



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 21-672, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-1.

CAC - Consideration of (1) a Recommendation from the Ad Hoc 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee Pertaining to the 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program Awards; and (2) Make a Recommendation to the City Council.

Meeting Date: February 16, 2021

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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** Yes ☒ No ☐

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (02/11/21); Sony Pictures Entertainment (02/11/21); Culver City Arts Foundation (02/11/21); 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program Applicants (02/11/21)

Department Approval: Serena Wright-Black, Assistant City Manager (02/08/21)

RECOMMENDATION

The CAC Ad Hoc 2021 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee (Subcommittee) recommends that the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC): (1) approve the recommendation of the Subcommittee to award \$150,066 for the 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program to 21 organizations; and, (2) recommend that City Council approve the 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program awards and related grantee contracts; and (3) recommend that City Council designate the related performances as City-sponsored.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Arts grant programs are considered a central component to programs and services provided by local arts agencies throughout the United States and provide a diverse array of cultural services to its community. In many cases, arts grants help subsidize ticket prices and provide free cultural services to the public. Arts grants are an investment in the community and in the quality-of-life residents and visitors can enjoy in Culver City.

The Cultural Affairs Commission and staff have implemented Culver City's Performing Arts Grant

Program (Program) since its inception in 1994. Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Section 15.06.160 stipulates that no more than 25% of the money deposited into the Cultural Trust Fund (CTF) in the prior fiscal year be allocated for performing arts in the subsequent year. \$200,000 has been appropriated from the CTF for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. Additionally, contributions have been made in support of the 2021 Program by Sony Pictures Entertainment (\$25,000) and Culver City Arts Foundation (\$15,000). The Subcommittee (Tania Fleischer and Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin) considered it prudent to reserve some of the FY 2021-2022 appropriation for future years with the COVID-19 related economic downturn and anticipated reduction in development. Also, they acknowledged the responsibility to use the full amount of \$25,000 from Sony Pictures Entertainment and \$15,000 from Culver City Arts Foundation as requested. Consequently, the Subcommittee proposed allocating only \$110,066 from the Cultural Trust Fund, resulting in a total of \$150,066 in grants available for the 2021 Program.

Due to the closure of performing arts venues, as well as COVID-19 emergency cancelation of performances/events, the grant program and application schedule was delayed by three months. Staff issued the 2021 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to the public during the week of September 30, 2020.

The application included new language related to COVID-19 safety measures and allowed for both in-person and virtual performance projects. The application guidelines stated that grants were limited to \$10,000 per organization. There were several other temporary changes to the guidelines that were designed to consider the current pandemic-related challenges specific to performing arts organizations. The previous requirements that matching funds be identified and that venue commitment letters be included were temporarily waived. A copy of the guidelines is attached to this staff report.

The electronic application was posted on the City's website, and notices were distributed by email, social media, list-servs and other appropriate third-party sites, including the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture. A current list of potential performance venues in Culver City was also posted on the City's website. Twenty-three performing arts organizations submitted signed applications electronically on the City's website by the published deadline of January 7, 2021. This is consistent with prior numbers of applications.

On January 27, 2021, applications were reviewed by a Peer Review Panel. Six distinguished panelists were joined by the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee attended the panel meeting as observers and as an additional resource for questions.

The 2021 Performing Arts Grant Peer Review Panel Members included:

- **Nathan Birnbaum** - City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs
- **Virginia Figueiredo** - Clarinetist, Educator and Recording Artist
- **Camille Jenkins** - Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
- **Natalie Marrero** - Conga Kids and Undoing Racism LA Collective
- **Catherine Rotunno** - Global Corporate Social Responsibility, Sony Pictures Entertainment
- **Tony Spano** - Culver City High School Academy of Visual & Performing Arts, Board Member of Culver City Arts Foundation

The panelists reviewed electronic copies of the grant applications materials as well as artistic

samples that were provided by applicants in advance of the panel meeting on January 27, 2021. The panelists were provided a sample score sheet. The following four scoring criteria were identified in the application:

1. Artistic excellence and cultural merit of proposed project (45 points)
2. Outreach and engagement with the Culver City community (20 points)
3. Realistic project budget and funding base (20 points)
4. Contribution to cultural equity and inclusion (15 points)

Total Possible Score of 100 Points

The members of the Peer Review Panel and the Subcommittee convened via Webex due to COVID-19 restrictions. Staff opened the panel discussion by providing a brief overview of the grant program's history, guidelines and review criteria listed above. After the overview, panelists discussed each application and its corresponding artistic samples. Staff provided updated information as needed, and panelists took turns in leading the conversation about the applications. Each panelist had the opportunity to ask questions and offer comments to the group. This was followed by panelists providing scores in each of the four categories, resulting in an average score for each criterion and a total score for that applicant. Only the peer panelists provided scores during the peer review session. If a panelist perceived that they had a conflict of interest with any of the applicants, that panelist would leave the Webex meeting during that discussion and would not score the application. In this case, no such conflicts were identified.

Once the review of the individual applications was completed, the score for the applicants were tallied by staff, which resulted in a ranking of the applications from highest to lowest. The Peer Review Panel discussed the scores and made general recommendations for full and partial funding allocations based on total scores. The panel did not recommend funding for applications that scored below 65.

On February 1, 2021, the Subcommittee convened and reviewed the total panel scores and the requested grant amounts for all 23 applications. The Subcommittee recommended that those applicants with total scores between 90 and 100 should receive 90% of their requested funding; applicants with total scores between 80 and 89 should receive 80% of their requested funding; applicants with total scores between 70 and 79 should receive 70% of their requested funding; and applicants with total scores between 65 and 69 should receive 60% of their requested funding. Subcommittee concurred with the Panel's recommendation that applicants with scores below 65 points do not receive any funding.

Further, the Subcommittee recommended that the total score for Benita Bike DanceArt, Inc. be increased by ten (10) points to demonstrate support for the applicant's history of providing free dance programming in Culver City, as well as their focus on serving the senior citizen community.

The Subcommittee supported a plan for staff to review the application process with the organizations which were not recommended for awards this year. This review would better prepare the organizations for the next application process.

The total amount recommended for all grant awards is \$150,066. Staff will work closely with the grant

recipients on the promotional plans for their performances and provide them with a performance survey as well.

Attached is a chart of the 23 submitted applications, panel scores, recommended grant awards and a brief description of each proposed performance.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The Subcommittee recommends a total amount of \$150,066 be allocated for the 2021 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program. The funding includes monies from the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Art in Public Places Program (Cultural Trust Fund - 41322400.619800 PZ614) budget in the amount of \$110,066, as allocated pursuant to the CCMC; \$25,000 from the 2020 contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment (42080000.619800.PZ614); and \$15,000 from the 2021 contribution by Culver City Arts Foundation (42080000.619800.PZ614).

ATTACHMENTS

1. 21-02-16_ATT_2021 Performing Arts Grant Program Application Guidelines and Notice of Funding Availability
2. 21-02-16_ATT_Overview of 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program Applications, Scores and Recommended Awards

The completed Performing Arts Grant electronic applications are available for public review by sending a written request by email to cultural.affairs@culvercity.org
<<mailto:cultural.affairs@culvercity.org>>

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S)

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. Consistent with the recommendation from the Ad Hoc 2021 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee, recommend that City Council approve the 2021 Performing Arts Grant Program awards and related grantee contracts as outlined in the staff report; and recommend that City Council designate the related performances as City-sponsored.

OR

2. Recommend to the City Council that 2021 Performing Arts Grant awards be allocated as amended.