

2018 Mayoral Candidates Forum

The Future of Arts and Culture in Orange County



Pete Clarke



Jerry Demings



Rob Panepinto

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1. **Dedicated Funding Source: Will you support the creation of a public sector, ongoing dedicated funding stream for the arts that generates at minimum, an additional \$5 million per year in funding for arts & culture beyond existing sources?**

Pete Clarke: This fund is generating around five million dollars. I believe these monies need to be protected and should not be altered. As we continue to grow the number of visitors the amount should increase. This is a dedicated funding source but may not be exactly what you are looking for.

The second piece is the Application and Review Committee. The review committee will be coming to the Board of County Commissioners during the budget process. A benefit of being a commissioner is that I will be able to use what I learned during the forum when the Application process is being discussed by the County Commission.

The question of a dedicated source generally leads to a tax. This would require significant community dialogue and vetting. We need to see what happens with the new process (Application Review Committee).

Jerry Demings: In committing to a dedicated funding source for the arts, I would assemble arts and cultural groups along with the business community to discuss the best return on investment strategy for taxpayers. It is important to note that this is not my sole decision and there would need to be broader conversation with the Orange County Board of Commissioners. However, I support the continuance of the current rate of 3% of the first 4 cents (2% of the total) revenues from TDT taxes currently collected and I would commit to increasing funding for the arts by \$5 million from other revenue sources within my discretion as mayor.

This may become a more significant challenge should Florida voters approve Constitutional Amendment 1, which would increase homestead exemptions of \$100k to \$125k. If passed, the impact on the County's budget will be in Fiscal Year 2020 resulting in countywide millage loss of \$16 million, Fire millage loss of \$5 million and Sheriff/unincorporated millage loss of \$4 million. This would be a reduction of county revenues of approximately \$25 million. In this case, it would be fiscally prudent to take into consideration all of the county's funding challenges and prioritize the most critical needs to ensure continuity of existing services at that time.

Rob Panepinto: I believe that arts and culture are an essential element of a thriving community, driving education, economic development and our overall quality of life and "sense of place." I also recognize the

State reduced their arts and culture funding by 94% in this year's budget. However, as discussed at the Forum, I believe the appropriate path to increasing any local arts and culture funding should come from existing sources and/or the General Fund. Given our current low wage economy with multiple pressing community needs, I encourage arts and culture leaders to press local leaders on the importance of supporting the arts to find additional dollars, without adding a new tax burden on our residents through a new dedicated funding source.

Additionally, as I discussed in my opening comments, I have co-founded two nonprofits that support social enterprises, including helping nonprofits analyze and build revenue models that help sustain their mission beyond government or philanthropic funding. As County Mayor, I would be open to and interested in working with the arts community to explore opportunities and pilots for innovative revenue initiatives.

2. **Per Capita: In past years, the county dedicated \$1 per capita from the General Fund for arts and culture in Orange County. That has dwindled to nearly .50 per capita in the past decade. Would you support the reinstatement of the \$1 per capita in 2019 from the General Fund for arts support?**

Pete Clarke: I am going to make this a quick answer. I will bring this up during the upcoming budget process and will encourage the Mayor and county administration to include it.

Jerry Demings: Yes, I would commit to funding a total of \$1 per capita from any combination of County revenue sources.

Rob Panepinto: Reducing the \$1 per capita General Fund allocation for arts and culture in 2007 was a wise decision in the face of the Great Recession and its impact on our community. Given a more robust economy, I would be supportive of reinstating the \$1 per capita allocation in the 2019 budget.

3. **TDT: Orange County has invested excess TDT funding to recruit and support sporting events. The fund was seeded with \$5 million and will be funded annually with an additional \$2 million. Would you support an equivalent fund for arts and culture events?**

Pete Clarke: The answer is yes, but it will take some work.

The addition of arts and cultural events to this type of fund will allow us bring in additional visitors as well as events that are currently out of our reach. However, it's going to be a process but I'm willing to take it on. I think that it is something that will add value to this community.

As with the Zora Neale Festival and other cultural events, we need to preserve our history while exposing the community to other extraordinary offerings.

Jerry Demings: As you are aware, the Mayor and Board of County Commissioners appointed a Review Committee that will meet this summer during the Budget Work Sessions to make recommendations on a spending plan for excess fees collected through TDT. Monies will be eligible for capital projects. If collections continue to outpace budgeted projections, I would support equivalency funds for the Arts with the Sports Commission.

Rob Panepinto: The Sports Fund was created to attract sports events that will drive tourism for the community. Grants are allocated through the existing TDT based on specific criteria determined by the number of attendees. Leveraging a similar formula and process, I would be supportive of establish a fund for arts and culture events, in addition to the current Blockbuster funding.

4. **Public Art: More than 500 cities and municipalities in the US (including the City of Orlando and State of Florida) have a Public Art Ordinance that designates 1-2 % of all capital construction costs – including repairs – to Public Art. Orange County has no such ordinance. Will you support an ordinance of up to 2% for Public Art in Orange County?**

Pete Clarke: Orange County already has a resolution that allocates one percent to public art. I think we need to settle on an amount but I would need to do more research and look at it in depth. I think the placement of public art is important and should be featured in facilities that the public visits.

I'm open to having a discussion as to the amount and the criteria for the projects that receive the funds. A resolution should be binding and the community needs to hold us accountable. If the BCC fails then an Ordinance would be a remedy. As your Mayor I will honor our obligation. My track record (votes) is proof that I honor our obligations and want the public to trust their government.

Jerry Demings: Yes, I would support an ordinance or resolution to designate up to 2% for public sector/government building projects, but maintain flexibility in determining the suitability for an art enhanced project. For example, the building of a sewage lift station may not be an appropriate project to include an art element.

Rob Panepinto: Orange County does currently have a resolution in place that generally dedicates 1% of construction funding for public art. I would support instituting an ordinance for a similar level of construction funding for public art. As I said at the Forum, we will need to work through the details to make sure the ordinance is consistent with the intent to create public art for public buildings/spaces, but I am supportive of the change from a resolution to an ordinance.

5. **Affordable Venues: The cost of performance spaces often becomes prohibitive for many arts organizations. Will you work to cultivate funding to make venues affordable for arts organizations and independent producers?**

Pete Clarke: My hope was that when the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts was completed it would a venue that you could use. Maybe there are not enough venues between Bob Carr and some of the others. That's something that I'm willing to discuss.

I'm working on a proposal through Orange County now to build a cultural center for the Hispanic community which will include some of what you spoke about, such as stages and places for kids to come be in and practice and perform.

I believe those are important issues. As your Mayor, when we develop our CIPs, I think we need to keep in mind the totality of what we need to do for the community when we build community centers.

Every high school has a stage which is something we should discuss with the School Board. Private schools are another opportunity. So, yes we will work on this through what's in place now and through our CIP projects. We will work very hard to accomplish this.

Jerry Demings: Yes, I would work collaboratively with other governmental entities and private sector partners to make rental fees affordable. This would include working with such entities as the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Bob Carr Auditorium, schools and other local theaters to stabilize or reduce costs. Additionally, I will work with state legislators on obtaining special appropriations for enhancement of arts within our community. We want to avoid another year like the 2018 Legislative Session in which there was a loss of \$2.4 million in arts funding for Central Florida.

Rob Panepinto: I recognize the importance of community, cultural, and independent art organizations and producers and will to help find lower cost venues for these productions/organizations. I believe the most optimal solution will be to leverage existing community assets, including public school auditoriums/theaters and the Bob Carr Theater. While the Bob Carr would likely need renovations to serve in this capacity, I would engage in conversations with the City of Orlando and potentially, UCF, to discuss this option.