



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number: 18-4633**

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**Agenda Item Number: 1.**

**Agenda Date: 8/8/2018**

**In Control: City Council B Session**

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DEPARTMENT: Department of Arts & Culture

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Debbie Racca-Sittre

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: All Council Districts

SUBJECT: Briefing on San Antonio Symphony Long Term Strategy

**SUMMARY:**

In March 2018, the City and County established the Symphony Transformation Taskforce and contracted with Michael Kaiser of the DeVos Institute to develop a long-term strategy for a sustainable symphony in San Antonio. Mr. Kaiser will provide an overview of the extensive research he has completed and a summary of his recommendations.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In March 2018, the City and County created a new City-County Symphony Transformation Task Force. The nine member taskforce was chaired by Denny Ware and included Councilmember Trevino and Commissioner Paul Elizondo. Other members included:

- Elizabeth Fauerso, City of San Antonio
- Suhail Arastu, City of San Antonio
- Nissa Dunn, City of San Antonio
- Mike De La Garza, Bexar County
- Linda Chavez Thompson, Bexar County
- Dr. Alice Viroslav, Bexar County

The charge of the Taskforce was to develop a Symphony Orchestra Strategy for the City of San Antonio and Bexar County and provide a roadmap for building a sustainable approach to providing symphonic orchestral music in San Antonio. To assist in their efforts, the City and County contracted with Michael Kaiser of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management. Michael is an arts administrator who served as president of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2001-2014) in Washington, D.C. and has earned international renown for his expertise in arts management.

To develop the strategy, Michael conducted extensive research and interviews in the community. He interviewed over 100 individuals including community leaders, arts administrators, arts patrons, Symphony board members, musicians, and staff. The taskforce met with Michael numerous times and on Friday, June 15, Denny Ware submitted the taskforce report to Mayor Nirenberg and Judge Wolfe and presented his recommendations.

#### ISSUE:

The nine members of the City County Symphony Transformation Taskforce worked with Michael Kaiser of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management to develop a vision and long-term strategy for a sustainable symphony in San Antonio. The strategic plan addresses budget, programming, alternative revenue streams, orchestra size, fundraising, leadership, season duration, and community engagement.

Through their assessment, the Taskforce believes that San Antonio's orchestra should remain at 72 musicians and that San Antonio can support a 30-week season if important programmatic changes are made. The Taskforce felt strongly that the Symphony Society of San Antonio needs the following:

- Strong, permanent, professional leadership;
- Stronger governance;
- More dynamic programming;
- Financial accountability;
- More realistic budgeting;
- Build family of donors;
- Embrace the entire community; and
- Collaborate more successfully.

Additionally, the strategy outlines a model for growth and sustainability that is comprised of four components that rely heavily on each other. This cycle is key to the success of the organization and includes:

- Artistic Programming;
- Education and Outreach;
- Marketing; and
- Fundraising.

Finally, the Taskforce recommended several milestones that must be achieved by December 31, 2018 to include hiring an Executive Director by December 31, 2018, completing a strategic vision/plan by December 31, 2018, establishing a fundraising process, and developing a 5 year artistic plan. To assist in its implementation, the DeVos Institute of Arts Management has been contracted to provide interim leadership to the San Antonio Symphony during its period of management transition. Michael Kaiser will be making the presentation on the Symphony Strategic Planning process to City Council.

#### FISCAL IMPACT:

The San Antonio Symphony applied for funding through the competitive arts funding process. The FY2019 Budget includes \$460,500. The disbursement of any funding will be contingent upon the implementation of several milestones.