

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 12/18/06		Item Number: <u> A-1 </u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Approval of 2007 Performing Arts Grant Awards and Allocation of Funds as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Susan Obrow		Phone Number: (310) 253-5762	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: 2007 Performing Art Grant Applicants (12/01/06); Cultural Affairs Commission (12/01/06); Master Notification List (12/14/06).			
Department Approval: Susan Evans (11/30/06)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (12/14/06)	
City Controller Approval: Marlee Chang (12/14/06)			

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve the recommendation of the Cultural Affairs Commission and allocate funds for the 2007 Performing Arts Grant program.

BACKGROUND:

Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program was established in 1994. The Culver City Municipal Code stipulates that 25% of the money deposited into the Art Fund in the prior fiscal year be appropriated for this program for the current fiscal year. For FY 2006-07, the budgeted amount from the Art Fund is \$33,824 (this includes a carryover of \$8,824 from last year's program). To this, an additional \$15,000 is expected to be allocated by the City Council from a larger contribution made in 2006 by Sony Pictures Entertainment. The total amount available for Performing Arts Grants for 2007 is \$48,824.

On June 26, 2006, staff and the Cultural Affairs Commission Grants and Artist Services Subcommittee met to review the draft Notice of Funding Availability ("NOFA") for the 2007 Performing Arts Grant Program. Based on comments and discussion last year, the 2007 NOFA eliminated fee waivers at City-owned or City-controlled buildings or facilities. The 2007 NOFA also restructured the review criteria and eliminated the ten points for PERFORMANCE HISTORY IN THE CULVER CITY COMMUNITY. The ten points were added to ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE OF PROPOSED PROJECT which gave that criterion a total of 50 points. The CAC considered the 2007 NOFA at their regular meeting on July 11, 2006, and approved the document. During the week of July 24, 2006, the 2007 NOFA was posted on the City's web site, notices distributed electronically to former applicants, individuals and

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organizations included in the Cultural Affairs master contact database, the City's Master Notification System and the LACN (Los Angeles County Arts Commission) listserv. Special outreach was conducted in the theatre and dance communities and the application was sent to networking organizations in those communities.

On Wednesday, August 9, 2006, a workshop was held by staff at the Veterans Memorial Building at which the grant guidelines and application were reviewed in detail. Eleven individuals attended. Staff reviewed the new scoring structure as well as the new policy regarding the elimination of fee waivers for buildings and facilities owned or under the control of the City of Culver City or the Redevelopment Agency. Also, staff reviewed the current list of possible performance venues in Culver City.

A total of fifteen applications were submitted by the deadline on Friday, September 8, 2006. One application was immediately disqualified as improperly prepared.

The panel review session was held on Tuesday, October 10, 2006, at City Hall from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Five distinguished panelists were joined by the two members of the CAC Grants and Artist Services Subcommittee who attended as an additional resource for questions and also as observers.

The 2007 Performing Arts Grant Review Panelists were:

1. Sofia Klatzker, Arts Education Manager, Los Angeles County Arts Commission
2. Janice Pober, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Sony Pictures Entertainment
3. David Stahl, Pianist/Musical Director and Professor of Music, Los Angeles City College
4. Shay Wafer, Managing Director, Cornerstone Theatre Company
5. Renae Williams, Director of Dance Presentation, The Music Center

DISCUSSION:

Each panelist was sent an advance copy of the fourteen applications which were first reviewed by Cultural Affairs staff for completeness. The panelists were also provided a score sheet for each applicant (see attached) and an overview of Culver City's Performing Arts Grant program. There were three scoring criteria identified in the 2006 NOFA which are as follows:

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1. Artistic excellence of proposed project (50 points);
2. Realistic budget and diversified funding base (25 points); and,
3. Outreach programs to the Culver City community (25 points).

Staff opened the review panel discussion by providing a brief overview of the grant program's history, guideline changes from the previous year, and discussion of the three review criteria listed above.

After the overview, each application was reviewed in alphabetical order. The panelists first had the opportunity to ask questions of other panelists, staff or the subcommittee, and then to offer comments to the group about the application. This was followed by each panelist providing scores in each of the three categories resulting in an overall average score for that applicant. The CAC subcommittee and staff did not provide scores. In one instance, as noted below, Ms. Janice Pober recused herself from providing scores because she had recently interacted with an applicant and wanted to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest. In this instance, the score listed is an average of four panelists' scores rather than five.

Upon completing review of the individual applications, the fourteen qualifying applicants were ranked from highest to lowest; average total scores for all fourteen ranged from 96.75 to 64.2. The panel felt that those applicants with average scores of 95 and above should receive 100% of the funding requested or an amount that would guarantee the presentation of all the performances proposed. Those applicants with scores below 95 received a portion of the funding requested and the amount recommended is based in part on their prior year funding history.

The panel's recommendation was reviewed by the CAC subcommittee. The total amount recommended for award is \$44,500. The review panel and CAC subcommittee were satisfied with the scoring and recommended grant allocations for this year's applicants and recommend that the remaining funds (\$4,324) be carried over toward the 2008 Performing Arts Grants Program. Staff projects that there is a strong possibility that another performing arts facility will be identified in 2008 and that there will be many more grant applications from theatre companies. The additional funding will be beneficial to attract more performing arts organizations of artistic excellence to the City of Culver City.

At the conclusion of the review process, the panelists provided some recommendations to staff for future years.

Below is a brief overview of the fourteen applicants (from highest ranked to lowest) with summary comments as provided by the panelists:

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Culver City High School AVPA
Performance Venue: Ivy Substation

Panel Score: 96.75
(This average does not include scores from Ms. Pober)

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$4,000	\$4,000

The panel felt that this project was in line with what one would like to see in an education-based arts program and noted favorably the tremendous community outreach. The application was considered informative and to the point. One of the panelists noted that they would have liked to see a sample of student video work on the demo DVD included with the application.

Vox Femina Los Angeles
Performance Venue: Culver City Presbyterian Church

Panel Score: 96.6

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$4,000	\$4,000

The panel was unanimous in its enthusiasm for this project and the applicant's high artistic quality. The grant application was well written. Although it was not clear from the application exactly how outreach to the community and to young people was to take place, it was clear to the panel that the group had a strong consistent following. Also, the panel noted that this free event was attractive in terms of the accessibility of the program to the wider Culver City community.

We Tell Stories
Performance Venue: Culver City Julian Dixon Library

Panel Score: 96.4

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$8,750	\$7,500

The panel made a favorable note of this group's diverse hiring and programming choices. As noted in prior years, the panel felt this program was a wonderful addition to those held at the Julian Dixon Library, and that it is an easy fit for a

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Saturday morning with a built in audience. One panelist observed that this is a model arts organization that uses established standards well and that this applicant is now included on the Los Angeles County's Arts Education Resource Directory.

The Definiens Project

Performance Venue: Jazz Bakery

Panel Score: 95.4

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$3,500	\$3,500

The panelists were in agreement that this was a group of well trained musicians and that combining contemporary and commissioned works with unique venues such as Jazz Bakery is commendable. They felt the application included a comprehensive outreach plan and a well-documented budget. Some concern was expressed about the lack of a diversified funding base.

About Productions

Performance Venue: Senior Center

Panel Score: 92

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$10,000	\$5,500

The panel's overall response was favorable with regard to the pairing of youth and seniors in this project. The organization's diversified funding base was favorably noted as was the size of the grant request relative to the overall project budget. The panel felt there was a great community outreach opportunity with this program. As a constructive comment, it was noted that this group might have done more to partner with the AVPA which may have also helped with regard to financial support. It was also noted that the performance could be more fully realized. The proposed project for 2007 clearly incorporates some of the recommendations from last year's panel.

Westchester Symphony Society (Culver City Symphony Orchestra)

Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

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Panel Score: 89.8

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$7,500	\$5,000

This applicant displayed a high quality sound on their demo CD and their budget is consistent with their programming. It was suggested that in the future, this organization may want to have their board membership better reflect goals of the organization and the audience it wishes to attract.

Culver City Public Theatre, Inc.
Performance Venue: Carlson Park

Panel Score: 89

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$10,000	\$5,000

Overall the panel was impressed with this group's commitment to diverse casting and programming in a park setting. They felt the application was clear and representative of the goals for the organization. The proposal included realistic project and organizational budgets. There was a comment about the absence of an artistic director and whether or not that showed a shift in the company's direction. It was suggested that perhaps hiring a consultant to help with future organizational planning might be helpful. The panel noted favorably that although this is currently a volunteer organization they should be commended for future plans to pay their artists.

Los Angeles Doctors' Symphony
Performance Venue: Veterans Memorial Auditorium

Panel Score: 85

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$3,018	\$1,500

The panel supported this applicant's promotion of artistic excellence among youth as well as the established partnership with the Music Teachers Association of California. It was also noted that this organization was working towards extended outreach. There was a question about the accumulated surplus shown on p. 15 of the application and whether or not this was a cash reserve.

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Culver City Chamber Orchestra

Performance Venue: Culver-Palms Methodist Church

Panel Score: 84.8

Grant Request
\$5,000

Recommended Award
\$2,500

The overall consensus was that this is one of the better community orchestras in Culver City as demonstrated by the quality of music on their demo CD. However the panel struggled with assessing the merits of the proposed program given that it is new and there was no support material included with the application. The panel scored this group in part on the quality of the organization's reputation for past work. There was some reservation about whether the proposed project was a school program, with tuition-paying students, and whether or not this grant was supporting a business. In general the application could have been more specific and the panel would have desired more focused supporting materials.

Three Chairs Theatre Company

Performance Venue: Black Box Theatre at West Los Angeles College

Panel Score: 84.4

Grant Request
\$2,850

Recommended Award
\$1,500

The panel felt that this group showed promise and that this was clearly a young organization with lofty goals. Clips included with the application showed artistic promise combined with the organization's participation in EdgeFest. There was some concern for the fact that artists and production staff were not being paid. The professional affiliations of the board members should have been included in the grant application.

Benita Bike DanceArt, Inc.

Performance Venue: Veterans Auditorium

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Panel Score: 84

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$1,700	\$1,500

Although this group has been performing this program for many years it has never been presented in Culver City. It is an informative and accessible community-oriented project. The panel felt that the multi-generational component was extremely attractive.

Keith Glassman Dance and Performance
Performance Venue: Synergy Cafe

Panel Score: 84

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$3,000	\$1,500

Overall, the panel responded favorably to the unique venue and supported the collaborative work presented by this group. There was some concern about the submission of a handwritten budget and that the fact that the organization appears to carrying a deficit.

contra-tiempo
Performance Venue: Teen Center

Panel Score: 80.2

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$10,000	\$1,500

This project appeared easy and tangible for the company to implement and the panel responded favorably to the fact that this is a series. There was little concern about attracting an audience considering the large salsa following in Los Angeles. One panelist noted that this applicant has a very strong school program and that they have a great deal of support through that program. There was some concern about the budget and the fact that the fiscal receiver is based outside of California. There were specifically concerns about the increase in personnel costs and the amount included in the budget for marketing.

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The International Education Exchange Association
Performance Venue: Veterans Auditorium and Senior Center

Panel Score: 64.2

Grant Request	Recommended Award
\$35,000	\$0

The panel was excited about the prospect of bringing an international group and program to Culver City however the amount requested was disproportionate to the total amount of grant funds available. Some of the panel's reservations included the ability for this applicant to garner the level of support needed from other sources to make the program possible and the outreach as described in the application was not well articulated. Furthermore the focus of this organization as described in its mission statement did not clearly fall within the parameters as included in the grant application guidelines.

* * *

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission on November 14, 2006, the award recommendations as outlined above were approved 5-0.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The total amount recommended for the 2007 Performing Arts Grant awards is \$44,500, leaving \$4,324 in reserve to be carried over into FY 2007-08. These funds come from the combination of Art Fund monies as allocated pursuant to Culver City's Municipal Code and a contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Overview of 2007 Performing Arts Grant Requests
Attachment 2 – 2007 NOFA, Score Sheet and Performing Arts Grant Applications
(Note: due to the large size of the attachment package, a copy will be placed with the City Clerk's office for public review rather than attached to electronic distributions.)

MOTION:

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That the City Council:

1. Approval of 2007 Performing Arts Grant program and allocation of funds as recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission and as outlined above in the staff report.