

Arts plan says Cambridge at cusp of a renaissance

Mayor sees plan as endorsement of work to bring Drayton Theatre and Venice Biennale

May 05, 2009

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Is Cambridge the hard-core sports town it once was?

Maybe not, if you believe the recommendations of a \$75,000 arts and culture master plan approved last night by city councillors.

"Cambridge is on the threshold of . . . a cultural renaissance," said Jon Linton, of TCI Management Consultants.

It lays out a vision to support existing organizations and help new ones take root, by hiring a city manager to better promote and co-ordinate cultural issues. A public committee should also be formed, money be set aside for public art and set up a policy to give stable funding to arts groups.

A marketing plan -- including better promotion as tourism attractions -- and better communication between existing groups is needed.

Councillors endorsed the plan, but they didn't set aside any money to put it into action. To start, if all short-term recommendations are implemented, it will cost about \$332,000 a year.

City staff must now fit the recommendations into the proposed 2010 budget, which council will consider early next year.

Count. Karl Kiefer supports the arts and culture plan, but the longtime sports booster didn't unlace his skates.

"I just wanted to make a comment to the consultant . . . it still is a hockey city and it still is a sports town," he said.

After the groans from the audience subsided, Count. Ben Tucci said he agreed Cambridge is on the cusp of a renaissance, but not at the expense of its sporting history.

"It doesn't mean it has to be more important than sports and recreation," Tucci said.

Artist Sue Sturdy said she's been involved in similar city arts planning processes over the years, and praised what she read in the study.

"This is the best that's come out of it."

For Mayor Doug Craig, the study recommendations confirm work over the past three years to bring Drayton Theatre and the Venice Biennale to town, to foster a culture in Cambridge.

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