of the West.

Some of the activities DOCA is or will be undertaking include:

- developing a public art master plan (applications for public art director are due March 4);
- working on establishment of the Clyfford Still museum;
- developing incentives to help stabilize the local film industry;
- fostering greater collaboration between DCCC and DOCA;
- working with other organizations on a master calendar of events, festivals, etc.; and
- better aligning and managing the work of DOCA;

The Mayor will announce the Denver Poet Laureate on March 22. One Book/One Denver is moving to the fall this year to better align with the school calendar and so as not to compete with Open Doors Denver, which will be held April 22-23 this spring.

5. Create Denver: An Economic Development Plan for the Commercial Arts Sector

Ginger White, Senior Economic Development Specialist, Office of Cultural Affairs, presented an overview of the strategic plan aimed at coordinating and strengthening Denver's efforts to nurture the commercial arts (see attached). The for-profit commercial arts sector includes:

- film
- music;
- galleries & arts districts; and
- "individual creatives" (students, emerging types, arts educators, professional associations)

Gathering baseline data has been a challenge, especially in the individual creatives category. Ms. White has been working with the Office of Economic Development to identify and geo-code these businesses. Approximately 13,000 people are employed in about 2,000 arts-related businesses in Denver, including museums, visual arts and photography, media, design and publication, and schools and services. Locations were mapped by Council District (see attached).

Another challenge is that there are limited financial tools available to help for profit arts businesses. These are usually small, and individually they do not create the number of jobs required for financial incentives from traditional economic development groups.

Ms. White said no immediately apparent niche market opportunity emerged from the study that would

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help direct our efforts. However, a framework for short-term and long-term planning and activities has been developed. Initial efforts include:

- Mayor's Task Force on Creative Spaces: address the shortage of appropriate and affordable space for artists and other creative enterprises. As more areas are redeveloped, fewer spaces are available. A community meeting was held Jan. 24 and 320 people participated. The task force includes artists, gallery owners, students, technical experts, and planning and zoning officials, including Peter Park, Manager of Community Planning & Development, and is working to develop policy recommendations by October.
- Building Creative Businesses Expo: link arts businesses and artists to financial, legal, and other resources for technical assistance. The Expo will be March 4 with 30 exhibitors and 35 workshops. Participants include city officials, non-profit organizations, institutions, neighborhood groups and others.
- Creative Enterprises Revolving Loan Fund: establish a micro-lending fund for arts-related businesses. DOCA working with the Office of Economic Development with about \$10,000 in working capital and on fundraising efforts.
- Denver On Film: help grow the fledgling Denver film industry. Involves collaboration with Colorado Film Commission; may lead to recommended ordinance changes and interagency agreements.
- Improved Communications: reaching out to individuals and groups the City has not traditionally approached. Updated website: www.denvergov.org/createdenver. Email database now contains about 500 addresses. Mary Buckley of the Office of Economic Development sits on the Denver Commission on Cultural Affairs, helping to foster cross-pollination.

Gretchen Williams
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