

Subject: AED – Cultural Affairs Proposed Transition Plan
FY 2020 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up

3/29/2019

The following information is provided as follow-up to a discussion with the County Board at the work session on 3/27/2019, regarding the proposed reductions to Cultural Affairs.

Cultural Affairs Follow-up

In developing the proposed FY 2020 budget, I am most interested in exploring the question of what the appropriate role of local government is in supporting the arts and having a broader community conversation on this important issue. As I mentioned during the recent [budget work session](#) on this topic, the intention of the proposed reductions in Cultural Affairs is not to debate the value of the arts. There is much value in the arts which enrich the lives of many Arlingtonians, create a sense of place and belonging, and contribute to the health of the local economy.

Rather, as we spend funds on the arts, we must determine whether the dollars spent make sense for the services delivered and to make investments which can be delivered to a broader audience. Spending on new and innovative programs, such as the Arlington Art Truck, a platform that brings art to all people in the County, and our upcoming collaboration with WMATA as part of the Digital Engagement Initiative, are examples of efforts that increase accessibility and visibility of the arts at relatively modest costs.

As we continue to look at ways of bringing innovative, efficient and cost-effective arts programs to more people, there are several long-standing legacy programs including the CostumeLab, Scenic Studio and Mobile Stage which are rarely, if ever, provided directly by a local government. In Arlington, these services in some instances are used sparingly and episodically throughout the year, but still require intensive staff resources to operate under the current service delivery model. My proposal does not recommend removing the space or assets of these functions, but rather a re-evaluation of how the functions are being supported by the County.

The **CostumeLab** is significantly underutilized with a total of 24 rentals in FY 2018 averaging 5 hours per week. There are 13 total user groups, including 4 supported local arts organizations (Encore, Avant Bard, The Arlington Players, and Opera NOVA), 8 outside organizations, and Arlington County Historic Preservation. Additionally, two-thirds of the approximately 23,000 costumes in the inventory have never been rented. The fees collected equal approximately \$3,400 in FY 2018, of which 33% are from supported arts groups.

The **Scenic Studio** is used primarily, and nearly exclusively, by five arts organizations (Encore, Avant Bard, The Arlington Players, Dominion Stage, and Jane Franklin Dance) that have been operating for more than 27 years in Arlington. The fees paid by these organizations are very low (approximately \$2,700 in FY 2018) and do not begin to recover costs for the services provided.

The **Mobile Stage** is currently used for 15 events per year (5 County Events, 8 Non-County Events, of which 3 are supported arts organizations). Use for Arlington County purposes is free, Arlington based non-profit users pay \$500 per day, others pay \$1,000 per day. Staff must be certified to operate the stage. Two staff are required for operations.

Proposed Transition Plan

Upon further consideration based on this information and feedback received from the arts community, we believe more time is needed to have a thoughtful conversation with the community. In doing so, I am proposing a transition plan over the next year to move us forward from the current situation to one

where services provided are scaled to the demand and where arts organizations potentially bear more responsibility for their ongoing technical and space needs.

CostumeLab:

- Eliminate CostumeLab Manager position (1.0 FTE). (Reduction of \$70,761)
- Serve existing organizations by appointment only; reduce available days and hours. Facility Manager will staff up to 0.12 FTE.
- User Experience: There will be limited inconvenience, since long lead times for theater production will allow all organizations to plan accordingly.

Scenic Studio:

- Provide one-time funding for Scenic Studio Tech (1.0 FTE) (Add back \$108,621)
- Provide level of service consistent with demand – more hours available in peak season (Sept, Dec-Feb), less in off-peak. This will free up staff to assist with mobile stage, summer concerts and festivals.
- User Experience: User groups will continue to have access to the studio year-round. During off-season user groups will have to schedule according to staff availability.

Mobile Stage:

- Serve existing organizations and outside users will pay for \$350 towing fee incurred by towing company.
- Provide one-time funding for towing services for County Government users. (Add back \$4,550)
- User Experience: No change. Existing Technical Service staff that are certified to operate the stage will provide the service.

County Facility 3700 S. Four Mile Run:

- Provide one-time funding for Facility Manager (1.0 FTE) (Add back \$96,663)
- Facility Manager will be needed to continue existing operations as a cost recovery model is being developed in the Spring/Summer 2019. The manager will be a resource when the Arts & Industry District is implemented, and will provide the 0.12 FTE to support the CostumeLab.
- User Experience: Most users will not be affected. Major users may have rehearsal time capped depending on other programming needs.

Audio Tech Services:

- Eliminate 1.0 FTE (currently vacant) (Reduction of \$83,143)
- Contract with vendor for sound engineering services (\$25,000 ongoing funding in proposed base budget)
- User Experience: No significant change. Contract services will meet the user needs.

Arts Grant Program:

- Fully fund FY 2020 Grants Program (\$215,810) as proposed in the base budget.
- Application process is conducted in FY 2019. Applications are currently under review by the Arts Commission and recommendations will come before the County Board in July.
- For FY 2021, consider reconfiguration of the grants program in consultation with the Arts Commission.

During this transition period in preparation for the FY 2021 budget development, I propose that there be further community conversations about the role of government in terms of scope and costs with the provision of community arts services.

Also, I recommend that the current Art Policy adopted in 1990 be revised to align with the Enriching Lives Arts and Culture Strategy, and completion of a cost recovery study of user fees in Cultural Affairs with a recommendation for the Board's consideration.

In addition, the Facility Technology Services Director manages the full and part-time technical staff for 3700 S. Four Mile Run facilities, the Scenic Studio, and joint-use spaces at Gunston and Thomas Jefferson (TJ) Middle Schools. As proposed in my budget, this position's funding will be replaced with one-time funds for the duration of the incumbent employee's participation in the County's Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP). In FY 2020, we will explore a new model for facilities usage and look to implement a new scheduling process. We will work with Arlington Public Schools (APS) to develop a joint-use facility scheduling process. The current process is not transparent, relies on permission from individual school principals, and does not provide the assurances needed for arts organizations who need to schedule months in advance.

We will also work with Arlington Public Schools to update the joint-use policy and agreement for our mutual benefit regarding shared facilities. The current joint-use policy for Use of School Facilities dated, October 6, 1994, is 25 years old and the Memorandum of Agreement dated, March 31, 1988, is 31 years old for TJ Middle School and Community Center.