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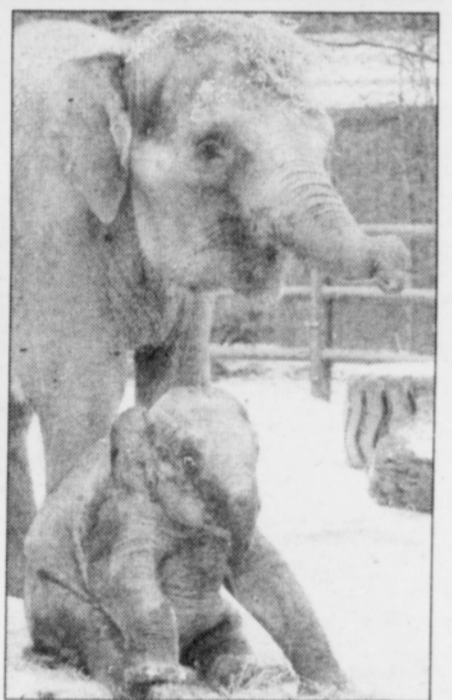
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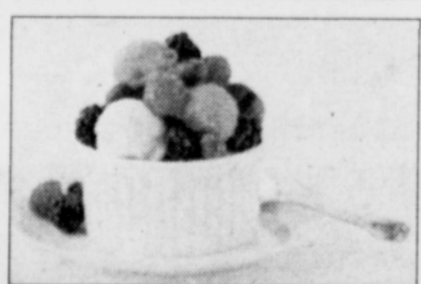


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# Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

## LOCAL NEWS

# Center Draws Suitors

### Parks bureau evaluates applications

BY JAKE THOMAS  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Several potential suitors are lining up to take over the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, an incubator for many minority artists who now occupy prominent positions in Portland's art scene.

In May, the previous operator, Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, Inc., closed its doors due to chronic financial instability. Portland Parks and Recreation, a city bureau that owns the 1910 building at 5340 N. Interstate Ave., put out a call for proposals for another like-minded non-profit to continue its mission.

So far PPR has kept the selection process for the new operator of firehouse shrouded in secrecy. Beth Sorenson, PPR spokesperson for the bureau declined comment. But here's what we know so far:

Four non-profits applied for the space, and include the northeast Portland-based music education organization Ethos, the theater group Stumptown Stages, NW Documentary, and Community Music Center- PPR's own music education program.

Ian McCluskey, the director of NW Documentary, told the Portland Observer that his two-person staffed organization is not in the running, but will be in contact with whoever gets the facility to hopefully work out some sort of partnership.

No one from PPR's Community Music Center would comment on where they are with negotiations, leaving Stumptown Stages and Ethos.

Kirk Mouser, the executive artistic director of Stumptown stages, said that his group is still vying to take over the firehouse. He said that if his group, which got its start at the IFCC in 2005, gets control of the building it will continue the education programs it launched at Jefferson High School. Mouser also said that he wants to collaborate with other artistic groups, including the other non-profits that applied.

"We've extended an olive branch



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center at 5340 N. Interstate Ave. awaits a new tenant.

to the other organizations," said Mouser. He also added that he wants to carry on the center's original mission by fostering diversity in the arts, which was established by Charles Jordan-the city's first African American city commissioner.

But the big question is the financial viability of whatever organization takes over the firehouse. The previous occupant of the building struggled with fundraising, and when the city could no longer afford to subsidize them due to declining revenues, they had to close their doors.

"The challenge with the IECC has been the financial need," said Mouser, who added that his organization will get help from the African American Chamber of Commerce beating the bushes to raise money.

He also said that it will begin a marketing plan and develop other strategies to make the operation viable.

However, looking at Stumptown's most recent set of tax documents, the organization has a ways to go before it is financially stable. According to the most recent set of tax documents, it's over \$23,000 in the red and has no paid staff. The year before, it was in a similar position.

Charles Lewis, the executive director and founder of Ethos, confirmed to the Portland Observer that his organization is in negotiations with PPR about taking over the firehouse, but couldn't say much more citing a

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