City of Asheville Staff Report

City Council Meeting Date: August 25, 2026

Staff Resources: Chris Corl, Director, Department of Community & Regional Entertainment Facilities; Jon Fillman, Community Event Manager

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to renew an agreement with the Asheville Area Arts Council (AAVL) to administer the Event Support Grant program, which reimburses cultural and arts-related non-profit events for certain city fees and charges, for up to a three-year period in an amount not to exceed $228,042.

Background:

- The City of Asheville has authority pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes to enter into contracts for services with other entities; N.C.G.S. 160A-488 authorizes cities to provide funding for cultural and arts-related programming.
- On August 22, 2023, City Council authorized the City Manager to execute an Event Support Grant Agreement with AAVL for calendar years 2024 - 2026 per Resolution 23-199 at a maximum value of $76,014 annually, $228,042 over a three-year contract period.
- AAVL is the designated arts agency for Buncombe County by Resolution #21-07-13 and has been regranting state arts funding in Buncombe County since 1979
- The mission of AAVL is to keep the arts at the heart of our community. The Arts Council fulfills its mission by supporting arts professionals and businesses in Buncombe County through connection, advocacy, and grants.
- The Event Support Grant Program assists eligible nonprofit event organizers by covering approved City event fees associated with producing free public events. Because grant funds are used to pay fees owed back to the City for services provided, the program operates with nearly a net-zero budget impact.
- Over the past three years, the Event Support Grant Program has supported free cultural and arts-related events in Asheville's outdoor public spaces. In 2024, the program supported nine events and event series; in 2025, it supported ten events and event series, all of which were successfully held and collectively served more than 117,000 participants. The 2026 grant cycle is still underway. To date, support has been extended to 20 events and event series through the Event Support Grant and Mini-Grant Pilot programs.
- Continuation of Mini-Grant: Staff recommends continuing the Mini-Grant, which repurposes unallocated Event Support Grant funds to provide a rolling funding opportunity for smaller eligible events throughout the year, maximizing the use of available grant resources.
- Funding Eligibility Change: Due to the transition of the funding source to the Business Improvement District (BID) Municipal Service District sales tax allocation, Event Support Grants will be limited to eligible events occurring within the BID boundaries for any year in which the program is funded through BID sales tax revenues. This represents a change from prior years, when funding was not geographically restricted in this manner.
- The City of Asheville desires to continue providing support to arts-focused non-profit events conducted within its outdoor public spaces in calendar years 2027, 2028 & 2029 through the Event Support Grant, and requires administrative support to execute the grant funding program.
- This City-funded grant program will continue to support cultural and arts-related events in outdoor public spaces through an annual allocation of $76,014, consisting of $61,700 (88%) awarded directly

as Event Support Grants, $7,404 (12%) retained for grant administration, and a 10% contingency of $6,910. The total annual funding shall not exceed $76,014, for a maximum of $228,042 over the three-year contract period.

Vendor Outreach:

- Not applicable.

Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

- A diverse community
- Thriving local economy
- Connected and engaged community

Council Priority Recovery Area(s):

- Economic Recovery

Committee(s):

- None

Fiscal Impact

- Funding for Year 1 of the contract is available in the Business Improvement District fund.
- Organizations receiving the grants use the majority of the grant to pay the City for event-related fees.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a new three (3) year contract with the Asheville Area Arts Council to administer the Event Support Grant Program to reimburse arts-related non-profit events conducted within outdoor public spaces for certain city fees and charges in an amount not to exceed $228,042 over the term.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution

City of Asheville Resolution Number 26-_____

Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Asheville Area Arts Council (AAVL) to administer a grant to reimburse cultural and arts-related non-profit events for certain fees and charges

Whereas, the City of Asheville has authority pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes to enter into contracts for services with other entities; and

Whereas, N.C.G.S. 160A-488 authorizes cities to provide funding for cultural and arts-related programming; and

Whereas, the City of Asheville desires to provide support to arts-focused non-profit events conducted within its outdoor public spaces in calendar years 2027, 2028 & 2029, and requires administrative support to execute a grant funding program; and

Whereas, the mission of AAVL is to keep the arts at the heart of our community. The Arts Council fulfills its mission by supporting arts professionals and businesses in Buncombe County through connection, advocacy, and grants; and

Whereas, AAVL is the designated arts agency for Buncombe County by Resolution #21-07-13; and has been regranting state arts funding in Buncombe County since 1979; and

Whereas, the City and AAVL have negotiated an agreement for the public purposes of providing support to community events focused on the arts and cultural preservation; and

Whereas, the amount allocated within the existing department budget for this program is not to exceed $76,014 annually, $228,042 over a three-year term.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Asheville that:

The City Manager is authorized to execute an Event Support Grant Agreement with the Asheville Area Arts Council for calendar years 2027, 2028 & 2029 at a maximum annual value of $76,014, $228,042 over a three-year term.

Read, approved, and adopted on this 25th day of August 2026.

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Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

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Brad Branham, City Attorney

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Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk