

Arts Council approves recommendations for Noyes art center

Paige Leskin , Reporter

The Evanston Arts Council approved Tuesday night recommendations for the management of the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, which will be passed on to the city's Human Services Committee.

The transition follows the city's push to make the center a more active place. Jennifer Lasik, the city's cultural arts coordinator, said this is part of a city-wide effort to make arts more prominent in the community.

"(Evanston) wants the arts to become a priority," she said. "It's a new year, a fresh start, a fresh concept."

The proposal listed a set of rules and regulations for the tenants and administration of the arts center, 927 Noyes St. Council members expressed their disappointment in the building's current state, saying it is closed off and unavailable to the community.

"What we have right now is an arts center that has fallen to bureaucratic neglect," council member Lisa Degliantoni said.

The recommendations cover efforts to try to bring together tenants of the building, which currently lacks central leadership. To make up for lack of unity, the council endorsed putting a city official in charge of all the building's administrative duties, as well as hiring full-time reception staff to handle visitor logs and take general calls.

The city's attempts in the past to make the arts center more open to the public have been fought by some tenants, who use the building as rental space. The council members agreed it should instead act as more of a community center.

"It's not as vibrant as it could be," co-chair Anne Berkeley said. "It's very quiet when you walk in."

Council member Greg Allen said the diversity of artists in the building makes it difficult for tenants to come together and find solutions to common problems.

To resolve the accessibility issue, the council advocated open houses and mandatory office hours for tenants. Berkeley said many tenants have disagreed with these ideas in the past, the same who have the mentality that the city should "go away and leave them alone."

"Non-action is not OK," Berkeley said to the council members. "There's a group of artists that just want to create."

The Noyes Cultural Arts Center was the center of controversy last year when a tenant, the Piven Theatre Workshop, proposed an expansion in the center, which would in turn cause the relocation of two other tenants. A committee is now considering opening a downtown performing arts center, which, if opened, would provide more space for the performers and artists which currently occupy the Noyes center.

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