

June 8, 2001

## Board Report to Council

As secretary of the Arts Advisory Board, I convey to you a copy of a motion passed 4-2 on 6/7/01 (Report 01-006), followed by my dissenting opinion.

Moved by Richard Bates:

“Given that the conditions for scenario A in the RFP process have not been met, I move that the Arts Advisory Board recommend to Council that the Council accept the recommendation passed April 5th (report 01-004) by the Arts Advisory Board in which GAVA's original budget was approved as a contribution group and in which the Council was urged to ask that City staff and the Arts Advisory Board develop an arts contracting procedure for next year with input from City staff, the Arts Advisory Board, and the arts community.”

(4) Yeas: R. Bates, Dennis Jelalian, Robert Shafer, Ginny Zanner

(2) Nays: Lillian Johnson, Teddy Primack

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Teddy Primack, 6/8/01

## **Dissenting opinion by Teddy Primack:**

The motion by Richard Bates is both flawed and destructive.

1. "Scenario A" was prose created by staff; it was not the motion which Council passed.
2. Prior to voting, Council knew from the Director of GAVA, by her own word and in no uncertain terms, that GAVA would not accept the contract. If the understanding of Council would have been that the RFP would be void unless GAVA accepts, voting would have been moot. By voting, Council showed that they were prepared to accept the Greenbelt Pottery component, whether or not GAVA accepted the Visual Arts component.
3. Submission of the Bates motion, after Council has acted, does not constitute "advising" Council, but interferes with Council's authority to rule on matters before it.
4. The Arts Advisory Board has no idea of all the hard work it is dismissing by this motion and what disruption it would introduce, where everyone else's objective is an orderly transition.
5. No group should be able to make or break a program, an RFP, or hold the City hostage. This unfortunate situation shows the arts program should be guaranteed and administered by the city, and not dependent for its existence on the whims of one person or one private group. Because the building, utilities, and much of the equipment are owned by the city, the city should have ownership of the program *in order to provide continuity*, regardless of conflicts that arise within independent organizations.
6. To imply, as the motion does, that not enough time has gone into this issue, is an insult to city staff, who have spent untold amounts of paid hours on this matter in the last six months, and to Nicole DeWald, the Arts Coordinator, in particular, who has labored tirelessly to bring the two parties together, and who has been acknowledged *by Richard Bates* (at the same meeting in which he introduced the above motion!), and validated by all the other members of the Arts Advisory Board present, as especially to be "commended for coordinating an outstanding year of Arts programs held in the City of Greenbelt in the past year." [Resolution passed unanimously by acclamation]
7. All parties agree that the City's main objective should be to insure the continuity of arts programming in the City of Greenbelt, no matter who the personalities involved. It would be irreparably destructive to the citizenry to dismantle all the arts programs which are currently going forward, despite GAVA's unwillingness to compromise, and actually reward GAVA for its recalcitrance by ousting Greenbelt Pottery and giving GAVA anything and everything it asks for.

The report comes too late; the whole question is moot. The Board has already submitted its recommendation to Council on this matter, and Council already made its decision. In fact, two of the Board members who voted in support of this recommendation last night did so with the stated understanding that the issue was moot, and that neither the Council nor GAVA would

be swayed by the report.

Barbara Simon and Jessica Gitlis are both old friends of mine, and I have personally tried to bring them together. I must sadly conclude that whereas Greenbelt Pottery (which brought the ceramics component to GAVA in the first place) has made overtures to GAVA and expressed its willingness to compromise and work together, GAVA remains adamant and will not reciprocate. (GAVA should have concerned itself with its loss of programs in Life Drawing and Sculpture, instead of obsessing over ownership of the ceramics program.)

It is time that justice be served. Greenbelt Pottery has already waited seven months to try and implement programming independently of GAVA. It is unreasonable and unfair to expect them to wait out another entire year before being allowed to resume operations at the Community Center.

Does anyone continue to suggest that GAVA be rewarded for being uncooperative? Does anyone in the City really fear that without GAVA there can be no arts in Greenbelt? Do people not understand that the City has in place an experienced, talented, energetic, and independent Arts Coordinator, whose track record of providing arts programming *within a budget* has been as good or better than GAVA's? It is a public secret that excellent arts programming exists throughout the region, without the benefit of GAVA.

City staff and interested Greenbelt citizens need to refocus their energy on providing services to the community, beginning with the summer session. The staff is making headway toward a smooth transition, which is the purpose of tonight 's report by Joe McNeal, and there is no clear reason for derailing this progress.

--Teddy Primack 6/8/01