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Subject: Public Comment for the 12/12/2024 SECA Commission Meeting.
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SECA Commission,

I'm sorry to get my comments to you so late, but when the meeting agenda is posted only 2 days ago and there has been much to digest in the past months with SECA. It is hard to succinctly respond. I also regret that I have a conflict and cannot attend the meeting in person. Thank you for your patience and I apologize for typos that I'm sure exist.

Public Forum:

- In future years, please include a link to the SECA Grant applications so the public may view the applications and provide comment. This link should be included with the traditional Saturday meeting to receive public comment as well as the meeting the commission makes a unified funding recommendation.
- Applicants are supposed to disclose whether "Director, Board Member, or employee of the applicant has a family interest, employment interest or ownership interest in the applicant's use of the SECA Grant Fund Program funds being requested." I'm not sure the 1-13-1 is the correct municipal code reference, but it seems contrary to the public's best interest to have a member of the Public Arts Working group and soon to be executive board member of the public-private partnership be awarded a \$12,000 grant as occurred this fall.
- I can find no where where the changes from the CY23 to CY25 program manual were presented to the public or even the SECA commission for review. Some changes, like CY23 to CY25, are minor, but still the commission should have had the opportunity to review it. Changes like adding "If the art is to be placed on private property, an agreement with the private property owner must be submitted for approval" are not minor and should have received the commission's recommendation plus Councils approval. The new change in placement policy is also troublesome as it does not address placement of art on school or park district property. Another change from CY23 to CY25 poorly considered was the removal of the requirement that the art owner is responsible for decommissioning the art. I understand that the city may wish to decommission a piece of art even if the artist is unwilling to, but this should be clearly defined. The CY26 manual should be reviewed and improved by the commission and subsequently approved by Council. Beside clarifying placement, the acceptable terms for liability, maintenance, and removal should be outlined and a distinction made between permanent and temporary art. To me, temporary is less than a year and ephemeral (e.g. chalk) or on loan. (The city should not pay for an artist to create a piece, place it on city property for a few days, remove it, and place it elsewhere.)
- A [12/03/2024 news article](#) claimed the "public-private partnership for the arts has been

developed” and will be operational in the 1st quarter 2025. Yet, it has never been offered for review by the public, voted for recommendation by the commission, nor approved by City Council. I have little confidence that this new relationship will be transparently and professionally managed given what has happened thus far, It seems this group won't be much different than Century Walk's relationship with the city. I'm disappointed the SECA commission has been more involved - it seems like it has been a staff and working group effort outside of the purview of the OMA. (Note, even task forces go before City Council for approval. Certainly a public-private partnership should.) Please note:

- The group has launched a website and chosen executive board seemingly independent of gaining any city approvals for the purported partnership.
- SECA meeting minutes state the partnership would "apply for SECA funding on an annual basis for projects" then it does not seem to be modeled after the NDP which is not a 501(c)3. What sort of partnership is this going to be?
- The city's relationship with Century Walk was poorly defined and city staff seems to be have taken over resolving what to do with the art upon that organization's demise. It is unfortunate that this new arts group wants nothing to do with the existing city art, at least according to SECA meeting minutes. It also does not seem to have forged relationships with other arts groups as the Art of Inclusion applied for CY25 grants separated. Naperville needs much better planning for public art, not more of scattering of the special interest group focused art around the city with the city paying a large share for the creation, ongoing curation and maintenance.
- ARTFORUM is a well known international magazine that has been around since 1962. Surely a name more closely related to the new group's legal name, more identifiable with Naperville, and less confusing with the well-known magazine could have devised.
- If as the public art survey indicated, the community is keen on public art being placed predominately on non-city owned property, then this newly formed 501c3 has a great opportunity for successful fund raising without using tax-payer dollars to create and maintain art on non-city owned property as well as city owned property. That, should be the 1st focus of the group, not an eventual desire.

E-2: Reach consensus on a unified funding recommendation for the CY25 SECA Grant Fund allocations and direct staff to submit the recommendation to City Council for review and approval

- No public art should be installed on private property. The agreement by City Council stated "“Works of art selected and implemented pursuant to the Public Arts Program may be placed in, on, or about any public place **owned by the City of Naperville** by agreement with the art owner.” (Emphasis mine.) Just because staff's notes for the City Council meeting had the phrase "If the art is to be placed on private property, an agreement with the private property owner must be submitted for approval.", does not mean that is what City Council agreed to it was not included in the CY23 manual and should not have been added to the CY25 manual without City Council's approval. Neither the CY23 nor the current wording in the CY25 manual mentions installations on school or park district property. Again, I think because Council's intent was that SECA funds only should be spent for art on city-owned property. That is the policy Council held Century Walk to for the last 3 years. Century Walk felt the SECA Commission

held them to a different standards than other and this seems to me to cement that belief. If staff and the commission wish to revise the policy, it should be presented to the public for review and approved by City Council. Given how tight funding is and the upcoming loss of the 1% grocery tax, installation art on private property seems unwarranted.

- Riverwalk Commission approval should be sought for any approved application that involve their property. (#45, the Spring Renewal Lightscape application is one such project.
- C7 is requesting more funds be allocation to #44, #59, and #60 then the applicant is asking.

E-3: Discuss the possibility of increasing available SECA funding for CY26

- There is no attachment to this agenda item giving why an increase may be warranted. There should be so that public and commission can think about the issue prior to the meeting and so the public (whether or not in attendance) can submit comments during the public forum portion of that agenda item.
- Given the loss of the 1% grocery tax, discussing simply to up the amount is a big ask.
- I propose instead that the commission spend time in early 2025 strategizing on how best to allocate funding with better balance, better public accountability, and possibly less funding for CY26.
- Once a strategy is drafted, it should be written up, included on a SECA agenda so the public can review it, and voted on by the commission.

E-4: Review and approve the 2024 SECA Commission Annual Report draft

- Why isn't the details of the proposed public-private partnership mentioned on the 2025 upcoming work? Surely, this isn't a done deal. It has never been offered for review by the public, voted for recommendation by the commission, nor approved by City Council. (Again, even task forces go before City Council for approval. Certainly a public-private partnership should.)
- Please add publicizing and maintaining the Naperville Public Art catalog as discussed in the CY23 and CY25 program Policy and Procedures Manual. (See section 3 H: Documentation). I believe this catalog should include **all** public art that is on city property, public art owned by the even if not on city owned property, public art paid all or in part by city funds, public art donated to the city, public art maintained by the city, and public art decommissioned by the city. Thus, it should include not just art created after the Public Art working group was formed, but also Century Walk art, historical memorials, and pre-Century walk public art such Landforms.
- Upcoming work should not be to "Advocate for additional SECA funding to address significant increases in City Services expenses for special event applicants". Asking for more funds rather than first reviewing how the commission currently spends funds is not good financial stewardship. Instead, the commission should review and strategize how best to allocate funding with better balance, better public accountability, and possibly less funding for CY26.
- Listed under 2024 Challenges is "discussing and determining SECA Commission's role in the formation of ARTFORUM partnership and the future of public art in Naperville". I don't believe this was done in a publicly documented manner beyond the scant verbal presentation that went before the commission this fall. Similarly the item "Collaborated with public art working groups to ultimately result in the formation of ARTFORUM, a

partnership for public art in Naperville” has not formally be presented to the commission or even recommended for City Council’s approval. These items may have been things the working group did, but not the commission.

- What about the decision to grant \$75k for maintenance of Century Walk art? (The obligation lapsed and it seems funding for maintenance has not formally decided who controls how much is allocated and who is responsible for approving it. Unless City Council approves an ongoing obligation, I would think the commission should have a say as to what pieces of art warrant maintenance, how much should be spent, and pass the recommendation onto City Council.)
- Please mention decommissioning the Century Walk art at the Children’s Museum. Just new art should be mentioned.
- Please clarify whether the commission or just staff had in-person mandatory meetings with each applicant.
- The public art survey is not mentioned. I don’t know how much it cost or what organization the survey was supposed to benefit. If it was SECA, it should have been 1st reviewed by the commission. If it was for ARTFORUM, then I don’t thing city funds should have been spent on it. If staff decided to do it independent of the commission that is a little odd. Perhaps the annual report could shed some light on justifying this effort.

Thank you,

Marilyn

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Marilyn L. Schweitzer

