

## Agenda Item VII. A.



**Meeting Date:** March 7, 2017

**Department:** County Administrator

**Issue:** **Second Stage | Amherst Grant Application**

**Board Action:** The Board is being asked to appropriate matching funds

**Attachments:** Challenge Grant Request  
2016-2017 Activities

**Summary:** Second Stage|Amherst is attempting to raise \$5K to support a matching grant of the same amount from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. The EDA has already agreed to fund \$2500 of the total. SS|A now seeks \$2500 from the Board of Supervisors. The application must be submitted by the County by 1 April.

There are no funds in the current fiscal year budgeted for this grant. Funds would come from the unobligated General Fund.

**Recommendation:** That the Board consider an appropriation of \$2500 from the unobligated General Fund and direct staff to apply for a matching grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts for \$10,000.

*A non-profit initiative to create a center for creativity and community*

Second Stage | Amherst requests that the Amherst County Board of Supervisors continue its support of our community-based non-profit programming by applying for a fiscal year 2018 Local Government Challenge Grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. The maximum amount available for each applying governmental organization is \$5000. The Virginia Commission will match this amount dollar-for-dollar. We request that the Amherst Board of Supervisors and the EDA share the available maximum amount to the County by budgeting \$2500 from each entity. We are also asking the Town of Amherst to apply for the same matching grant by allocating \$5000 in their upcoming FY18 budget. If successful, the combined budgeted and matching funds will total \$20,000. These dollars will be spent to further the long-term sustainability of Second Stage|Amherst and to expand the work of Cultivate Amherst\*, a community-building program focused on art and food.

Second Stage is providing programming that the citizens of Amherst County are asking for but which are not possible, given the strategic focus of the County, staffing and funding limitations. Second Stage is beautifying and distinguishing the County, providing a farmers market on its grounds (now five years old), leasing office and studio space for start-up businesses, inviting children and seniors to enjoy ongoing activities, is a venue for business, club and family celebrations. To date, it has presented 68 performances on its stage - all creating a significant economic impact.

Second Stage attracts people to Amherst from *out of the county* and is bringing citizens of Amherst *into town* to experience civic activities, music performances, patronize businesses, and is providing a gathering place for the community where none existed before. It is partnering with Sweet Briar College, The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, The Amherst County Historical Museum and the County Recreation and Parks Department.

Our accumulated annual budgets reveal that the cost of these accomplishments, had they been contracted out to a professional staff, would

# Second Stage<sup>2</sup> | Amherst

have been in excess of \$250,000. The cost to date to the County for this remarkable gift has been \$1250.

Thank you for your support of our work to further quality of life strategic planning and Cultivate Amherst activities in this budget year. The growing energy across the entire county and additional attractions and events available to the citizens are benefits indeed, and are due at least in part because of the work of Second Stage With the Board of Supervisors, the EDA and Town of Amherst as partners, the good works accomplished and envisioned can continue.

\*Please review the accompanying overview of the expanded Cultivate Amherst!! events.

February 15, 2017

# Second Stage | Amherst

## Cultivate Amherst!! 2016-17

Cultivate Amherst !!(2) is the second community initiative hosted by Second Stage. The purpose of Cultivate Amherst!! is to demonstrate the strength of art and artists as catalysts for development and transformation in healthy communities.

Based on the outcomes of our very successful April 7, 2016 gathering we have chosen to focus on food and agriculture within the region as a way to open dialog and memory about our shared home, Amherst County.

CA!! is creating a series of 2017 events that will celebrate the role of food as a connector within families and communities; food as a spark of memory and history, and as a way to understand our shared values, which are rooted in the land. Its broader goal is to build community awareness by identifying attributes of Amherst County and by marketing those characteristics to the larger audience. Long term, we hope that this collective understanding will guide strategic planning to strengthen small business and corporate activity, welcome tourism, and enhance the quality of life in our community.

### Singing in the Season - November 27, 2016

The second year of the community walk and caroling between churches, it culminates in a group sing at Second Stage. At a closing reception we served Brunswick Stew tastings; one local, one international. Goals of CA!! were introduced.

### Restaurant Celebration – February 15-28, 2017

Participating restaurants will feature a local menu item “special” during a designated dates in February. At a later date, each restaurant is encouraged to present a dining event that is unique to them. Cooking demonstrations, pie baking, breakfast for dinner, wine and watercolor evenings are being discussed. Information about CA!! events will be available.

### Agri-Culture Market – April 27, 2017

A spring garden event in conjunction with the opening of the 5th season of 2nd Street Farm and Artisan Market. Beyond vendor offerings, activities such as lessons in seed germination, garden planning and care, safe food handling, menus with garden produce, a food and seed swap would be included. CA!! will ask for assistance to collect information on historical agricultural methods, inviting community ambassadors, elders with oral histories, videos, community cookbooks.

### Community Dinner – September 30, 2017

The culminating event is a fall food festival and community gathering for all citizens. In addition to a variety of activities focused on the county, artists will be involved in demonstrations, presentations and lectures about how food informs who we are as individuals, families, and citizens. A light table featuring photos brought by citizens, a map of Amherst stenciled on street identifying disappearing communities, tents with elders telling stories, displays of memorabilia and samplings of favorite

church social recipes are planned. Dinner tickets will sell at a low-ticket price. The menu will include recipes contributed by citizens and/or local cookbooks. Amherst High School students will make videos for projection on wall of nearby building; a food artist/chef will be present.

CA!! initiatives are almost entirely volunteer led. The Operations Manager at Second stage is playing a vital role as is a contracted New York based food artist whose art media relies on food culture to build community interaction and enhancement. CA!! seeks partners. Individuals and organizations invited to participate would be those whose focus is on community development and economic sustainability and groups whose focus is on food accessibility and sustainability such as FFA, Dept of Agriculture, the Health Department, Amherst County Public Schools, local churches, fire and rescue squads, the Garden Club, Sweet Briar College, VCCA, and professionals and students from academic centers whose work seeks to understand the role of arts and food in human experience.

For more background on the work of Second Stage visit [www.secondstageamherst.org](http://www.secondstageamherst.org)