

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Members of the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts Committee  
**From:** Asha Venkataraman, Council Central Staff  
**Date:** September 21, 2016  
**Subject:** Council Bill 118771: Office of Arts and Culture Proviso Lift

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The Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts (CRUEDA) Committee will discuss Council Bill (CB) 118771 on Friday, September 23. This bill proposes to lift a proviso imposed in the 2016 Adopted Budget (green sheet 47-1-B-1) on funds in the Office of Arts and Culture (OAC) Capital Arts budget control level (BCL) to be spent on funding agreements for projects by Town Hall, the Nordic Heritage Museum, and the Burke Museum. The proviso prohibited spending these funds until Council passed a future ordinance, and it anticipated that Council would not pass such an ordinance until the Executive shared negotiated contracts detailing the public benefits each institution would deliver in exchange for the City's funding. The negotiated contracts are attached to CB 118771, and the public benefits are summarized below. Lifting the proviso will allow OAC to enter into a separate \$500,000 contract with each of the three institutions.

**OAC Awards and Public Benefits**

The Washington State Constitution prohibits gifts of public funds. As a result, OAC contracts with arts and cultural organizations, providing funding for construction or renovation in exchange for benefits to City residents. OAC has defined public benefits in the context of arts and culture as "events/presentations, rehearsals/previews, planning/research, meetings/consultations, workshops, scholarships, educational/interpretive programs, archives or discounted/free use of facilities/equipment targeting a broad segment of the city." For traditional awards (under \$50,000) OAC often accepts as public benefits provision of discounted or free access to existing activities and programming based on the organization's mission. For larger contracts (over \$50,000) OAC requires further public benefit by requiring that the organization leverage funds to create new opportunities and programs, specifically focused on correcting historical inequities.

**CB 118771 Contracts**

OAC plans to provide \$500,000 to Town Hall to fund renovation to the existing facility. The renovation will fund an upgrade of building systems and new and better performance spaces. In exchange for this funding, Town Hall will continue to provide to the public deeply discounted tickets to its events—many events are free or \$5. Town Hall also commits to subsidizing its rental rates and production/marketing support for about 100 non-profit presenters. In response to the additional requirement to create new programming focused on racial equity and social justice, Town Hall has committed to delivering arts programming to neighborhoods around the city to create and sustain new relationships. Town Hall has not previously put on programming around the City but has mostly focused on programming at its main location. The intent is to move programming into traditionally underserved neighborhoods and in doing so,

involve those underserved audiences in co-creating arts programming and bring those relationships and programs back to the newly renovated space. Town Hall will involve the public in these efforts by using neighborhood advisory boards to co-curate the programming.

OAC plans to provide \$500,000 to the Nordic Heritage Museum to fund construction of a new museum. This museum will contain a permanent exhibition space, a visiting exhibition space, a cultural resource center, classrooms, a craft studio, an auditorium, and climate-controlled storage space for artifacts. In exchange for this funding, the Nordic Heritage Museum will offer free First Thursday admission to the museum's exhibitions and facilities for the next 50 years. School groups will also be able to tour the museum at a low cost or for free. This access includes full use of the Cultural Resource Center archives. In response to the additional requirement to create new programming focused on racial equity and social justice, the Nordic Heritage Museum has committed to launching a new project to focus on the connection between Nordic and Native Americans. The project, "Nordics and Native Peoples: An Oral History Project of Folks with Roots in Both," is directed towards a core Native American audience, specifically local tribes including the Suquamish, Duwamish, Tulalip, and Snohomish. The intent of the project is to create a long-term authentic connection between Native people and Nordic Americans, and to further dialogue and cooperation between them. The Nordic Heritage Museum will maintain all of the oral history recordings and transcripts coming from this new project at the Cultural Resource Center in perpetuity, and will make them available for free on the museum's website. In addition, the museum commits to specifically connecting with underserved communities to create new and cooperative educational content.

OAC plans to provide \$500,000 to the Burke Museum to fund construction of a new museum. In exchange for the City's construction funding, the Burke Museum has agreed to create an electronic benefit transfer program (EBT) to allow free general admission and deeply discounted family memberships to EBT cardholders. The Burke Museum has also committed to specifically conducting outreach to the U-district community through coordination with social service agencies to make complimentary admissions available. In response to the additional requirement to create new programming focused on racial equity and social justice, the Burke Museum will coordinate with the non-profit Path with Art, which "transforms the lives of people recovering from homelessness, addiction, and other trauma by harnessing the power of creative engagement as a bridge to community and a path to stability," to provide free classroom space for ongoing art classes and reach out to underserved populations with its Access Art program.<sup>1</sup> The Burke Museum also commits to becoming a member of the Safe Place program, which helps youth in crisis connect to safe and appropriate sources of assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Access Art events "overcome traditional barriers to arts and culture access, taking groups of Path with Art students and participation to a wide variety of Pacific Northwest art institutions....Access Art also assists arts organizations as they strive to reach underserved Seattle audiences." [www.pathwithart.org/overview/](http://www.pathwithart.org/overview/).

## Issues

Below are several potential issues Councilmembers may want to consider for discussion:

- The pricing and discounts for new programming have yet to be decided upon. Is the Council comfortable with a qualitative (rather than a quantitative) valuation of these benefits?
- Does the project sponsor have full funding for each project, or will the City be asked to make additional contributions towards one or more of the projects?
- If more funding is necessary, will the project sponsor provide additional public benefits in exchange for any additional funding provided by the City? Are there any particular conditions under which such funding be granted?

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Executive Director  
Dan Eder, Central Staff Deputy Director