From: arnifishbaugh@gmail.com
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Letter of Support for expanded hours of Public Art Committee part-time position in 2021-22 Budget
Date: Thursday, August 19, 2021 12:32:05 PM

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing this letter to strongly urge that budget priority be reconsidered to expand the hours of the City of Missoula's Public Art Committee Director part-time position in its 2021-2022 city budget. This position fits precisely into Engage Missoula's vision that states, "We are an inclusive city where all people can live and celebrate meaningful, purposeful and fulfilling lives in a community offering unparalleled recreational, cultural and entrepreneurial opportunities."

As the former Executive Director of the Montana Arts Council (1992-2016), I've had the pleasure to see Missoula rise in stature state-wide and nationally during that time in the number of artists, arts organizations and arts educators whose work makes the city such a dynamic cultural center. I am also very familiar with Public Art programs, having overseen dozens during my tenure at the Arts Council.

Missoula's Public Art Committee has acquired 20 public art works now owned by the city. This is in addition to the 70-plus traffic signal box artworks they have shepherded through their process. They work on 4-5 projects a year now.

Many people don't realize what's involved in Public Art oversight:

- In order to run a program as large as the Public Art Committee's has become, expansion of hours of a dedicated position with specific qualifications is really critical.
- These Public Arts jobs are frequently complicated, requiring knowledge in the areas not only of visual arts, but in architectural and space design and building specs.
- To do the job professionally, at what has become the scale of projects undertaken thus far, it is unrealistic to add oversight responsibilities on to current staff, rely on volunteer efforts or split the jobs up onto different people's shoulders. The job is too specialized, and it's too much work.
- Each and every project has unexpected complications that *frequently* arise. There needs to be consistency in the oversight of Public Art because of this complexity.

Missoula is a city that values its arts and its artists. Several studies reinforce this worth:

- There is a significantly higher per capita concentration of independent artists, writers, dancers, performers, theatre companies, dinner theaters, art dealers and bookstores than the rest of the US according to the study conducted by the Western States Arts Federation and the Creative Vitality Index Suite, 2020
- This study also ranked Missoula #10 out of the 30 most creative small communities in the U.S.
- The $54 million economic impact of Missoula's nonprofit arts and cultural sector is three times the national average for cities our size, as reported by Americans for the Arts in their "Arts and Economic Prosperity Report", 2017
- The arts and Public Art are an important feature of Missoula's Comprehensive Plan,

Neighborhood Plans and the most recent Downtown Long-Range Plan.

The Public Art Committee's request is a small investment that makes a strong statement about how the city of Missoula prioritizes the culture of our city and what sets it apart in the state and the nation.

Thank you for your hopeful reconsideration.

Arlynn (Arni) Fishbaugh, Former Executive Director of the Montana Arts Council
Former Chairman of the Board, National Assembly of State Arts Councils
Former Board Member of Grantmakers in the Arts, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and the Western States Arts Foundation

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