



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 06/06/2024

REQUESTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks & Recreation

PRESENTER: Andy Couch, Executive Director/ Curator, Firehouse Art Center

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDED AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF A DONATION TO THE FIREHOUSE ART CENTER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$120,652

BACKGROUND:

The Norman Firehouse Art Center was founded in 1970 as a community arts center by Carolyn Folkins, Carol Whitney, and Audrey Bethel, three friends and artists. The Firehouse is so named because it operates out of the city-owned Fire Station 2, built in 1946 by on-duty Norman firefighters and decommissioned by the Norman Fire Department in 1970. Folkins, Whitney, and Bethel partnered with the City of Norman to transform the building into a space for visual artists to practice their craft and teach others interested in the arts. Their dream has been reimagined and revitalized many times over the succeeding decades. The Firehouse Art Center is now a part of many generations of Norman's history and the longest-operating visual arts center in the Norman community.

DISCUSSION:

Firehouse Art Center approached park staff regarding a proposed Pottery Patio Project and Security System Plan. The patio project will entail renovating the current kiln yard into a small outdoor event space with a functional gas kiln and space for a new clay mixer. Construction will include replacing the outer wall and roof of the kiln yard, concrete work to repair the walkway to one of the main entrances, adding an outdoor gas kiln and an entry door, and commissioning murals for the outer wall. The new area will provide additional space for events.

Firehouse Art Center also plans to install a new security system with 18 indoor and outdoor cameras to increase the safety of their faculty and students, make it safer to commission public art outside their building, and more securely display artwork in their gallery and gift shop. Firehouse Art Center voted to approve an allocation of \$25,000 to develop a patio on Flood Avenue in front of the original Firehouse entrance, and the City of Norman has agreed to assist with the concrete for the patio and construction needs to take place to add a new garage door.

The Kirkpatrick Pottery Patio and Security System Funding will consist of a \$10,000 grant from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, a \$74,152 grant from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds from the Oklahoma Arts Council, a \$11,500 Firehouse Arts Center Cash Contribution from remaining

grant funds from the Zarrow Family Foundation, and in-kind donation from Parks and Recreation Department for project management and concrete for \$25,000 for a total of \$120, 652.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommendation is that the Board of Park Commissioners recommend the City Council Director to accept the grants and in-kind donation in the total amount of \$120,652 for improvements to the Kirkpatrick Pottery Patio, Security System, and new garage door at the Firehouse Art Center.