

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: May 23, 2024

PREPARED BY: Amy Lawrence, Deputy Director of Economic Development

REQUEST: REQUEST FOR DIRECTION ON THE PALM DESERT COMMUNITY GALLERY

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide staff with direction on the Palm Desert Community Gallery located in the North Wing Building at Palm Desert City Hall.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

With Visitors Services relocating to the new Library in July, staff is requesting direction as to if the North Wing building should remain a public art gallery. The Palm Desert Community Gallery has been in operation for over 25 years, serving as the home to rotating art exhibitions for local artists and the annual Student Art and Essay Contest. The gallery went on hiatus in March of 2020 due to the COVID pandemic and reopened in August 2023. In November 2023, Palm Desert's historic timeline was wrapped on the walls in the gallery where it has remained due to its visual value for those coming to get information on Palm Desert and the surrounding area from Visitors Services staff.

With Visitors Services relocating to the Library, the North Wing building will see minimal foot traffic as it will only remain open to those doing business with the Finance and Housing Departments and attending meetings in the North Wing Conference Room. Given the extensive staff time that it takes to curate the community gallery (i.e. release an annual Call for Artists, review proposals with the Cultural Arts Committee, coordinate a schedule of exhibitions with selected artists, hang the exhibitions, host receptions, etc.), together with the fact that the Student Art and Essay Contest will now be exhibiting at UCR Palm Desert Center in future years given that the awards ceremony has outgrown City Hall and the Council Chamber, staff sees benefit in ceasing gallery operations at City Hall.

Therefore, staff is seeking direction on one of the following options related to the Palm Desert Community Gallery:

1. Continue operation of the Community Gallery.
2. Cease operation of the Community Gallery and keep the historic timeline up.
3. Cease operation of the Community Gallery and place other permanent artwork to be determined (e.g. photographs of wildflowers and other desert scenes).
4. Cease operation of the Community Gallery and place *Desert Spirit* by John Richen and other permanent artwork.

If option four is selected, staff recommends placement of the artwork entitled *Desert Spirit* by artist John Richen that was accepted for donation by the City Council in July of 2022 for

placement at City Hall. The artwork is made of stainless steel and bronze, measures 42” wide x 72” tall, and has an approximate value of \$32,500.00 to \$35,000.00. The artwork was originally going to be installed in the Development Services lobby after its renovation; however, since there are two walls that require artwork in that lobby, a decision was made to release a call for artists to commission two similar artworks (that project is currently underway).

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney’s office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funding to maintain the Palm Desert Community Gallery does not impact the General Fund as it is paid for from the Public Art Budget. The approximate cost per year is about \$1,500. If the option for permanent artwork is selected, staff estimates costs could range from \$2,000 to \$5,000, inclusive of installation, depending on the type of art.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Photos of *Desert Spirit* by artist John Richen