

Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, thank you for this time. My name is Richard Renner. I am a member of the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission, but this evening I am speaking to you as the producer of the Lawrence Busker Festival.

It should be increasingly obvious that the arts play an important part in the culture and businesses in Lawrence. We have established a Cultural Arts District, hired a Director of Arts and Culture and have created numerous events to promote the arts. This commission has been very supportive and deliberative when it comes to the culture of our town. I for one, thank you. I am proud to be a part of this movement.

I would like to call your attention to an unmet need and suggest a possible solution. Presently, the option open for a large public arts or culture event, such as the Busker Festival, the Festival of Cultures, or the Free State Festival to apply for financial support from the city is through the Lawrence Community Arts Grants program, which has limited total budget of \$7,000. While this program is intended to enhance community participation in the arts and promote collaboration among artists and arts organizations, the amount available is too small to support larger community-wide events.

This results in festival promoters, such as myself and the Lawrence Arts Center, making sometimes fairly large out-of-budget cycle requests to the city or requesting support from the Guest Tax, event-by-event, to gain any substantial support. In the past, I have requested and received funding from the City's Guest Tax, but I will say the requirements for getting that have always been a little fuzzy to me. Likewise, in making the request directly to the council, I am uncertain about the process and rules.

These large festivals are exactly the kinds of events that present both visual and performing art and make it available to the public at large, expand connections to the arts throughout the community, and draw large numbers of outside visitors to Lawrence. For example, The Busker Festival has grown steadily since its inception in 2008 and generates significant revenue for city merchants. The Kansas Tourism Bureau has estimated that our festival brings in over \$244,000 in tax revenue with only a budget of \$25,000. Finances aside, These events greatly enhance Lawrence's regional and national reputation as a City of the Arts. The Lawrence Busker Festival is recognized worldwide as the biggest street performer festival in America.

I would like to suggest that the City consider a more standard way of supporting these beneficial events by establishing a well-funded and well-regulated annual granting process for cultural events in Lawrence.

I would like to propose a possible solution for funding and administration of this service. Resolution 7070, the Percent for Art Public Art Program, stipulates that up to 2% of all capital expenditures be set aside for art in public places. It does not require that the art be a part of the capital improvement project itself, although that has been how it has traditionally been used. This opens up the possibility of using these funds for arts and culture all over town, including to sustain and enhance major festivals such as the Busker Festival and Free State Festival.

The upcoming wastewater treatment plant is an example of a capital improvement project that could easily help fund an arts and culture events or public arts grant program for many years.

The Director of Arts and Culture could oversee the Arts and Culture Events Grant program and the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission could operate the grant competition as it already does for the Community Arts Grants program. As the City's existing advisory board on arts and culture, the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission is well suited to work with the Director of Arts and Culture to develop and promote the new grants program, solicit applications, and select suggested recipients for presentation to the City Commission for final decision, following already established procedures.

The mechanisms are already in place, all that is required is for the City Commission to include Percent for Art in Capital Improvement projects at the bid stage rather than applying it after the fact as has been the practice in recent years (so there are no surprises for contactors), and approve use of Percent for Art funds in this way, as well as for purchase of City-owned artworks, as has been the traditional use.

Resolution 7070 has been greatly underutilized in recent years. I propose that the City Commission re-engage with this program and seriously consider creative uses for these funds to open up possibilities for Lawrence to grow its reputation as a center for arts and culture. Doing so will benefit programs as well, including the City's interest in drawing retirees to live here, as well as drawing in outsiders who will spend money in the City's restaurants, stores, and hotels.

I hope you will consider my proposal to make your support for arts and culture in Lawrence, especially events like the Busker Festival, more sustainable. I believe embracing new ideas for utilization of Resolution 7070 can offer a solution particularly for the recent increase in out-of-budget-cycle requests for fesval funding. I glad to answer any questions and invite the members of the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission who are present to join me answering them.

Thank you for your attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Renner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Producer of the Lawrence Busker Festival

rrenner@vodvill.com

785-749-2226