

COMMENTARY

It's high time for some skunk works

Big Barnsmell," a moonshiner in the World War II comic strip, "L'il Abner," had a secret still called the "Skonk Works" where he made "kickapoo joy juice."

Aerospace juggernaut Lockheed Martin adapted the term in WW II when responding to the unstoppable German Messerschmitt. Their best and brightest produced the legendary P-38 in less than five months, all the while adjacent to a malodorous plastic factory.

The true smell of a skunk works is the sizzling savory aroma of hearts and heads on fire doing something profoundly creative, smart, fast and right, especially under pressure.

Fairfield has a budget crisis. So far, the Fairfield City Council and staff are candid. Fairfield is about to lose a jewel in its crown, the arts.

Everybody understands the magic of the arts where dreams and imagination become melodies, words become lyrics and librettos and pictures and portraits of human creativity take shape. The arts are an umbilical connection to the world and we are healthier when we choose to create on the grand stage of life, rather than languish in the mezzanine.

The arts are pivotal for a vibrant, happy and safe community. They stimulate critical thinking as well as increase cultural understanding and preserve ethnic heritage. Flourishing arts encourage personal and community creativity and pride, contribute to lifelong learning in



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adults and the well-rounded education and development of children while strengthening the local economy.

At the last council meeting, Councilman "Mottown Mraz" summed it up tightly and rightly with fellow city staffers and

council members doo-whopping in backup harmony . . . "The body of this city is . . . safety . . . its soul is the arts." Listen to a leitmotif of leadership. They get it!

I have often bathed in that sweet skunk works stink. A chance is coming again. Because of many forward-thinking backstage meetings last week, opinion leaders and city staff will convene their own skunk works to distill a better elixir that will institutionalize rich, vibrant and entertaining immersion in the arts as part of the fabulous Fairfield experience.

The notion causing all the commotion is this: Build a bonafide non-profit arts consortium. Staff it and wear it into self-sufficiency. It would have at least the following attributes: durability, structural and fiscal soundness, inclusivity and run by those with most at stake and the most talent.

There would be institutionalized organizational learning through sharing of time, treasures, technology and talents and programmed large scale use of city Internet presence, organization web space and city cable TV with emphasis on entertaining and educational outreach to K-12 and beyond.

The Fairfield Center for the Creative Arts would be maximally utilized with forgiveness of tech and rental costs. It must be fun, not overly ponderous and not dependent on a small group.

The city would have oversight, seeding and staffing responsibilities to provide a safety net, but not a bassinette, and the city would creatively coerce participatory partnership of all to build bridges to taxpayers' consciousness and coffers.

An amalgamation of city, private, small businesses, fraternal and philanthropic organizations, "tithing subscribers," as well as some incentivized generosity by community "big fish" recently and unexpectedly awash in new monies, could fund it. Thank you, Measure Q.

Talent, technology and treasures exist to marshal economies of scale for marketing, publicity and fundraisers reaching every nook and cranny and market possible naming rights.

The key ingredients are no farther away than a mirror and the urgency to do what is clever, quick and right is no more distant than our pulse. The City Council is on board and ready to tap the joy juice vat. If we build it well-reasoned and glad-hearted, all will come and the sweet smell of skunk works will linger for generations.

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