



Legislation Text

File #: 15-087, **Version:** 1

Staff Report for an Update on the Status of the Selection Process for a Potential Lessee of the Theater at the Helen Lawrence Building

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information only.

BACKGROUND

The theatre at the Helen Lawrence Building at 999 East 14th Street was leased by the California Conservatory Theatre (CCT) from 1998 until 2012. In October 2012, Curtain Call Performing Arts, Inc. (CCPA) was added as a party to CCT's lease due to financial difficulties that prevented CCT from fulfilling its lease obligations of providing fifty live theatrical productions per calendar year. Upon expiration of the original lease term, in June 2013, the City entered into a five year lease with CCPA, with the continued mandate to provide fifty live theatrical productions per year.

In February 2014, staff received information that the theatre was vacated and CCPA posted notice on its website that it closed and ceased operations in January 2014. Staff sent correspondence to CCPA's Executive Director, Andrea Gorham (who was the only signatory on the theatre lease) on February 14th and March 5th to confirm CCPA's status and its intentions for the lease. Staff received responses on February 27th and March 27th to these inquiries from Dan Dillman on behalf of CCPA, although Mr. Dillman was not a party to the lease nor identified by CCPA as a member of the organization's leadership or its Board of Directors. Staff never received return correspondence from Ms. Gorham. On April 14, 2014, due to abandonment of premises and default of the lease terms, notice was sent to Ms. Gorham that the City was terminating the lease with CCPA. CCPA was notified it had until May 15, 2014 to remove from the premises any fixtures, furnishings and other personal property. The theater has been vacant ever since.

DISCUSSION

As it has been a long-standing City goal to support and implement programs that enhance the quality of life in San Leandro and promote a sense of community and civic pride, staff began a formal process for finding a new lessee for the theater. On August 6, 2014, a Request for Proposals for a new lessee was issued. In developing the criteria for the RFP submissions, staff considered potential drivers for successful residency at the theatre. Staff, with input from the City Manager, determined that respondents should provide an explanation of the organization's structure, including descriptions of relevant experience of its leadership team and board of directors. Additionally, proposals had to include information on what type of productions would be staged, including the range of offerings, expected audience and participants, associated costs and a projected schedule for the first two lease years.

To understand the respondents' capacity for effective business management and capital reserves to fund necessary improvements to make the theatre operable, the RFP required submission of a comprehensive business plan, which included anticipated expenses and documentation of current and proposed funding sources. Respondents were also required to submit six months of their most recent financial statements.

Any party interested in submitting a proposal was required to take a tour of the theatre. Staff conducted a total of eighteen tours on August 20 and August 21, 2014. Tour attendees represented a varied and diverse list of organizations including local established non-profit theatre companies from throughout the East Bay and newly established San Leandro arts and theatre collaborations. These organizations represented arts offerings that ranged from family offerings to improvisation and from storytelling to staging of classics and modern classics.

Seven proposals were received by staff by the September deadline and a review panel was convened that was comprised of Library Director Theresa Mallon, Recreation and Human Services Director Carolyn Knudtson and the Engineering and Transportation Administrative Services Manager Kirsten Foley. The panel evaluated the proposal submissions -- with additional consideration given to organizations based in San Leandro -- on the criteria listed below:

1. Scope of Services

- a. Description and schedule of productions, classes, etc.
- b. Audience/participants defined
- c. Associated direct & indirect costs of production
- d. Two year schedule included

2. Business Plan

- a. Current funding sources documented
- b. Proposed funding sources documented
- c. 6 months of financial statements

3. Organizational Overview

- a. Explanation of organizational structure
- b. Relevant experience of Board of Directors and leadership team
- c. Descriptions/Curriculum Vitae of current leadership

A fifty point scale that awarded points based on the criteria listed above was used to rate the proposals. Final scores were the average of the three scores.

After review of the proposals, six candidate organizations were selected for interviews that were held on December 2, 2014. The organizations were encouraged to attend with their Finance Director, Creative or Managing Director and a Board Member.

The organizations interviewed were:

1. Bay Area Children's Theatre, Oakland - Founded 2004
 - a. Professional theatre company; produces five (5) main stage and 22 youth education shows per year; offers classes and summer programs throughout the Bay Area
2. Cut Glass Theatre, Oakland - Founded 2011
 - a. Community theatre touring company with emphasis on modern and classic works
3. Made Up Theatre, Fremont - Founded 2011
 - a. Improv theatre company; hosts weekly comedy shows and classes, summer camps as well as corporate training
4. San Leandro Theatre, San Leandro - Founded 2015*
 - a. Professional theatre company; proposes to offer wide range of theatre productions, classes for adults and children
5. Stage 1 Theatre, Newark - Founded 1988
 - a. Stages three (3) large-scale (all volunteer) musicals per year, offers children's summer musical program
6. Brian Copeland & Storied San Leandro, San Leandro - Founded 2015*
 - a. Performing arts collaboration; proposes to offer comedy and dramatic solo performances as well as storytelling and poetry slams

*Pending formal LLC or 501(c) 3 registry with State of California.

Library Director Theresa Mallon, Acting Recreation and Human Services Director Breyana Riggsbee and the Engineering and Transportation Administrative Services Manager Kirsten Foley were the panel evaluators. The interviewees were assessed on the viability of each organization as a theatre lessee, the level of operational, artistic and business expertise represented and what each candidate would potentially offer San Leandro's residents if awarded the lease.

CONCLUSION

The City is committed to providing opportunities for art to thrive in our community and advancing the availability of the arts to all members of the San Leandro community. To that end, staff evaluated all of the interviewees, and ranked the Bay Area Children's Theatre as the most advantageous to the City. Staff will commence lease negotiations with the Bay Area Children's Theatre shortly.

For further information, please visit Bay Area Children's Theatre's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9pW0qDOPArpod8-thI2qw> or their website www.bactheatre.org.

PREPARED BY: Kirsten Foley, Administrative Services Manager, Engineering & Transportation Department

