

**SOPHIE HAHN**

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CONSENT CALENDAR  
 May 16, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Councilmembers Sophie Hahn and Kate Harrison  
 Subject: Refer to Budget Process and Civic Arts Commission Berkeley Art Center's Request for \$45,000 for FY18-19

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to budget process and Civic Arts Commission Berkeley Art Center's special request for \$45,000 for FY18-19.

BACKGROUND

For many years Berkeley Art Center (BAC) has been a primary resource for the display of local artists, with a diverse representation of multicultural art. BAC is often the first point of contact between local artists and the broader community, serving as an important venue for the promotion of artists whose work might not yet have been shown in other venues. Furthermore, BAC provides arts education to community members of all ages, and general admission has always been free. BAC was a city-operated facility until it closed shortly after Proposition 13 passed in 1978. The non-profit Berkeley Art Center Association has administered and operated BAC on the city's behalf after re-opening in 1979. BAC has made possible the continuation of an important program for the City of Berkeley, and for Berkeley artists.

Currently the City of Berkeley is looking to change the lease terms for the Berkeley Art Center, which is likely to result in the Center needing to relocate. BAC is actively seeking relocation to Berkeley's downtown, as a means to further strengthen the Arts District and to provide a more central location for the promotion of local artists and art. A new location has yet to be identified. In addition to this major transition relating to space, the Berkeley Art Center's financial relationship to the City of Berkeley is also changing, resulting in a need for the organization to become a more self-sustaining, independent not-for-profit.

The recently elected BAC Board leadership is committed to building a strong fundraising board with relevant experience and access to greater financial resources. The BAC is also actively pursuing grant opportunities. The \$45,000 request for City funding is necessary to provide a bridge while the organization finds a new space and establishes more robust sources of funds. At its January 25, 2017 meeting, the Civic Arts Commission voted unanimously to support BAC's request for this additional \$45,000 operating fund amount.

Currently, the limit for applications for Civic Arts Grants is \$12,000. Arts organizations have traditionally approached the City Council with funding requests for amounts that exceed \$12,000, and these requests have often been granted on an ad-hoc basis. I am committed to expanding City support for the Arts, and to creating additional revenue streams that address the varied needs of multiple arts groups. A recent Council item initiated consideration of reform that would create a formal policy for larger grants. However, such a policy does not yet exist. This request is time sensitive as it addresses a set of extraordinary circumstances that confront the organization this coming year. Without the additional funding, the BAC may not be able to undertake all that is necessary to continue at its existing location while seeking and developing another location and developing its Board and fundraising capacities. As such, providing this \$45,000 should not be delayed while waiting for more robust city-wide arts funding systems to be put in place.

This month marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BAC as a treasured community institution. This funding is urgently needed to assist during this transitional year of active consideration of possible relocation closer to the Arts District. An investment in the Berkeley Art Center at this critical time in its organizational lifecycle not only shows support for a valuable community institution, it also helps to put BAC on a path to financial stability and continued success.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Consistent with Berkeley's Environmental Sustainability Goals

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

\$45,000

CONTACT PERSON

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