2018 October CBJ Municipal Assembly & Mayoral Candidate Questions

1. Please describe your involvement/participation in the arts and cultural activities in Juneau:

a.    How many times per year do you attend an arts and cultural events?

  In a typical year, I attend upwards of 10 arts and cultural events.

b.    What types of events do you attend, and what motivates you attend arts and cultural events.

  I attend plays at Perseverance, go to at least one high school performance, go to several events at the JACC, and attend venues at both the city and state museum. Interest in a subject is typically my motivation to attend or a desire to support an artist or youth in our community. I’ve been to almost all the Who’s your DIVA program and the Folk Festival.

c.    Are you a current or past member of any Juneau arts organizations?  Which one(s)?  What motivates you to be a member?

I am only a member of Folk Fest. I appreciate that everyone is allowed to go up to the mike and have their 15 minutes of fame and that they are operating as a grass roots effort.

2. The Juneau Arts & Humanities Council (JAHC) operates the Juneau Arts & Culture Center (JACC) which is a CBJ facility.  Since July 1st of this year, JAHC has been contracted by CBJ to manage and operate Centennial Hall (also a CBJ building on CBJ land).  JAHC is committed to building a facility dedicated to the arts and culture to replace the existing JACC: the New JACC.

a.    How familiar are you with the New JACC project, and what if any questions do you have about it?

I am very familiar with the New JACC project. My questions would be how do we get to a compromise on the funding, and can we move the building toward the Centennial Hall and marry the two buildings to gain parking on the Whittier Ave side of the new JACC.

b.    What do you know and think about the dual management of the JACC and Centennial Hall?

  I was one of the Assembly members who advocated for the JAHC to manage Centennial Hall. I have been part of a group that rents Centennial Hall each year and faces many challenges in doing so. I have also heard similar experiences from other user groups. I am looking forward to seeing how the management of the two facilities can benefit both of them and the arts community this year.

c.    What is your position on the New JACC project generally?

  I support the New JACC as it will be a needed economic boost resulting in construction jobs, a larger performing venue, and possibly more performing arts jobs. In the Juneau Economic Development plan, one of the goals is to make Juneau the arts and culture center of the region. We won’t be able to do that with the current facility. However, I don’t think the latest proposal is the most prudent as $12 million from the city is too big a financial commitment for the city and taxpayers at this time.

d.    Do you support CBJ investment in the New JACC, and what form would you consider best (general obligations bonds, revenue, bonds, sales tax allocation, or other means of generating investment funds)?

I continue to support my proposal which was a $2 million grant from the 1% sales tax revenue that was earmarked for Centennial Hall. The rest of my proposal included utilizing the remaining $2.5 million left of the 1% sales tax revenue and $4.5 million in general obligation bonds to refurbish Centennial Hall. This proposal would help the JACC project and renovate Centennial Hall. Upgrading Centennial Hall has been a request from several user groups and the tourist industry for quite some time, and the renovations were part of the original $12 million request from the city.

3. Juneau was chosen by the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC as the 11th city in the nation for the Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child Initiative, a community-wide effort to ensure equal access to learning in and through the arts for all students.  How would you, if elected, support and contribute to equitable access to arts education for every Juneau student?

Studies show that children who are exposed to the arts perform better in all aspects of their education, gain confidence, have better social skills, and can be more creative and imaginative. I am glad to see the success of JAHC’s Artist in the Schools Program. This program has exposed children in the schools to a wide variety of artists and genre. We are also blessed as a community to have the successful Juneau Alaska Music Matters program. I have enjoyed watching these students perform in a variety of venues. I understand the importance of arts, and would do what I can, as Mayor and as a citizen to ensure that these types of programs continue.

4. Juneau was recently named one of the top 10 most Culturally Vibrant small town’s in the United States by SMU’s National Center for Arts Research, and at the beginning of this year was named the sixth most Creatively Vital micropolises nationally by the Western States Arts Federation.  Both these rankings were in part determined by the level of economic activity associated with arts and culture in our community, and by the level of public investment in the arts.  How do see these national rankings being leveraged to Juneau’s advantage, and what would you do as an elected official to ensure that Juneau remains a national leader in this area?

With the Walter Sobeloff Center, the Andrew P. Kashevaroff State Museum, the renovation of the Elizabeth Peratrovich hall, and the City Museum, I am not surprised we are ranking high for our arts and culture in Juneau. The arts and culture community accounts for over a 1000 jobs in Juneau, adds to the locals’ quality of life, and makes us a vibrant Capital City. These rankings should help us raise more private funding for the arts especially for the New JACC. While the majority of the money will have to be raised privately, as mayor, I will work with JAHC and the pARTnership to see what we can do as a city to encourage this investment in the arts and culture in our community. I will also work on seeking a solution to any parking problems in the Willoughby area. I am also looking forward to the opening of the Tlingit and Haida Immersion Park in Thane. This will only add to our already rich arts and culture community and industry.

5. JAHC recently adopted a resolution on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as did the Assembly. How can the arts and culture sector help address social issues to help make Juneau a healthy and vibrant community?

What role does the Assembly have in this effort?

I believe arts and culture can bring people together. Recently, with the unveiling of the bronze house posts at the Walter Sobeloff Center, there was a broad-based audience, including tourists, at the event to appreciate the artists’ works. The community of Juneau has used art to promote healing of old wounds. We have also used art to help people understand and appreciate our differences. Many events, such as Wearable Arts, show the immense array of creativity that can be found in art. I think the Assembly can promote inclusion by encouraging the diverse art community in Juneau, and by recognizing and honoring artists and their work.

6. Please share any other thoughts and comments you may have about JAHC, the New JACC, or the arts and culture in Juneau.

During my time on the Assembly, I have learned while I had great appreciation for the arts and cultural climate in Juneau, I really only had surface knowledge of the depth and breadth of how the arts and cultural community benefitted Juneau. I was able to attend many events that previously I didn’t even know occurred. I have a much deeper understanding of and appreciation for the arts and culture in our community and am glad for being included in numerous meetings about eh JAHC and the new JACC.