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Dear Council Member

I am writing to support Mayor Ten Haken's proposed addition of an Arts Specialist FTE in his annual city budget. Sioux Falls is no doubt a city of Art! We have some of South Dakota's (and the nation's) finest examples of great art. Consider just a few – our nationally acclaimed South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, the architectural wonder Arc of Dreams, the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science, a first in its class Downtown Sculpture Walk, one of the nation's few Levitt outdoor amphitheatres, outstanding arts education in our school system, a myriad of arts and cultural festivals, and maybe most significantly, great artists who call Sioux Falls home. I could go on and on, but I bet we're on the same page. Sioux Falls is no doubt a city of great Art.

What matters most is how this impacts the people of Sioux Falls. First, the arts make our city stronger and more resilient, a place people want to live, and a welcoming experience for our visitors. The arts strengthen our economy – as recently as 2015, a study of the non-profit arts industry in Sioux Falls reported \$104,551,099.00 in annual economic activity, supporting 3,535 FTE equivalent jobs. Finally, the arts tell the story of our city, bringing us all together as one community.

As a 22-year resident of Sioux Falls and someone who has worked for the Washington Pavilion, SD Symphony, Sioux Falls Jazz & Blues Society, and is currently an active professional musician, I can easily say Sioux Falls has afforded me opportunities I would not have anywhere else in our state or region.

With this in mind and because the City of Sioux Falls plays a vital leadership role in so many of our arts institutions, now is the time to invest in a leader that will ensure a strategic vision, equitable access, and assure transparency and effectiveness of taxpayer dollars. We need an arts professional. Quoting the report by the Mayor's Task Force:

"The City of Sioux Falls has invested millions of dollars in arts venues and organizations over the past twenty years without expertise from professionally trained staff or an advisory commission with expertise in the area of cultural sustainability and growth. We don't build roads without engineers or develop transportation systems without experts. We are investing dollars in cultural institutions and getting a return on that investment that is substantial."

I urge you to support the Mayor's request for an Arts Specialist. It is time to have a more effective mechanism by which the City and the Mayor can more effectively and efficiently interface with community needs as it pertains to arts and culture.

Best Regards,

Jim Speirs

Executive Director & Mayor's Task Force Member

