

# Banning sets sights higher when it comes to art

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FOR THE RECORD GAZETTE

Imagine a place where in every corner you turn, you witness beauty – a small garden with colorful flowers, a fountain with dolphins you can almost imagine them smiling to you, a sculpture of a woman posing with strength free, looking to the sky, a musical instrument that reminds you of a song you can almost hear and you have always loved?

Imagine that place is Banning, where in every corner you turn, you are reminded of the beauty and benefit of art.

Last year, the Banning City Council explored the idea of an Art in Public Places (APP) project and created an ad-hoc committee, called ad-hoc to investigate the possibility and make a report and recommendations back to the council.

Ad-hoc committees formed with a specific task in mind, such as the Art in Public Places Committee.

According to committee member Bob Botts, the idea was to "find a source of revenue to acquire/buy art for the city for the benefit of all people." The committee was to research the program and find the sources of revenue.

The APP is not new and many cities enjoy similar public arts programs, including cities in the Coachella Valley and in Orange County.

The funding source is usually developers. For example, a developer who is looking to build a shopping center would be required by the city to pay a one time fee to the city. That fee would be based on the size of the development. If the lot size is 1,000 squares feet, the lot size would be multiplied by the fee determined and the money would directly go to the APP program. This applies to new residential and new businesses whether it is industrial, retail or commercial. The fee also applies to new public projects implemented by the city. This means a new fire station or a new community center for example.

"It's a one time fee," said Botts. "It's not like taxation."

Since last year, the APP Ad-Hoc committee members have been researching and studying the project then recently developed a recommended ordinance. Banning Community Services Director Chris Millen facilitated the meetings.

However, the city council didn't quite see things the same way.

Council members were concerned the fee, which would be applied to new development, was too high and could stop developers from coming to Banning.

The APP Ad-Hoc committee went back to work and made additional adjustments to the ordinance.

The new suggested ordinance, which the committee promised would fund itself and be "self sustaining" went back to the council for more discussion.

The debate got heated as members of the city council disagreed with each other and with the APP Ad-Hoc committee members.

Mayor John Machisic was concerned with funding more demanding programs in the city.

Finally, the council approved a .75% fee for new

residential and businesses and a 1% fee for public projects.

According to Botts, the reason the fee is higher for public projects is to show that the city believes in the program, so they are applying more to public projects. The vote was unanimous.

The project will get bigger as more development comes to Banning. A majority, or 55% of the funds will be applied to visual arts. This includes painting, bronze status, land scaping, fountains, etc. Next, 25% will apply to performing arts events, which includes dance, theatre, musicians or bands, this, said Botts, will promote artists from outside who want to contribute art and "our own artists," and it all must be public, noted Botts.

An additional 15% will be put aside for maintaining the visual arts, "so sales tax or gen-

eral funds don't go to it," and the last 5% will pay for administering the program. This will not pay for the members of the art commission who will along with the city apply the law and implement the program; the commission members will be willing volunteers appointed by the city who are interested in beautifying Banning.

As for the developers, "they will come," said Botts. He said that one developer told him his company will not support the APP publicly, but will not come out and oppose it either. "This speaks well for the true developers who want a quality community," concluded Botts.

The council's first approval was on Tuesday, March 28. Second or final consideration will be on Tuesday, May 9.

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