

**MOORPARK CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** Honorable City Council

**FROM:** Jeremy Laurentowski, Parks & Recreation Director *SL*

**DATE:** December 10, 2015 (Meeting of December 16, 2015)

**SUBJECT:** Consider Cancellation of the Moorpark Arts Festival 2016 Event

**BACKGROUND**

The history of the Moorpark Arts Festival is somewhat unclear. Several local historians make reference to its origin as early as 1930, while others agree that it was established sometime in the 1960's. In either case, the Moorpark Arts Festival is an integral part of Moorpark's history and was established well before the City became incorporated in 1983. However, after many years of variable success the event was cancelled. In 2003 the tradition was revived by a committee of local Moorpark volunteers. The event was traditionally held in October in conjunction with the Ventura County Arts Council's Arts Week. Event activities were located at multiple venues in the Civic Center and on High Street.

The original intent of the Moorpark Arts Festival was that it be a volunteer driven community event. However, in 2007, the City Council expressed a desire to rekindle the event and directed City staff to assume responsibility for the continued planning, staffing and general organization of the festival. At that time the event schedule was moved from October to May due to conflicts with other City events. In 2009, the event schedule was moved to April in order to avoid competition with other arts-related events in east Ventura County. From 2007 through 2010, the event was coordinated by the Active Adult Center Supervisor with assistance from Recreation Division staff. In 2011, the Recreation Division assumed full responsibility for coordinating the event. In 2012, the entire event was moved to High Street to consolidate the event venue. Prior to 2012, the event was located at various facilities within the Civic Center complex and on High Street. The move to High Street reduced confusion about where activities were located, increased event visibility, improved event traffic flow, and addressed several safety concerns regarding participants crossing Moorpark Avenue (State Highway 23). In 2013, High Street was closed between Moorpark Avenue and Walnut Street for safety and logistical reasons. For the past few years, activities at the Arts Festival have

included art exhibitions (adult and youth), a craft fair, hands-on art activities, food booths, and live performances.

**DISCUSSION**

The Moorpark Arts Festival is the only City sponsored event focused primarily on celebrating the arts. As such, it is an important and valuable program to the City, and Ventura County in general. However, over the past several years, attendance at the festival has declined. The event venue has, by its nature, presented logistical and staffing challenges. It is also increasingly difficult to secure the participation of artists and performers at the event. The success of the High Street Arts Center over the past few years has restricted the theater’s availability and participation in the event. Although the event has been able to consistently meet the minimum cost recovery requirement, it realizes a substantial net loss each year. Below is a summary of the event’s financial performance over the past three years.

<b>Moorpark Arts Festival Summary</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
Attendance	1,835	2,000	3,500
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,195</b>	<b>\$2,900</b>	<b>\$1,700</b>
Direct Costs	\$2,901	\$3,749	\$2,645
Indirect Costs			
<i>F/T Staff</i>	<i>\$9,160</i>	<i>\$5,910</i>	<i>\$8,377</i>
<i>Overhead Costs</i>	<i>\$775</i>	<i>\$610</i>	<i>\$826</i>
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$12,836</b>	<b>\$10,269</b>	<b>\$11,848</b>
Gross Profit / (Loss)	(\$706)	(\$849)	(\$945)
<b>Net Profit / (Loss)</b>	<b>(\$10,641)</b>	<b>(\$7,369)</b>	<b>(\$10,148)</b>

At this time, the Recreation Division has two full-time staff vacancies, and will experience a change in management within the next few weeks. The current staffing challenges have made it difficult to adequately plan for this event. However, staff believes that there is an opportunity to re-examine this event and possibly reschedule the event later in the year in 2016. In order to accommodate current workloads in the Recreation Division, staff feels that it will be necessary to cancel the Moorpark Arts Festival in April 2016. This will allow staff time to research and prepare a series of options for the City Council to consider at a later date.

Some areas that staff feels should be considered in order to revitalize this program follow:

- **Location:** Although holding the Arts Festival on High Street brings an event to the downtown area, the venue has several disadvantages. In order to provide a safe, easily accessible venue, the street must be secured and closed. The street closure is handled directly by City staff in order to keep direct costs at a

minimum, such as CalTrans permit fees and contractor costs for barricades. Although staff handles the closure, the cost to close the street is approximately \$1,800 annually, including overtime staff costs, which represents a significant portion of the total event expenditures. Police volunteer services are also required to direct traffic and secure the road closures. In addition, indoor exhibition space is limited to the Chamber of Commerce and/or Moorpark Foundation for the Arts building, which limits the expansion of any indoor fine art exhibits. The outdoor stage and all other equipment must be transported from the Arroyo Vista Recreation Center (AVRC) to the event venue, adding significant staff time and costs. Staff believes that alternative locations for this venue should be considered to keep costs down and feels that AVRC and adjacent park grounds should be considered as a future potential site for this event. The majority of the City sponsored events are already held at this location, and this location provides ample indoor and outdoor space, parking, and other amenities.

- **Schedule:** The Arts Festival is currently held in April. Although the event was moved in 2007 from the fall to the spring to avoid conflicts with other fall events, the Arts Festival now conflicts or is in competition with a variety of spring events, which outweigh the benefits of the schedule change that was made in 2007. Staff believes that the time of year the event is held should be reconsidered.
- **Expansion:** Currently, only vendors that create hand-crafted items are accepted for the venue. Staff feels that allowing a more diverse combination of vendors to participate in the event would increase vendor participation and make the event more attractive to a wider audience. In addition, there may be an opportunity to expand the festival to include a variety of recreational activities, such as a craft fair, game booths, expanded food court and other attractions.

On December 7, 2015 staff presented this report to the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission). The Commission voted 4 to 1 (Commissioner Doria) in favor of canceling the Spring 2016 Moorpark Arts Festival due to staffing challenges, and recommended considering changes to the event at a future meeting. The Commission also included in the motion a recommendation that the Arts Commission should also have the opportunity to consider any proposed changes to the event. Staff recommends that the two commissions consider this for recommendation to the City Council by April 30, 2016 so that it can be considered as part of the 2016/17 fiscal year event programming.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Direct staff to cancel the Spring 2016 Moorpark Arts Festival and recommend changes to the event by April 30, 2016.