



LAWRENCE OWN-YOUR-OWN

Lawrence Committee for the Advancement of the Visual Arts

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CITY MANAGERS OFFICE
LAWRENCE, KS

March 4, 2004

Mr. David Dunfield, Mayor
City Offices
6 East 6th Street
Lawrence, KS 66047-0708

Cc: Mike Wildgen, City Manager

Dear Mayor Dunfield,

The Lawrence Committee for the Advancement of the Visual Arts was quite disappointed upon reading the letter to you from the Langston Hughes Center for Community Enrichment (LHCCE) regarding their proposal for the use of the former Carnegie Library Building. We had negotiated with them faithfully over dual use of the large amount of square footage in that building and thought that we had reached agreement for such dual use. It was unpleasant to learn that we were excluded from the final proposal they have prepared.

The LHCCE Committee is a noble and well-intended group and has across-the-community support. Its desire to raise literacy levels in Lawrence, especially for under-represented populations, is admirable. Our discussions with the small representative group were practical and accommodating. We think they 'negotiated' in good faith. Their Committee is passionate, focused and dedicated to the mission of the LHCCE.

In discussion it became evident that we cannot simply meld our groups together because of the differing functions of the two groups. We think that the model that we used to invent potential collaboration (The Douglas County Health Facility) was a good one because (like the common issue of "health" in that building) both groups share a fundamental desire to nourish targeted, over-looked, populations in the Lawrence community. However, we think the LHCCE saw an absolute correspondence between the physical building and their goals, so that they thought that the whole building was needed for all their activities. With some programming help they might see that time-sequenced use of the building would mean that they may be able to achieve their goals with less physical space. We do think that many of the literacy activities listed in the LHCCE proposal can be time-scheduled to make smart use of the building space and so allow the studio based Arts Commons to occupy a portion of it. Our feeling is that both the LHCCE and the AC are each selflessly addressing a valued need in Lawrence,

Lawrence Committee for the Advancement of the Visual Arts

David Adams, Grace Carmody, Diana Dunkley, Darcy Gerhard, Lee Gerhard, Chair, Linda Gutierrez, William Hambleton, Amanda Martin Hamon, Janice Hansen, Dyan Jones, Judi Kellas, Sandra Shaw, Pat Roach Smith

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consistent with the historical use of the Carnegie Building.

The possibility of artists' enrichment through clustering in an arts commons is a very exciting idea for those interested in supporting the Lawrence practicing artistic community. We think it is warranted by the many artists in Lawrence who make up a sizeable portion of our community and contribute uniquely to the public profile of the City. They would professionally develop from the sharing of an exchange commons space to make Lawrence a City of the Arts in more than just a name. In our 'negotiations' we felt that, in operation, an inevitable and healthy overlap and sharing would flourish and be mutually beneficial. It seems to us that an Arts Commons of about 25% of the total building floor area is not an unreasonable apportionment of space in the building. Gallery space to display local artists work and to bring beauty into the lives of all who use the facility, along with the physical presence of artists on a daily basis would add literacy in the arts to other kinds of literacy.

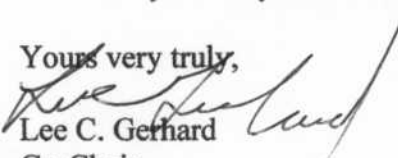
Artists do not use hazardous materials in any way that would harm children or others; the programs of the Lawrence Arts Center belie that argument, which was never discussed in our negotiations. The costs of interior construction, operating the building, and establishing an ambiance that reflects well on the entire community can best be accomplished by conjoining the needs of several groups. It is a large building, and the community deserves to have it used efficiently.

Mike Wildgen gave us the impression that the Commission was supportive of LHCCE over all other proposals but we think we could suggest to the City Commission that:

1. Both groups are dedicated to nourishing the specific unaddressed needs of valued populations within the Lawrence Community.
2. There is enough floor space and natural overlap of intentions and activities to be optimistic about some sharing of the building space (as exemplified in the Douglas County Health Facility).
3. The issue may be helped along, before a final decisions made by the Commission, by having a facilities programming professional study both proposals and undertake a determination of physical needs of both groups.

We have a unique opportunity to convert an empty building into a community asset, for all of the community. Such a facility should be useful over many hours of each day, much as classrooms on the KU campus are used for many purposes over many hours. Few rooms exist solely for limited participants. The expenses of constructing the interior facilities, operating the building, and maintaining a vital ambiance is substantial. The arts community is ready to do their share, and perhaps more.

Yours very truly,


Lee C. Gerhard
Co-Chair

Lawrence Committee for the Advancement Of the Visual Arts