



City Commission Work Session Minutes

June 25, 2026 at 3:30 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

, City Manager Randy Knight; Assistant City Manager Michelle del Valle and City Clerk Rene Cranis.

Absent

1. Meeting Called to Order

Mayor DeCiccio called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Discussion Item (s)

- a. Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts Operation Discussion 2 hours

Mr. Jeff Flowers, representing Blue Bamboo, provided background, and pointed out the following:

ADA compliant

The last permit review should be completed today for renovation.

The former executive director Chris Cortez passed away in December 2025

Every month of the calendar year has been profitable

ticket sales have expanded 50% in the last six months with the help of a marketing team.

Strong support from the board of directors, volunteers and staff

Goals:

preserve the arts mission

protect the public investment and Orange County TDT money

maintain community access

establish a collaborative financial model going forward

expand to be the arts hub

Financial and economic impact shown noting expenditure on improvements of \$2.3M with assistance in TDT grant dollars of \$1.3 M from Orange County and \$981K from supporters.

The Blue Bamboo is generating almost \$2M in revenue.

After a survey of seven nonprofits, none could afford the rent that being requested from this lease. So our lease only allows us to rent to nonprofits, people who can not afford to pay the rent. We need to be able to rent to groups that can pay. Our rent is scheduled to increase from \$32 per square ft to \$44 per square ft. According to the original arrangement, we were never expected to pay the entire rent on our own. The

lease is expected to double in September from \$11,000 to \$22,000. The original second floor tenant didn't have the capacity to make the additional rent. Their upper floors are not viable for performances and neither will the parking lot hold two or more performances at a time. Maybe a teaching or rehearsal facility would be appropriate for the upper floors.

Commissioner Lindsey asked the net monthly income of the Blue Bamboo, recognized the public in attendance and explained that the city has to be a good steward of city assets.

Mayor DeCiccio mentioned the valet parking income from Rollins. Mr. Flowers confirmed \$5k sometimes \$6k per month included in the approximate \$23k per month.

The Ask:

Officially recognize Blue Bamboo as an Arts Hub, amend the master lease to give Blue Bamboo the ability to lease to others rather than just art nonprofits, approve the proposed educational partnership with conditions, rent relief or phase-in structure, long-term cultural development opportunities ex: public private partnerships, allow flexible usage for upper floors, transition to another venue, transition to another venue Mr. Flowers asked the commissioner if they want to maintain the building as an art center or not and if so then Blue Bamboo can make it happen.

Mayor DeCiccio advised that the rent figures were provided by Mr. Flowers, and the city was transparent in providing the problems with the building. The commission has a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Winter Park to take the value of the building that's between \$8 and \$12M that can pay for city projects that will benefit many during a time of uncertainty with the possibility of the loss of property taxes. We are already preparing by cutting staff. There was a reduction in rent for Blue Bamboo in the first year and the second year.

Ms. Teresa Levin-Smith spoke on behalf of Central Florida Vocal Arts, the original second floor tenant. She noted that CFVA is fiscally solvent, professionally managed and a rapidly growing nonprofit organization. CFVA declined the lease terms because they were asked to pay roughly half of the building's \$11,000 per month rent while having less than one-third use of the building and simultaneously being restricted to operations ending at 5pm every day. The issue today is whether the city wishes to preserve the original vision that justified awarding this facility in the first place. CFVA is in active discussions with multiple arts and cultural organizations that continue to express interest in participating in a collaborative model for 460 East New England Avenue. The concept remains compelling, the need remains real and the interest from the arts community remains substantial. I urge the Commission not to further reduce lease obligations, provide additional concessions, or extend additional time in hopes that a fundamentally unsuccessful operating model will somehow become sustainable. I ask that you protect the public interest, preserve accountability, allowing this facility to return to a truly collaborative vision that would honor the promise that inspired so many to support the project because Winter Park deserves a thriving, accessible,

sustainable performing arts home that serves the broader public good.

Mr. Flowers commented that the CFVA sublease was rejected due to the ability to sub lease and charge a fee, the requirement of a 250 minimum occupancy, the hours of 7am to 11pm

Commissioner Cruzada questioned the occupancy and build out of the second and third floor. The cost is \$320K.

Commissioner Lindsey asked another location has been considered if this doesn't work out when the lease expires in September, what is the plan B?

Mr. Flowers advised that the plan is to work with the city collaboratively and that his hands are tied until August, when the building department's requirements have been met. Plan B is to subdivide and approach possible tenants after the build-out is complete.

Commissioner Russell mentioned that originally, it was stated that nonprofit would be sought to occupy the second floor and this is what the city agreed on, but now you're stating that nonprofits are unable to afford leasing the second floor. As a good steward, we have to get back to the vision of the original lease.

Commissioner Cruzada stated that the intent is to be a cultural arts hub and to encourage Blue Bamboo to bring on others to take on the second and third floors.

Mr. Weaver advised that he started helping Chris Cortez before he was diagnosed with building issues and at that time found out about the lead time on the different construction projects of 7 to 10 weeks. He suggested renting the third floor to Central Florida Vocal Arts and the second floor to a deep pocketed commercial entity.

Commissioner Ingram commented that the Blue Bamboo was aware of its obligations under the lease two years ago and it is not the city's burden that it wasn't accomplished in the two year timeframe. She suggested that Central Florida Vocal Arts take over the lease and rent space to Blue Bamboo.

Mr. Knight explained the challenge of parking due to the 73 parking spaces roughly half the amount for a 30,000 sq ft building, which limits the number of people who can use the building at the same time. A challenge is finding a sub-leaser who could use the building during the off times avoiding evenings and nights Thursday through Saturday. The thought was that nonprofit offices would occupy the space during the day that wouldn't need parking space during the night.

Mr. Weaver mentioned that the building is open during the day everyday, evenings Monday through Wednesday and during sold out shows, performers and staff park at

dinky dock and All Saints church.

Because of the time, the Mayor allowed one minute for each public speaker. Randolph Saylor spoke on behalf of Blue Bamboo as a facilitator and to allow them to have the first floor

Kate Dolov - general contractor for Central Florida Vocal Arts, noting that they could apply for a building permit with their own design for the second floor, but would not be able to receive a TCO or CO until the ADA stairwells and elevator were complete.

Because there was no collaboration on working schedules and numerous architects, we were unable to come to an agreement and solution.

The following individuals spoke in support of the Blue Bamboo:

Mike Barko, Debbie Fahmie, Dylan O'Shea, Jacklyn Johnson, Carol Ducas, CJ Wilson, Alan Houghey, Nathalia Bauer

The following individuals spoke in opposition to the Blue Bamboo:

Julia Lozada, Victoria Wells

Damien Madsen Suggested hiring a commercial leasing broker to lease the second and third floor at market rates and let the Blue Bamboo stay on the first floor or start over , find someone else to take over or sell the building

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

Mayor Sheila DeCiccio

ATTEST:

City Clerk Rene Cranis