

For more information:
cortezguitar@earthlink.net
713-775-2080



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An Investment in the Future of Winter Park: City Commission Approves Blue Bamboo's Proposal for Library Reuse

WINTER PARK – (June 13, 2024) After four hours of discussion and public comment, the Winter Park City Commission voted four-to-one to approve Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts' proposal to reuse the former library space, bringing an exciting performing arts space to Winter Park. Blue Bamboo's proposal, which was presented by founder Chris Cortez and Board Chairman, Jeff Flowers, also provides a home for arts education partner Central Florida Vocal Arts, led by Winter Park resident, Theresa Smith-Levin, Performing Arts Matters, also led by Jeff Flowers, and Winter Park Chamber Music Academy, led by Alvaro Gomez. All four organizations are 501(c)3 organizations and highly recognized for their programmatic excellence.

The former library site, called a gateway to downtown Winter Park by Mayor DeCiccio, has sat unused since 2021 and the former commission had found itself unable to agree on an appropriate reuse that served the community, honored residential concerns and functioned as a fiscally responsible investment for the City of Winter Park. The June 12th Commission meeting focused on two reuse proposals; Rollins College Museum of Art and an arts collective space proposed by Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts.

After hours of passionate public comment, the commission voted four-to-one in favor of Blue Bamboo's proposal, with Mayor DeCiccio voting against the proposal. The motion to approve the proposal was made by Commissioner Craig Russell, seconded by Commissioner Kris Cruzada and ultimately supported by Commissioners Sullivan and Weaver, as well. The Commission echoed support for both proposals with the belief that voting in favor of Blue Bamboo's proposal would allow both projects to flourish in the City with Rollins Museum of Art being built in its previously approved Lawrence site. Commissioners also expressed that Blue Bamboo's proposal offered a unique opportunity currently missing in Winter Park.

Since January 2024, Blue Bamboo has been performing in various locations around Winter Park including Casa Feliz, the current Winter Park Library and the Woman's Club of Winter Park, having lost its previous lease on a building on Kentucky Avenue to developer sale. Arts education partner, Central Florida Vocal Arts, founded in 2012, has never had a home of its own, performing across the five county area and building strong partner relationships.

Of the proposal approval, CFVA Executive Director, Smith-Levin comments "A performing arts collective space, housed in the former library site shows a renewed commitment from our City leadership to support ALL arts in our beautiful city of 'arts and culture'. As a lifelong resident, I could not be more excited for the impact this space will have on the future of our community, especially our young people. This arts collective is truly an investment in our future!"

With an eye on providing opportunities for the broader nonprofit community, Blue Bamboo's proposal not only provides space for the aforementioned three arts nonprofits, but also a third floor, flexible space that can host other charitable community happenings.

Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Blue Bamboo, Central Florida Vocal Arts and Performing Arts Matters have all contributed meaningfully to the arts landscape in Winter Park, impacting tens of thousands of lives through the power of performing arts. Now, with a collaborative home in the heart of Winter Park, the potential community impact is endless!

About Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts

www.BlueBambooArtCenter.com

407-636-9951

Blue Bamboo exists to provide affordable, family-friendly music, spoken word and visual arts, while providing an income to artists and serving our community through the arts.

About Central Florida Vocal Arts

www.CentralFloridaVocalArts.org

863-510-7236

Central Florida Vocal Arts transforms our community through arts education for all and professional performances that inspire. We believe a kinder, more connected Central Florida community is possible through equitable arts access.

About Performing Arts Matters

www.PAMATTER.org

321-303-1711

Performing Arts Matters provides opportunities for community artists to perform in a quality environment, while teaching technical and historical aspects of performance for the benefit and enjoyment of the Central Florida community.