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February 22, 2024

Mayor Danielle Moore and Town Council
360 South County Road
Palm Beach, FL 33480

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Dear Mayor Moore and Town Council Members:

As an organization with the mission of improving the quality of life in the Town of Palm Beach, the Palm Beach Civic Association will from time to time take positions on matters which we believe will have a positive impact on the residents of Palm Beach. We do so only when we believe a particular proposal will have a meaningful positive impact on the Town.

The Civic Association Executive Committee recently reviewed the plans for the renovation of the O'Keefe and Rovensky buildings at the Four Arts campus. The Four Arts has served as an important cultural center in Palm Beach for many decades. The O'Keefe building has been a gathering place for music, art, lectures, and cultural performances. The building is clearly in need of updating and the proposed renovation will, in our view, significantly enhance the user experience. These renovations will allow the Four Arts to better serve our community as a cultural center for decades to come. Similarly, the proposed changes to the Rovensky building, particularly to the Children's Library, will significantly benefit our community, particularly for families with young children. Accordingly, these proposed renovations have the Civic Association's full support.

We understand that the Four Arts is seeking a zoning change from residential to a new civic or cultural zoning designation in order to accomplish these renovations.

The current residential zoning designation does not seem appropriate for a ten-acre parcel that has no residences and only a community serving cultural institution. The need for multiple variances from standards intended for residential zoning in order to achieve the renovations contemplated, and the broad rights to appeal any grant of a variance, can seriously impair the ability of a project like this to move forward.

In our view, that cumbersome variance process, and the potential for delay it carries with it, will not serve our community's best interests. Accordingly, we support the concept of civic/cultural zoning district for the Four Arts property. Our support of this change is limited to the Four Arts and should not be construed as a broader endorsement of zoning changes to other parts of the Town.

We further understand that the Four Arts has submitted a proposed Zoning Code amendment for consideration. It is beyond our role to weigh in on any particular language of a proposed code change. The concept of a cultural zoning district makes good sense for the Four Arts, and we will leave the drafting to Town staff and legal counsel.

Finally, the Civic Association is mindful of the extent to which the Four Arts has made a positive contribution to our Town for many decades. The King Library is the official Town library and receives modest financial support from the Town. The sculpture garden is a restful greenspace on a busy corridor that is open to the public. The lectures, classes, exhibits and performances all make Palm Beach a more stimulating place to live. We hope that the goodwill the Four Arts has generated by being a good "Town citizen", will factor into the Council's analysis of this complex, but important proposal.

The Civic Association thanks each of you for your service to the Town.

Very truly yours

Michael J. Pucillo
Chairman and CEO
Palm Beach Civic Association