

## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

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### *City Council Budget Hearing – October 24, 2016*

#### *Remarks – Commissioner Mark Kelly*

Thank you, Chairman Austin and Council members for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). Your support is appreciated.

Above the Washington Street entrance to the Chicago Cultural Center (“The People’s Palace” and my spectacular new home base), there’s an architectural detail of dolphins. I’ve been told that they were used to illustrate the adage “More Haste, Less Speed”—or “Make Haste, Slowly.”

That’s been my mantra since I made my way to DCASE. In my new role, I will be making haste, because the work of the department—and Chicago’s artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy— is too important to not keep moving forward. But I’ll be ever-mindful of the many cultural assets that already exist—great institutions, events and ideas that we will build upon. I’d like to specifically thank Mayor Emanuel and former Commissioner Michelle Boone for their leadership in establishing the Chicago Cultural Plan as a roadmap to guide the City’s future cultural and economic growth.

I’ll also continue to support the great work of my team, who present some of Chicago’s most beloved annual festivals and events—including Chicago SummerDance, World Music Festival Chicago, Chicago Gospel Music Festival, Chicago Blues Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival and Taste of Chicago. Of course, we also present amazing free art exhibitions, music and more at the Chicago Cultural Center—and we shine a light on our creative communities through the Lake FX Summit + Expo, our annual Fifth Star Awards, the work of the Chicago Film Office, and more.

Our work together is critically important. Chicago’s arts sector contributes \$2.2 billion annually to our economy, provides 60,000 jobs and \$1.3 billion in household income every year.

At DCASE, our large-scale summer festivals and events contribute more than \$246 million in total business activity to the Chicago economy and generate well over \$5.6 million in tax revenues. And by the end of this year, DCASE will present more than 2,000 programs, services and events for well over 10 million residents and visitors alike.

I’d like to share just a few more facts and figures—a snapshot of DCASE, by the numbers:

- In 2016, our Cultural Grants Program will award 260 grants totaling \$1.7 million to nonprofit organizations and individual artists in neighborhoods throughout the city.
- Millennium Park presented 80 free concerts and films this summer, our attendance for DCASE events at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion was up 10% and we’re seeing a huge surge in attendance at the Park overall—expecting to blow past our 2015 attendance of 5 million visitors.
- Our popular Chicago Farmers Markets program brings some 70 City and independently-run markets to wards across the city. Last year, we boosted attendance by 25% and this year we’re boosting sales: with LINK and Double Value Coupon sales up 27% year-to-date.

- And last, but certainly not least, Mayor Emanuel's Night Out in the Parks program has presented more than 1,670 free cultural activities in neighborhood parks, enjoyed by well over 207,000 people—and that's just as of August. Night Out in the Parks is a Chicago Park District program, but DCASE is a proud partner and the primary funder of this summer-long and year-round series.

In 2017, we'll be looking at all of our DCASE events and initiatives with fresh eyes in order to advance them, while also looking for ways to promote the many other free cultural activities that happen across the city—including museum free days, Park and Library events—via social media, email marketing and a new website.

Plus, we've declared 2017 as the "Year of Public Art" in Chicago, with dozens of events and exhibitions. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of two of our most seminal works of public art—the Picasso in Daley Plaza and the Wall of Respect which once stood at 43rd Street and Langley Avenue on the South Side – Mayor Emanuel's 50x50 initiative will seek to activate a public art project in all 50 wards. This program will build on the release of a new Public Art Plan for Chicago, and Mayor Emanuel's ongoing citywide vision for art and culture that has incorporated public art into projects at a variety of City departments.

Also in 2017, DCASE will be working alongside the Mayor's Office to help mount the 2nd edition of the successful Chicago Architecture Biennial. The largest international survey of contemporary architecture in North America, the 1st Chicago Biennial in 2015 drew more than a half-million visitors to free exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center and elsewhere that showcased the cutting-edge ideas of 120 architects and firms from more than 30 countries, including many from Chicago. The 2017 Biennial opens September 16 and runs through December 31.

And we're hoping to expand our popular Chicago SummerDance in the Parks program to include even more neighborhoods, culminating in a major dance-off event in Millennium Park.

At DCASE, we believe that artistry and creativity is as fundamental as the air we breathe. Creativity is neither a luxury nor a recreation; it is how we become more human.

Our world often dismisses the arts as a frill, an extra, an add-on. But I want to remind them—and all of us gathered here today—that it is the arts and culture that define the character of great cities, great states, great civilizations. What we remember most about them is what they created, the legacy of their artists and makers.

And that's true for this great city. I think we can all agree that there is something very special about Chicago. We are the birthplace of storefront theater, modern architecture, footwork, improv, Gospel music, House music, the urban Blues and more. Chicago is an arts powerhouse and a global cultural destination.

We at DCASE believe in the power of the arts to build community and to bring fresh perspective to difficult and complex issues—and we believe that citizens benefit from free and open access to the arts and special events. It is our responsibility to make those forces stronger, so that our city feels the impact, the weight, the joy of the arts—and people from around the world will flock to Chicago.

Serving the residents of Chicago is an extraordinary honor. We all look forward to working closely with you and your constituents in 2017.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.