Visual Arts Commission Minutes
Thursday, April 11, 2019 | 3:30 – 5:00 pm
Collins Conference Room (Lower Level)
101 1st Street SE, Cedar Rapids IA

Commissioners Present: Bill Stamats - Chair
Kayt Conrad - Vice Chair
Lynn Ocken – Arrived 3:34pm
David Van Allen
Jonathan Berger
Alexis Dagit
Ashley Glassberg
Anne Johnson

Community Development Staff Present: Eric Pate

1. Approval of Minutes
Commissioner Conrad motioned to approve the minutes for March 14, 2019, on the condition that under the “League of Women Voters Art Piece Location” section, that a note is made to exclude Brucemore and Grant Wood’s Studio. Commissioner Berger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Input
There was no public input.

3. Discussion & Possible Action Items
a. Downtown Stormwater Drain Art – Eric Holthaus
Eric Holthaus, City of Cedar Rapids Sustainability Coordinator, shared that a partnership was formed in 2018 with Iowa Big and Economic Alliance to execute downtown stormwater drain art. This project was inspired by a similar initiative in Richmond, VA. Art is mixed with an environmental message on storm drains to encourage people to not litter, and educate on the impacts of dumping into the river.

Last year, 35-40 design submissions were received and evaluated by VAC members, community residents, City staff, and high school students. After each design was evaluated, they were scored and recommended to full the VAC. Mr. Holthaus shared that they are looking at eight sites this year where sidewalks and curb meet the road. Potential locations include 3rd Ave by DASH and Matthew 25, as well as several locations near the Early Bird. The cost of each design will be $500. The Commission discussed longevity of the art and choosing locations that will not be negatively impacted. Mr. Holthaus shared that the art is weather dependent. Some alleys incur grease spillage, and the effort is ongoing to decrease
what is being dumped. The scouted locations this year are nicer and would not be at risk of being damaged by grease.

Traffic-grade paint is used for the art, and is the best long lasting option. In an effort to help preserve the art, the pavement was scrubbed several times beforehand. Once the art was finished, the Economic Alliance reported that people enjoyed looking at them. The timeline this year for designs will be June or July, at the latest.

The Commission expressed interest in the west side, and getting into the neighborhoods to impact a younger population. Mr. Holthaus shared that tag lines and hashtags are often used to help general interest on social media. The stormwater drain art has primarily stayed in the downtown footprint due to support from the Economic Alliance. The Taylor Neighborhood Association, however, was interested in this art near their playground. The Commission discussed gauging interest with the Neighborhood Associations, and could be a fair way to choose where this art is potentially expanded. Mr. Holthaus shared that he will return to VAC once more details are received in June or July.

b. Market After Dark Projection Art
Commissioner Conrad shared that Dan Fine visited Cedar Rapids to look at potential buildings for the Market After Dark Projection Art project. Mr. Fine keyed in on the Armstrong building, although Commissioner Conrad relayed to him that he would not be expected to project at this site given the size. Mr. Fine expressed it is easier to project on a building where there is a parking lot available. The Commission discussed that the museum would be out of the Farmers Market area, however, the wall by Cobble Hill was suggested. Mr. Fine will be traveling internationally for six weeks beginning in May. His partner would be helping him work on the photos.

Mr. Pate shared that Jesse Thoeming with the Economic Alliance was excited with the projection art project, and the downtown group happened to be having the same conversation as the VAC. They have a budget set aside for a “wow” project, and they are moving forward with a projection art effort at a 3rd Street site to project on the Guaranty Bank building. A permanent projector will be installed on a post in a weatherproof box in early summer 2019. There is the potential for a sound component, but would need to check with Mr. Thoeming to confirm. The projector being installed has the capability to project static images, as well as video. Frequency of art projections are to be determined. They are working with an artist now, but wish to collaborate with the VAC on what future projections and artists. The Commission discussed Mr. Fine being able to plug into existing infrastructure, and he would like to use multiple projectors for the Market After Dark project. Mr. Pate shared that they are looking at a light fixture to be placed further north in order to have a blanket of lights hung across the street.

Commissioner Conrad will provide an update to Mr. Fine and let him know that the VAC is still interested in moving forward with a Market After Dark Projection Art project using the
Cobble Hill wall, and also want to involve Mr. Thoeming in the conversation so the Economic Alliance is aware and can discuss opportunities.

c. Public Art Project Updates
   i. UFG Pocket Park

Sculpture:
Cara Briggs Farmer has submitted her invoice, and Finance is working on her first installment to purchase materials. Materials pricing has not been impacted by steel tariffs.

Mural:
The old plaster is still attached to the existing building. The UFG architect and GC suggest attaching panels, as plaster will continue to fall off. UFG will repaint it. If the plaster were to be removed, that would be a discussion between the City and Steven Emerson.

   ii. Light Sculpture
Mr. Pate shared that Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director, is researching who originally installed the Statue of Liberty replica, and groups that have an interest in it. City staff continue to advocate for the site. The Commission expressed the importance of making progress during the warm weather months, and getting a call posted on CAFÉ soon. Requested emails on continued progress, opposed to waiting for each meeting. Mr. Pate will reach out by email with regular updates, and will continue to work with Jennifer on determining who installed the replica and groups that are interested in it.

The Commission discussed adding the Statue of Liberty replica to the asset list, how the Statue of Liberty replica is on the asset list, and obtaining approval to move it to a new location. Commissioner Glassberg motioned to recommend relocation of the Statue of Liberty replica in order to install a lighted sculpture piece at the location along 1st Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed researching whether or not electricity is a potential at this location. Suggestions to move the replica have already been made for City Hall, Mays Island, or NewBo City Market. Mr. Pate will get in contact with Public Works on any infrastructure issues at this site that could affect the RFP.

4. Member Updates/Announcements
Commissioner Dagit shared that Murals and More is working as a consultant with the MedQ. They are interested in funding a mural on the side of the building where the Gilded Pear is located. A task force has been formed, and Commissioner Dagit shared she is meeting with Phil Wasta. The mural will be finished by the end of this summer.

5. Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.
Next Meeting: June 13, 2019