From: Amy Ragsdale
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Vote yes to approve the CCRC conceptual design
Date: Thursday, May 19, 2022 11:27:33 AM

Dear esteemed councilors,

I am a member of the Friends of the CCRC and have met with many of you, along with Mike Sweet and Tarn Ream. I would be at the meeting on Monday except that I am teaching out of town. I have been working in collaboration with Donna Gaukler, and her crew at Parks & Rec., for almost ten years and my commitment to this project has only grown.

I first joined the effort because of my longtime struggle to find a well-equipped, affordable and available performing space for my contemporary dance company, Headwaters Dance. A space like MCT was perfect, except that it was rarely available once MCT set their season and the remaining dates were undesirable (eg. middle of February). Additionally, the cost meant I could only afford one weekend a year -- not enough to build word of mouth and a growing audience, not enough to be able to get a review (rather than a preview) in the Missoulian or Independent (which I needed for grant applications), not enough to help me pay the $20,000 it cost me to put up such a performance. If we are to stem the steady exodus of talented Missoula performers (dance and theater) we need as a city to provide a well-equipped, affordable, available performing space for our local artists. The CCRC (or cirque as I like to call it:) will do this!

While that was my initial impetus to promote the creation of the CCRC I have come to love the project for many other reasons.

I've always cared about opportunities to meet people unlike myself and have often found it hard in the U.S. I tend to circulate in my own work/education/neighborhood group, among people who are like myself. It's natural to hang with one's pod. It has become imminently clear over the past six years that there are tremendous divides in this country -- ideological, cultural, social and now also economic -- and as Missoula grows those divides are increasing here as well. It's hard not to jump to conclusions about people based on -- their car, whether they're wearing a mask.... And at the same time it has become easier to listen to one's own echo chamber.

If we don't want our community to fly apart at the seams, we need to be proactive about finding ways to bring people together so that we can get to know each other at a deeper level, free of superficial labels. We need to find and provide ways to circumvent that quick jump to assumptions.

Having been a dancer (both professional and social) I think there is no better way than being actively engaged with others at something fun, maybe challenging -- learning how to play pickleball, listening to the caller for the next move at the contra dance, participating side by side in a movement class for tots or accompanying an aging parent to a stretch class for people with alzheimers. Even joining together to watch a dance performance, listen to a music jam or a comedy hour provides a kind of apolitical camaraderie.

The CCRC will provide these kinds of opportunities, and not just for those who can afford to join, but for everyone in Missoula, especially those for whom transportation may be

challenging and club or studio or lesson fees are impossible.

The Converge Foundation (TCF), of which I'm a founding member, is working hard to set the groundwork to raise ongoing funds so that all Missoulians have access to the center, both to participate in activities and to offer activities.

A unanimous vote to approve the conceptual design is a vital step toward eventual fruition of this facility and will aid in TCF's work of raising private funds to support it. Please vote yes. I appreciate your serious consideration.

Best, Amy Ragsdale

(She, her, hers)
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