

From: [Ottenad, Mark](#)
To: [Veliz, Kim](#)
Cc: [Cosgrove, Bryan](#); [Ammerman, Kris](#); [Stevenson, Brian](#); [Mombert, Zoe](#)
Subject: FW: Monday's City Council Vote on the Arts, Culture & Heritage Commission
Date: Friday, December 17, 2021 11:12:42 AM

Kim,

Public comment on Res No 2941 for the ACHC from the President of the Wilsonville Arts & Culture Council that was sent to some Council members.

Mark

From: Christopher Shotola-Hardt <wilsonvilleartspresident@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 17, 2021 11:09 AM
To: Councilor Charlotte Lehan <lehan@ci.wilsonville.or.us>; Mayor Julie Fitzgerald <fitzgerald@ci.wilsonville.or.us>; Councilor Joann Linville <linville@ci.wilsonville.or.us>
Cc: Ottenad, Mark <ottenad@ci.wilsonville.or.us>
Subject: Monday's City Council Vote on the Arts, Culture & Heritage Commission

Good Morning and Happy Friday, Mayor Fitzgerald, Councilors Lehan and Linville,

The day we've greatly anticipated is finally upon us! After several years of surveys, hired consultants, task forces, interviews, document drafts and public comments, we have the City Council vote on the new Arts, Culture & Heritage Commission's bylaws and structuring. I plan on attending the meeting and sharing my thoughts, which I preview for you here.

I have dedicated my life to advocating for arts and culture and arts education, knowing that they help us learn to really see and listen, they help foster deeper understandings, sensitivity and empathy, altruism, nurturing and caring. I was one of the teachers that helped open Wilsonville High School, and from day one I aimed to knock down the walls of the school and connect our students with the broader community and community of folks grounded in arts and culture. I founded the Wilsonville Festival of Arts, joined Theonie Gilmore and the Wilsonville Arts & Culture Council, and have served as WACC's president since June 2020, overseeing a new season of organizational growth and expanded programming even during the pandemic. Before retiring from the WLWV School District, I involved my art students in many public art arenas, connecting them to real world scenarios: the Beauty & The Bridge, two public art sculptures, a 44' wide mural, a permanent exhibit at the Evergreen Air & Space Museum, the wraps for SMART's new electric bus fleet, prominent annual exhibitions at the Wilsonville Festival of Arts and Charbonneau Festival of Arts, monthly exhibitions at the Fred Meyer Starbucks Gallery, and many other local group exhibitions hosted by local Wilsonville businesses. I could go on and on.

What has been missing, until now, has been an official arm of Wilsonville's city government to embrace arts, culture, and heritage and partner with the nonprofit organizations and arts educators who work so hard to bring beauty and meaning and a deeper sense of community and belonging to Wilsonville. The costs and roadblocks to cultural programming create much more and harder work for people and organizations, and this has burdened budgets and burnt out the volunteers who try to make a difference. Partnering with the City will be a major shot

in the arm.

The working documents Mark Ottenad shared with me that are under consideration for adoption look really good and will get the vital partnership work under way. I wish to address two major priorities for immediate attention:

* I do not see a line item in the City's 2022 budget for establishing a new paid position, an official director / commissioner to head this new commission, as was discussed throughout the task force processes I participated in and what I thought the City voted to approve a year ago. I fervently hope that the City can hire a specialist with experience in arts and culture administration. People in arts and culture speak a different language, operate in different paradigms and customarily present new paradigms as they think outside the box. Having such a professional at the helm as the main liaison and translator between the ACH Commission and the City will expedite communication and development.

* A Cultural Center: Over the summer I organized summit meetings with representatives from all five of Wilsonville's cultural nonprofit organizations (WACC, Charbonneau Arts Association, Boones Ferry Historical Society, Wilsonville STAGE, and the I-5 Connection). We all agreed that having a shared home where we can meet, collaborate, cross-fertilize, and conduct all of our programming is paramount. Not having a home has placed undue burdens on our budgets, scope, our frequency of programming, and our volunteers. Once the City has this in place, it will understand what we have long understood, that a vibrant arts and culture center breeds economic benefits and enhances community spirit and sense of well-being.

-- Look at what happened in Newberg when the Chehalem Cultural Center was established: it inspired art galleries to form in that area, coffee houses, boutiques, and restaurants, and it helped establish a vibrant downtown that attracts even people from neighboring communities.

-- Look at Portland's nationally renowned Pearl District, a popular tourist destination. I have been a longtime member of Blackfish Gallery (now in our 43rd year) in Portland's Pearl District. In the 80s, we were the first gallery to take a risk and move into the industrial warehouse district where artists were able to get cheap studio spaces. Other galleries followed, then the first coffee houses came, then the restaurants, then we helped start First Thursday art gallery hopping and formed the Portland Art Dealers Association (PADA), and then the City saw what was happening economically and got behind the movement to establish a new cultural district called the Pearl District, which was not the Pearl District when my pioneer gallery took a risk. Now we have a Hilton boutique hotel across the street from us, and a Hampton Inn one block away. Similar evolutions of areas have occurred elsewhere in Portland: look at the new art district in North Portland on Mississippi Avenue and Alberta Street, all the restaurants and businesses and gathering places that popped up because of arts and culture.

-- Look at Lake Oswego: There is a permanent home for the famous Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts at The Lakewood Center. There is a permanent home for the Lakewood Theatre Company. There is a well-known, ever-expanding public art "Gallery Without Walls" program that makes public spaces beautiful, welcoming, and vibrant. New galleries are popping up. Restaurants are popping up. It's a nighttime destination for people in L.O. and from throughout the region, for going out to eat, walking around, attending a cultural event, visiting shops, hanging out in beautiful public spaces.

These are but three examples of municipalities that took the leap and reap the benefits of prioritizing arts and culture, investing in arts and culture, and partnering with and enabling the organizations that started it all.

Compared to neighboring communities, Wilsonville may be late in coming to the table, but at least we've finally made it. I know we will never look back. With the Wilsonville Cultural Center, citizens will be able to enjoy much more frequent offerings, visual art exhibitions, performing arts programs and series, cultural programs and lectures, literary arts events, classes and workshops. Can it house an historical museum, an art gallery, a performance space, classrooms, a gift shop, an in-house coffee shop, a concessions area for wine and beverages and local eats for that performance evening? It's fun to dream about the possibilities in store for Wilsonville, the new businesses and activity that will be ushered in! It will be incredible to have that here in Wilsonville and not have to travel all the time to neighboring cities where these amenities are already established.

Respectfully,

Christopher Shotola-Hardt, M.F.A.

(he/him/his)

President, Wilsonville Arts & Culture Council

wilsonvilleartspresident@gmail.com

503.313.2559

Wilsonville Arts & Culture Council

P.O.Box 2510

Wilsonville, OR 97070

www.wilsonvillearts.org