



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Monday, February 4, 2002, for the purpose of discussing the Recreation Department's six-month review of arts programming and the question of issuing a Request for Proposals for FY 03 visual arts programming in the Community Center.**

Mayor Pro Tem Roberts started the meeting at 8:05 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V. J. Putens, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Pro Tem Rodney M. Roberts. Councilmember Alan Turnbull arrived shortly thereafter.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Hank Irving, Director, Recreation Department; Joe McNeal, Supervisor, Community Center; Nicole DeWald, Arts Coordinator; Jessica Gitlis, Ceramics Specialist; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Barbara Simon, Greenbelt Association for the Visual Arts (GAVA); Robert Schafer, Arts Advisory Board; Amy Boyes, the Gazette; and others.

Following introductions, Ms. DeWald presented an overview of the information provided in the staff report of January 31, 2002. She said it had been a very active six months and that the Recreation Department was overall quite pleased with the quality of programming, the level of enrollments and participation, and the cross-fertilization among programs that was enabled by having the activities under the same administrative umbrella. She thanked the instructors and the staff for their work over this time period. Mr. McNeal also commented on the volunteer time and donated equipment that had been provided over the period by the Greenbelt Pottery.

Mr. White said he was interested in only two things: 1) the scope of services that would be solicited in an RFP, and 2) a set of benchmarks to evaluate arts education programming. He commented that he had given the City Manager a grid for the information he was seeking and that it was not all contained in the report. For both evaluation purposes and also for describing the scope of work to be sought in an RFP, he thought it was essential to have a clear break-out on the data for programs that had previously been contracted out: i.e., the fee-based programs that formed the core of what GAVA had provided.

After some discussion, staff clarified that the information for the fee-based programs was included in the report in aggregate, but it was agreed that this information would be broken down by class. Mr. White said he wanted to see what programs were offered/advertised, which ones were held, enrollments, fees produced, and costs.

Mr. Turnbull thanked Ms. DeWald for the report. He said he was not concerned about how many programs offered were actually held, since he wanted to encourage the entrepreneurial effort to offer new programs. His primary concern, on the other hand, was to establish strong methods of program evaluation. He asked that, in addition to

the open-ended questionnaire, a quantifiable evaluation form be used with a sample of participants to provide consistent, standardized feedback. Mr. Turnbull also asked Mr. McLaughlin where the City stood with regard to upgrading Web-based software to permit on-line registrations. Mr. McLaughlin said this is on the new Director of Information Technology's list of projects, though it will still take some time to implement.

There was considerable discussion of how administrative costs should be treated. Mr. White questioned not including the Recreation Department's administrative costs, since it would be impossible for an outside contractor not to include some or all of those costs in its own estimates in response to the RFP. He said it would make it impossible for anyone else to compete. Mr. McNeal responded that one of the very reasons for doing the programs in house was that the City could piggy-back on the existing administrative overhead of the Recreation Department. He said it really is the case that the City can do the programs more efficiently and cheaply.

Ms. Simon said she would reframe Mr. White's point by saying that there are supervision costs to the programs that the City did not previously have and that these were not being shown as direct costs to the programs. Mr. Roberts said he would make the distinction that although these costs were real costs, they were apparently not added costs to the City. Mr. McLaughlin agreed that there was no net cost to the City in adding these programs to the responsibilities of the Recreation Department staff. He added that even with an outside contractor there are costs of oversight, if not direct supervision. He said while it is true that part of Mr. McNeal's and Ms. DeWald's time goes to these programs, it did previously as well. Mr. Putens responded that he thought the administrative costs were probably "a wipe" and that he did not think Council could make a direct "before and after" comparison. He said, "I believe we are doing more with less." Mr. White maintained, however, that for evaluation and comparison purposes, program information should not be integrated where it had not been before.

Mr. Turnbull said he thought Council should not assume the RFP would be issued exactly as it had been in the past. That is, the City should not now knowingly duplicate administrative costs if there are functions that can continue to be performed by staff that were not under the previous contract.

Ms. Gitlis expressed concern about that idea, saying that if an independent contractor was to be independent, it had to have control of its own finances and administration; otherwise, the contractor would be functioning as an employee of the City. She said that, for her, the advantage to not being an independent contractor was that she could spend her time on programming, not administration.

Mr. Turnbull said he found it valuable to have this review but that he had not heard anything that suggested that the current arrangement should be changed at this time. Mr. Putens agreed.

The matter will be placed on the agenda of the February 11, 2002, regular meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Gallagher  
City Clerk