

## Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Work Session at 4800 Town Center Dr., Leawood, Kansas at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, August 15, 2022. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

**Councilmembers Present:** James Azeltine, Julie Cain, Jim Rawlings, Mary Larson, Chuck Sipple, Lisa Harrison and Debra Filla

**Councilmembers Absent:** Andrew Osman

**Staff Present:** Patrick Geschwind, Interim City Administrator      Patty Bennett, City Attorney  
Chris Claxton, Parks, Rec & Cultural Arts Director      Loretta Morgan, Finance Manager  
Stephen Powell, City Clerk      Stacie Stromberg, Asst. City Clerk

## **Discuss Cultural Arts Proposal for the 2023 Budget**

Mayor Dunn called the work session to order at 6:05 p.m. She thanked Chris Claxton, Parks, Rec and Cultural Arts Director for her extensive packet materials.

Ms. Claxton stated that part of the information she provided to the Council in the packet is how the money is currently being spent on Cultural Arts and the Leawood Stage Company. She explained that in the case of public art, the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) takes precedent over the operating budgets for those two funds. She stated that in the past staff has used this as a guide and that there has been enough money in the budget to fund what was needed. Ms. Claxton noted that just because there is money in the budget for Cultural Arts and the Stage Company, not all of it has to be spent. She reminded the Council that staff watches the invoices and spending for all nine divisions on a monthly basis.

She acknowledged the concern and questions about the additional \$2 into the Cultural Arts fund. She pointed out that the staff memo stated that there was an increase from \$1 to \$5 in April 2001, as made by the recommendation of former Councilmember Rasmussen, but has not been raised in 21 years. Ms. Claxton stated that from staff's perspective the money can be spent multiple ways, such as landscaping for existing art pieces from the Arts Master Plan or playground equipment.

Councilmember Filla arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Councilmember Cain stated that she is the only Councilmember who has served on both the Parks & Rec and Arts Boards for over 10 years, as well as APPI (Arts in Public Places). She expressed appreciation for the Cultural Arts and Parks and Rec Departments and their robust programs.

She stated that the additional funds that have been requested did not come from the Leawood Arts Committee or APPI, but rather originated from former City Administrator Scott Lambers between \$5-\$7 "to address possible funding for the Leawood Stage Company's annual summer production." Councilmember Cain suggested that since there have been changes due to Covid and loss of staff the City should take a pause in collecting that revenue before ratifying the budget in 2 weeks, or take the

collected funds and keep it in a separate account to be used by the discretion of the Parks, Rec and Cultural Arts Director. Councilmember Cain pointed out that there are many unfunded projects in Parks and Rec. Councilmember Cain stated that the Leawood Stage Company gave the City a budget, but that they did not include the “soft costs”, such as staff, police, or rental spaces.

Mayor Dunn stated that Ms. Claxton and Holly York (former Cultural Arts Supervisor) both recommended the \$2 increase and agreed that the funds could be used for other Parks projects and the maintenance on the City’s expansive public art collection. She noted that the Leawood Stage Company is now funded through a grant, but since there was no production this year, they will be paying back the grant money, minus any expenses for the proposed production. She explained that if the money in the operating accounts is not used, it rolls over to the next year

Mayor Dunn offered some history of when the budget item was approved. Councilmember Harrison asked if the grant was from the City or an outside source. Mayor Dunn confirmed that it was a grant from the City as authorized by Mr. Lambers in January 2021. Councilmember Harrison asked if donated public art costs includes repairs, site work, landscaping, artist visits, etc. from either the APPI funds or the general Parks and Rec budget. Ms. Claxton replied that most of those costs come from the City’s general operating budget. She stated that if there are any monies left over from either of the operating funds, they go back into the hard art fund. She noted that there is usually money left over.

Ms. Claxton pointed out that the costs of site work is sometimes unknown. She reiterated that the City has always had money in the budget, and with the help of the Finance Department, they have managed the Art CIP very well.

Councilmember Filla asked about the regular wages overtime/professional services expenditures listed under Cultural Art. Ms. Claxton explained it is for the Cultural Arts Supervisor. She explained that in her report she deducted this amount since wages are not paid for out of the Community Theater budget. . Councilmember Filla asked if attendance is taken for events. Ms. Claxton stated that Parks and Rec does track the data, with the exception of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration due to its size. Councilmember Filla agreed that as long as the money does not need to be designated, the City take a pause.

Councilmember Azeltine was in favor of increasing the per person amount for art from \$5 to \$7 per person per year because it has been \$5 for 21 years. He asked about the grant money being paid back to the City. Mayor Dunn replied that because it was a grant paid in advance of their production, the Leawood Stage Company is paying the City back, minus any expenses.

Councilmember Sipple was in favor of increasing the budget and stated that he trusts the recommendation of the Director. He asked what the major unfunded needs are in the Parks, Rec and Arts Department. Ms. Claxton replied that it would be in the Capital Improvement Plan because that is where all the unfunded items are listed but noted that there could be more opportunities to do more cultural arts activities.

Councilmember Larson was in favor of allowing the extra \$2 per person per year to be used at the discretion of the Director. She questioned what the City gets in return for the money given in the grant to the Leawood Stage Company, if there was any grant money spent in preparation of the production before it was cancelled, and what the loss of rental fees on spaces reserved by the Stage Company.

Mayor Dunn mentioned that there are several productions throughout the year that are free to the public to attend, and are performed at various locations throughout the City. Councilmember Larson asked about attendance numbers. Mayor Dunn replied that she gets the information from staff and includes them in her Mayor's Report at the Council meetings. Councilmember Larson stated that their number one priority is to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money and to allow the Director to use the money as she sees fit.

Councilmember Azeltine acknowledged the high cost of using event companies, such as Harvest Productions, and other fees. He asked if the grant money had already been paid back to the City. Ms. Claxton mentioned it will be returned in September or October. She confirmed that some expenses were incurred prior to the cancellation, but that the Stage Company will return the difference. Councilmember Azeltine mentioned the Lodge space is no longer free to the Stage Company. Ms. Claxton stated that the City will provide the rehearsal space at the Lodge at no cost for the summer production, but echoed the Mayor that with more shows and locations, there were more issues with rental conflicts.

Councilmember Azeltine recommended using the increased funds for Parks specifically for Cultural Arts. Mayor Dunn replied that the current definition of public art is very broad, and that it does allow for flexibility and discretion.

Councilmember Cain stated that her intent was never to take away money from Cultural Arts or other entities but suggested that the additional \$2 be broadly designated. Mayor Dunn stated that the Council should focus on the excerpt from the Public Arts Policy that was included in the packet and summarized its intent and discretion. She stated that the goal is to allow the discretion of funds to the Director of the Parks, Rec and Cultural Arts Department, and that he/she would make recommendations throughout the years. Mayor Dunn stated that the Director can also make available the number of people who attend the community theater events.

Councilmember Harrison asked if there is a staff liaison to the Leawood Stage Company to attend their board meetings. Ms. Claxton confirmed that Ms. York had been attending up until her recent departure from the City.

Mayor Dunn asked for a consensus. Councilmember Cain did not agree because she stated it is unclear which fund the additional \$2 will go, and that she would vote no on that item when presented with the budget approval at the September 6<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

Councilmember Filla asked where the grant money was budgeted from. Ms. Claxton stated that it is funded through the Community Theater operating budget.

Mayor Dunn summarized that the Council would like to have more budget information throughout the year for each of the funds in Parks, Rec and Cultural Arts.

Councilmember Harrison noted that the policy states that the money will be spent with the "intent" of approximately 1/3 going to each of the three budgets, not the demand or habit.

Mayor Dunn adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.