

**MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
CITIZENS' COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMISSION  
May 17, 2021**

The Citizens' Community Enhancement Commission (CCEC) held a regular meeting on May 17, 2021 in the Community Room of the DeKalb Police Department, 700 West Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, Illinois.

Chair Brad Hoey called the meeting to order at 4:05 P.M.

**A. ROLL CALL**

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak and the following members of the CCEC were present: Chair Brad Hoey, Melissa Beck, Kenneth Brown, Jeanine Holcomb, Aaron Robertson, Helen Umdenstock and Ellingsworth Webb.

**B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**

**MOTION**

Ms. Holcomb moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Webb.

**VOTE**

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 15, 2020**

**MOTION**

Mr. Brown motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Webb.

**VOTE**

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Chair Hoey introduced Alex Nerad from the Egyptian Theatre to speak on the DeKalb Area Arts Council. Chair Hoey explained the Council was started about seven years ago and could help the Commission apply for grants that it does not qualify for as a government entity.

Chair Hoey introduced Paul Kassel, dean of the NIU Department of Visual and Performing Arts, to speak on the DeKalb Entertainment Consortium, which formed just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

No members of the public aside from invited guests spoke.

**E. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Alex Nerad – DeKalb Area Arts Council update

Mr. Nerad explained that the Council is a 501c3 organization, which established DeKalb's Arts and Entertainment Corridor recognizing about 30 cultural venues and has held workshops and art walks. He said the Council was close to creating a sculpture walk but the initiative was tabled under the previous City administration. Coming out of the pandemic, there is interest in reinvigorating the Council, which is the state-recognized art council for the area, making it eligible for state funds and grants for which no other grant is eligible. Mr. Nerad said he would like to look again at doing a sculpture walk. He said ten locations for sculptures have been identified. Artists would be paid a \$1,000 commission and pieces would rotate out after a year.

Chair Hoey said there are many grants that the Council is eligible and that the time is right for the reinvigoration of the organization.

New members are needed for the all-volunteer Council board, but Mr. Nerad said a mission statement, logo, website and bylaws are already in place.

2. Paul Kassel – NIU Visual & Performing Arts Dean

Chair Hoey explained Kassel has worked with the Commission previously, including on the mural initiative.

Mr. Kassel explained that the DeKalb Entertainment Consortium is supported by a student fee of 50 cents per credit that supports the arts on campus and generates about \$250,000 annually. The fee allows students to attend all arts events on campus for free and can be used to bring in outside artists. He said the intent of the Consortium is to bring in acts that meet the community's needs. Another purpose is coordination between NIU, the City and art venues, including the Egyptian Theatre, in planning and optimizing opportunities.

Along with the student entertainment fee, there is a new fee for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and the Campus Auxiliary Activities Board still exists. Mr. Kassel said the goal is that all groups work together to promote the mission of the University and enhance living in the City.

Mr. Kassel said another of his goals is sustainable initiatives, such as a mural done each year by students who earn credit. He also believes DeKalb can become a model for the use of National Endowment for the Arts grants.

Mr. Kassel also reported that NIU performances are being scheduled but it is not yet known how large the audiences will be, and Mr. Nerad said audience sizes will ramp up at the Egyptian with the hope of allowing sold-out shows in 2022.

Ms. Umdenstock shared an idea where DeKalb County businesses would pay \$20 a month with half going to scholarships and half to pay students to perform at local businesses. She said it would benefit the students while unifying the community. Mr. Kassel added that arranging a student to perform at a business would not be difficult since performers can already be requested through his department's website.

Returning to the DeKalb Entertainment Consortium, Mr. Kassel said the Commission has student and community advisory boards; although with the fee, student input needs to drive which acts are chosen to perform.

Returning to fundraising, Mr. Hoey suggested it could be done through the DeKalb County Community Foundation and could be a partnership with several groups.

Mr. Webb suggested members of the Belonging Council would be suitable board members for both the Arts Council and Entertainment Commission.

Chair Hoey concluded that the information shared by Mr. Nerad and Mr. Kassel will be the catalyst for additional conversations.

3. Paint-A-Plug application – 232 W. Lincoln Hwy
4. Paint-A-Plug application – Between 412 Settler Rd. & 381 Horizon Ln.
5. Paint-A-Plug application – 560 Katherine Circle
6. Paint-A-Plug application – 3<sup>rd</sup> & Prospect St.
7. Paint-A-Plug application – 301 Joanne Lane

#### MOTION

Ms. Umbdenstock motioned to approve all the Paint-A-Plug applications, seconded by Mr. Brown.

#### VOTE

The applications were approved by unanimous voice vote.

#### 8. Storm drain artwork

This idea was shared by Mr. Robertson and former Mayor Jerry Smith. Chair Hoey said it is another idea to consider that is similar to Paint-A-Plug and painting utility boxes. Mr. Robertson says painting bus benches is another idea.

The conversation turned to planters, Chair Hoey explained that the downtown reconfiguration this summer will narrow East Lincoln Highway from First to Fourth Street to two lanes and a turn lane, providing more sidewalk space. He noted the side street planters will still be done this year. Ms. Beck added that reduced Public Works staff will limit the planting that is done.

## **F. OLD BUSINESS**

1. Unity Mural at Lincoln Highway Underpass update

Mr. Robertson reported that the only work remaining is to apply the clearcoat. He said permission is being sought from Union Pacific for another mural nearby.

2. Review of Public Mural Program webpage

Mr. Zak unveiled the webpage to the Commission. It includes the mural policy, application, a list of City-owned buildings and photos of City-owned buildings that would be most suitable for murals. He said a next step could be soliciting privately-owned buildings as mural sites. The Commission agreed the webpage was ready to be published, and Chair Hoey said a news release would be prepared.

Mr. Brown shared that a community member is interested in putting on a battle of the bands at Blackhawk Road and Hillcrest Drive and he was encouraged to bring a proposal to the Commission.

3. Update on Paint-A-Plug map

Mr. Zak reported that a spreadsheet started under the previous management analysts listing the Paint-A-Plug projects needs to be finished, including research on whether projects that were approved were completed and collecting photos. City Planning Technician Doug Eaton is excited about helping to create an online Story Map for the Paint-A-Plug locations.

4. Update on City planters

No further information was shared.

5. Possible next steps on community art proposals by Brian Oster

Ms. Umbdenstock shared that work needed to be done to the metal of the East Lincoln Highway planter before it could be painted. Chair Hoey said money is tight for the rest of the projects but a partnership with the Art Council and grants may make them possible.

**G. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION**

Ms. Umbdenstock motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Beck.

**VOTE**

The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Minutes approved by the Citizens' Community Enhancement Commission on \_.