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April 13, 2020

Honorable Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells and Members of the City Council:

This report from the Culver City Arts Foundation (CCAF) constitutes our quarterly report for the period of January 1 – March 31, 2020 in accordance with the provisions of our Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Culver City.

The year started out on a high note having hosted a very successful Holiday Open House at the end of the year that had a large and enthusiastic audience from the community. Our chair, Ashley Rodgers provided an overview of last year's activities and what is being planned for this year. We also had an opportunity to meet our new Culver City Artist Laureate, Alexey Steele. On a sad note Ashley informed the group that she and her family were moving to Austin, Texas at the start of the new year. That coupled with the resignation of board member Malena Dobal Parra earlier due to work considerations left us short two board positions to fill.

In February, we reappointed members of our Advisory Committee who wished to continue serving. They include Celeste Anlauf, Elaine Behnken, Dr. Janet Cameron Hout, Kim Mitchell, Heather Moses, Cat Rotunno, Richard Rownak, Bunny Saaverda and Albert Vera. In March, we filled our two open board positions with Alicia Ide and Ken Mand. We also held elections for officer positions with the following results: Kathy Sue Holtorf, chair; Jim Clarke; vice chair; Sehnita Joshua Mattison, secretary; and Eric Sims, treasurer. Due to COVID-19 and stay at home policies, Sehnita and Eric who have swapped positions have decided to retain their current positions until it is safe to go to the bank and change signatories.

In January, we launched our own grant program, following on the footsteps of the City's Performing Arts Grants. Our program has three categories – Arts grants (which includes more than performing arts), Facilities & Equipment grants and Experience grants (which includes such activities as field trips, internships, mentoring programs). We developed a LOI (Letter of Interest) and solicited responses from the community. We were happy to receive 40 LOIs from individual artists and arts organizations living or working in Culver City in all three grant areas. The board reviewed the LOIs in February and invited 27 of the respondents to complete a full grant application by the March deadline. A grants committee consisting of board members, advisory committee members and outside individuals evaluated the applications and made recommendations to the full board in March. We received many outstanding applications and the amount of funding being recommended was about twice the amount we were budgeting. The board asked the committee to prioritize the applications in order to find a suitable number to fund based on the funds currently available and our ongoing fundraising efforts.

It was at that point that COVID-19 became a serious issue and fundraising efforts ended. Since the board has made no funding decisions, we plan to discuss at our April meeting whether funds should be reallocated to assist artists and arts organizations suffering as a result of COVID-19.

During this past quarter, the board has had the opportunity to meet with Alexey Steele, City's Artist Laureate, and discuss how we can work together in accomplishing his goals for the position.

We have also met with Lee Lawlor from the City to discuss the concept of creating a Black Box Theater on the stage of Veterans Memorial Auditorium. This is part of the Cultural Affairs Workplan. The board has decided to support the concept and to make a substantial financial commitment to its creation, once we receive additional details from the City. As of now, those plans are on hold by the City.

We also were a co-applicant with the City of a Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Grant. The proposed project is to create a "Yellow Brick Road" from the Expo station to Main Street in downtown along with artwork in each major intersection along the way depicting scenes from movies filmed in Culver City using local artists. The grant would provide up to \$25,000 in assistance. We are working with Heba El-Guindy and Gabe Garcia from Public Works. We anticipated hearing back around the end of March but that may be delayed because of COVID-19.

We were pleased to have a meeting with representatives of Tito's Vodka of Austin, TX and the co-owner of Tito's Tacos and decide to hold "Tito's Fiesta Mexicana" for a third year on Sunday, October 4th. The expenses for this event are covered by the two Tito's and all the proceeds benefit our organizations. It has been one of our principal fun and fundraising activities.

We are also hoping to again hold the very successful "Small Publisher Book Fair" again this summer. Last year, our first, saw 40 publishers along with authors at the Wende Museum. This event fills a niche for book publishers who cannot afford to participate in the LA Times Book Festival. It also adds to Culver City's cache as a cultural destination.

Lastly, we are planning, as soon as we are able to do so after COVID-19, to hold an Arts Town Hall to bring local artists and arts organizations together to get to know each other and to work together. This something that Alexey also wishes to do and we will plan to work with him on this project.

As might be expected, fundraising has taken a serious hit during this pandemic. We began our efforts in late January and continued until the middle of March when all activity stopped. Our goal was to try to raise \$5,000 a week for 10 weeks and \$100,00 for the year. The idea was to be able to have enough funds in place by the start of the fiscal year (July 1) to fund our grant program and fulfill our commitment for the Black Box theater.

It was also our hope to be in a position to consider the repayment of the \$35,000 loan the City provided to us at the outset of reorganizing the Foundation. In some initial discussions early this year (before COVID-19) we discussed with City Manager John Nachbar either some type of multi-year repayment plan or some form of forgiveness of the loan, as a result of funds we have already provided to the City which are in excess of the loan amount.

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Since the City Council has the option of requesting repayment by the end of June, extending the loan another year, authorizing multi-year repayment or forgiving all or part of the loan, we are requesting the City Council take up this issue sometime before the end of June so we have a better idea of where we stand in moving forward with our funds and our fundraising efforts.

It is our assumption that even if things get back to some semblance of normal in the next few months, it will be difficult for us to solicit funds from businesses that have suffered so much or from individuals that have experienced job losses or other losses. It is our expectation that there will be many charitable activities necessitating funding that will take priority over our own efforts. As such we would appreciate the City Council's consideration of our request to either extend or forgive our loan repayment.

Sincerely,



Kathy Sue Holtorf
Chair

Copy to:
John Nachbar
Serena Wright Black
Christine Byers
Len Dickter & Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin