

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager
Date: August 25, 2023
Subject: Arts Capital Grant Request from Ames Writers Collective

On July 11, 2023, the City Council directed staff to provide a memo in response to a request from Ana McCracken regarding the Ames Writers Collective Arts Capital Grant (attached).

In 2022, Ames Writers Collective was awarded an Arts Capital Grant in the amount of \$5,590 for the purpose of purchasing tables and chairs, bookshelves, modular couches, and equipment for the Ames Writers Collective property located at 409 Douglas Avenue. In June 2023, Ames Writers Collective reported to City staff that the landlord for the property had not yet resumed renovating it, and therefore the commitment described in the grant cannot be completed.

As an alternative to the original grant scope, Ames Writers Collective is proposing the purchase of chairs, tables, a moveable stage, and a Little Free Library. This equipment would be stored and used at the KHOI property at 622 Douglas Avenue. The grant amount would be revised to \$3,223 (\$2,367 less than the original grant award).

A second alternative proposed by the organization would be to reimburse it for a tent purchased in 2022 for use at Farmers Markets and the Swift Literary Festival. This purchase was \$2,642.

The Council should note that KHOI received a grant through the same capital grant program for a separate project in the amount of \$3,314.

The original awards for the Arts Capital Grant program were made following a competitive review by COTA and PAC commissioners of the 11 applications received. Seven projects were awarded funding. In reviewing the alternative projects proposed by Ames Writers Collective, staff believes the proposed uses of the funding

are comparable to other Arts Capital Grant projects that were awarded funds in the original evaluation.

The City Council's options include:

- 1) Direct staff to prepare a contract amendment with Ames Writers Collective to purchase chairs, tables, a moveable stage, and a Little Free Library (\$3,223).
- 2) Direct staff to prepare a contract amendment with Ames Writers Collective to reimburse the cost of a tent purchased last year by the organization (\$2,642).
- 3) Direct staff to prepare a contract amendment with Ames Writers Collective to pay for the chairs, tables, moveable stage, Little Free Library, and the cost of the tent, up to the full original grant amount of \$5,590.
- 4) Do not amend the grant contract and allow the allocated funds to be returned to the General Fund available balance.



Brian Phillips
Assistant City Manager
City of Ames
515 Clark Avenue
Ames, IA 50010

Dear Brian,

Thank you for working with me on the Art Capital Grant awarded to the Ames Writers Collective. This letter is follow up to our email conversations about why the Ames Writers Collective has not (to date) requested reimbursement for our awarded funds.

As described in my email, since signing our lease at 409 Douglas Avenue in November 2021, the landlord has not resumed renovations as promised. When we request updates, we do not hear back. The Ames Writers Collective holds the lease until November 2023. Because we have no space, we use the Ames Public Library for kids writing events (Swift Youth Writers), and our Author Spotlight Series, co-hosted with KHOI Community Radio, is held in Studio C at 622 Douglas Avenue. We also utilize Studio C for workshops and board meetings. During the past year we hosted three (3) Author Spotlights in Studio C (Dennis Maulsby, David Gonzalez, and Beth Howard). And so far for the fall we already have five (5) Author Spotlights scheduled (Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Douglas Gentile, Bi Ayers, Joe Geha, and Gary Eller). Additionally, we purchased a canopy tent to host outdoor pop-up events. These were held at the Farmers Market, and the Pop-Up Swift Literary Festival at the Octagon Art Festival ('22), and upcoming in 2023.

I am writing to request an unusual amendment to our grant spending. We would like to purchase the following that will be stored and used at KHOI Community Radio Station at 622 Douglas Avenue:



- 24 folding chairs from Lowes (\$642)
- 6 4' folding tables (\$400)
- 1 custom moveable stage to fit the space in Studio C, and to allow for easy storage-ability \$1,500
- 1 Little Free Library (LFL), which will be installed on KHOI property on Douglas Avenue. This LFL will be branded with the Ames Writers Collective logo, giving us visibility in the community. We plan to host a Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting once the LFL is installed. (\$681)
- Total: \$3,223

As mentioned, last summer we purchased the tent for the Farmers Markets and Swift Literary Festival. Perhaps there's opportunity to be reimbursed for it? It's total was: \$2642.

Thank you for your consideration. As a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, we are committed to healing lives through writing. All of our "community outreach programs" are provided free to participants. Such programs are: Writing Through Cancer, the Swift Youth Writers Workshop and Words Meet Art. [Visit us!](#)

Sincerely,

Ana
Ana McCracken
Ames Writers Collective, Founder and President