SPECIAL MEETING
CRYSTAL LAKE PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION
WITH CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2025
HELD AT THE CRYSTAL LAKE BREWERY

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Patti Noble at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Patti Noble, Kathy Hajdrowski, David Bradburn, Nancy Merkling, Brynn Jeffries, and Joy Neal were present. Michael Littrell was absent.

Mayor Haig Haleblian, Kathryn Cowlin, Director of Community Development, and Nick Hammonds, Deputy City Manager, were present.

ARTS WORKSHOP – DISCUSSION ONLY

Ms. Noble introduced the discussion of Public Art in Crystal Lake. She inquired the guests at the meeting to discuss their views on art in Crystal Lake. Among the topics discussed were the messages conveyed by art in the City, the types of art people would like to see, and examples from other communities that Crystal Lake can draw from.

Beth Alberger, general manager of Crystal Lake Brewery, proposed that a community mural can be placed on the east facing wall of the business' building. She expressed that she wants it to be a welcoming message for people coming and going. .

Richard Kuranda, Raue Center for the Arts, discussed art projects that are low-key and low maintenance, but interactive. He discussed looking versus interacting with art, and stated that both have their appeal. Mr. Kuranda also discussed that the City could look at that neighboring communities are doing, such as art tourism programs or sidewalk poetry events.

Guests in attendance discussed digitization of artwork. Concepts that allow art to be changed monthly or quarterly. Examples include artistic wraps placed over utility boxes.

A guest suggested art projects that include local woodworkers and welders. The local high schools and McHenry County College (MMC) have shop programs with students who have these skills and may be interested in participating in art projects. The guests discussed the importance of engaging the younger generation of artists.

Guests discussed their opinions of themes versus no themes with public artwork. Patti Noble stated that the Arts Commission has discussed this issue. Themes help to have a cohesive feel, but they do not want artists to feel restricted in their concepts. Ms. Noble stated that there is a fine line between creativity and having things that seem to pop-up at random. Joy Neal stated that quality is an important aspect of art

projects, even if the themes are not cohesive. Art can be surprising and unexpected so long as it is purposeful and high quality.

Brittany, with the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), discussed the railroad tracks that were uncovered during the recent Dole Avenue reconstruction project. She stated that the HPC has discussed what to do with the findings. The railroad tracks are too old to bend, so they are looking for potential art uses that utilize the existing structure of the materials.

Natasha Teetsov discussed art placements around the Three Oaks lake loop or around the lake Crystal Lake. Patti Noble discussed the interactive maps on the City website that highlight the placement of art in the City, including around Three Oaks, Crystal Lake, and various other locations in town.

Joy Neal discussed printing materials instead of permanent murals. Wendy Guss with District 155 stated that artists need to be compensated for their work, whether it is through paying for material or their time. She stated that it is important for artists to have clear expectations of ownership of their artwork.

Patti Noble began a discussion regarding fundraising. Guests discussed art festivals and events to help raise money for art projects. Brittany with HPC discussed the Trolley Tours. Guests suggested art tours, house tours, and rock painting where the public is invited to pay to place a rock in town.

A guest stated that messaging is important to spread awareness and gain buy-in for art projects; any art installation will not make everyone happy. Brynn Jeffries agreed, adding that part of art is to get people talking. Ms. Noble stated that the Arts Commission has a focus area in their strategic plan regarding communication and marketing, which includes fostering a connection, highlighting the artists, and showing the meaning behind the artwork.

Mayor Haleblian stated that fundraising can be difficult, but it creates a sense of ownership for those involved. He discussed the potential for public/private partnerships to help foster art installations. Mayor Haleblian stated that it is important to get going and start having movement with art installations in town.

Joy Neal discussed an art walk concept in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Their festival included a grand prize, which incentivizes artists to submit their work while fostering more engagement with artist and the community, who votes on the winner. This could be held entirely downtown, or it could also be a way of getting people to visit different places in Crystal Lake, with a map of all of the locations that art is displayed for the contest.

Guests discussed connecting the downtown area with the lake. Stating that art installations, or a trolley, along Dole Avenue could achieve this concept.

Wendy Guss discussed the purchase of art after they have been on display.

Kirk Hiatt discussed the High Line in New York, which involves a public park and art programming.

Guests discussed the potential inclusion of a traveling art exhibit.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Guests in attendance provided feedback during the arts workshop.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Hajdrowski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Jeffries seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m..