

August 2, 2021
Item 5

TITLE: REVIEW AND COMMENT ON FIREHOUSE ARTS CENTER UPDATES

SUMMARY

In March 2020, City facilities, including the Firehouse Arts Center, closed to comply with the Alameda County Department of Public Health's Shelter in Place Order. The Firehouse Arts Center responded to community need by launching a series of virtual youth programs, gallery shows, classes and performances. Fourteen months later, the Firehouse Arts Center reopened to in-person programs and performances in May 2021 with the Fresh Works show at the Harrington Gallery, the Teen Improv Troupe Creatures of Impulse show, and a vocal performance of America's Got Talent stars Branden and James. The Firehouse Arts Center is emerging from the closure with new programming and City staff will share what is being planned for the coming year.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and comment on Firehouse Arts Center updates.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

There is none.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented performances and displays of the arts from March 2020 to May 2021. While the Firehouse Arts Center was closed to the public, there were six virtual ticketed performances that served a total audience of 242 people. The shows were all third-party performers who provided a ticket link to the Firehouse audience and in turn, the city received a percentage of ticket sales.

City staff also created a virtual weekly show called Firehouse Live featuring a local business, local artists, and City programs. The program was held on Thursday evenings at 7pm from March 2020 through June 2021. The number of views per video ranged from 50-1000 depending on the artist and act.

The teen improv group, Creatures of Impulse, was able to move their extemporaneous shows to a virtual environment. The group of 10 teens auditioned, rehearsed, and performed online for the entire 2020-21 school year. They hosted eight shows throughout the year and sold 109 virtual tickets.

Beginning in March 2021, Firehouse Arts Center staff began working on a reentry plan for the facility, following the guidance provided by the California Blueprint for reopening.

Galleries were specifically identified as spaces that could be reopened to the public. In May 2021, staff opened the Harrington Art Gallery with the juried art show, Fresh Works. The show was selected because it is a Harrington Art Gallery tradition and many of the artists are local to Pleasanton. The gallery was limited to no more than 33 people at a time which reflected a capacity of 25%. The show had a virtual reception and featured over 50 mainly local artists. 374 visitors viewed the Fresh Works show in the gallery.

The larger Firehouse Arts Center reopened to the public later in May 2021 with a performance by the Teen Improv Group, Creatures of Impulse, and a vocal performance by Branden and James. In June 2021, the audience sold 99 tickets over two performances and a July performance sold 160 tickets.

As restrictions have been lifted, City staff have reopened the upstairs classroom to contract instructors, the theater to performances with a larger audience and increased the capacity in the gallery.

DISCUSSION

While health orders are relaxing and the community looks to return to the theater, the Firehouse Arts Center is working to schedule shows for all ages. Acts identified will include those who have previously performed at the Firehouse Arts Center to welcome back the audience as well as local performers.

Submitted by:

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Tamara Whitney
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