

Artist who designed bus station art irked over payment outlay

By Edythe Jensen

THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

Chandler artist Joan Waters won't be getting the money she expected for designing showplace downtown bus stations. And she's not happy about it.

"I took it in the shorts," she said. "Most artists would have said, 'This is insulting; forget it.'" Waters said she plans to tell her story to the Chandler Arts Commission on Wednesday. According to a recent letter from Valley Metro Regional Public Transit Authority to city officials, Waters agreed to accept the city's \$4,900 consulting contract fee for the design and Valley Metro's promise to pay her \$18,000 to oversee construction later.



Joan Waters

Waters said that she put in more than 400 hours of work on the designs and expected \$45,000 plus \$35,000 for construction oversight.

Confusion over distribution of federal stimulus money and whether it should be used for designing artistic bus stations started the pay dispute in June.

Valley Metro spokeswoman Susan Tierney said earlier that federal stimulus dollars are set aside for construction — not design — and must go through a regulated procurement process. Waters was selected by the Chandler Arts Commission for the design work and the city paid the \$4,900 contract fee; there were no public requests for proposals or bids and no City Council vote.

The stations will be part of a future bus rapid transit route along Arizona Avenue. Funding is overseen by the regional

transportation authority and includes federal stimulus dollars. Most of the design work went into a showplace station southwest of Arizona Avenue and Chandler Boulevard in front of San Marcos Commons. Service is scheduled to start in July 2010.

Waters said Valley Metro offered an additional \$6,000 for the plans but she returned the money in exchange for the agency's promise that they wouldn't scrap a collection of "art boxes" she had designed for the bus stations. The lighted boxes will display local artists' work and there was talk about eliminating them to save money. Waters said she pushed to save the art boxes "because I don't want to live in a vanilla city."

Her pay issues illustrate the downside of depending on public money for art, Waters said. "Cities can just say they don't have the money and that's it."

Downtown Redevelopment Manager Teri Killgore said she is pleased with the outcome and "very proud" of Waters for accepting the much lower fees and giving back the offered \$6,000 to save the art boxes.

"I think her design is beautiful; it will be such an amenity for downtown."

Waters' drawings and models unveiled at the July 15 Arts Commission meeting include leaf-shaped shade canopies that appear to float above angled seating areas, fiberglass shade panels with design cutouts and leaf-patterned concrete. Steel disks attached to metal poles will be the station's four sculptures, and lighted viewing boxes will provide local artists with display space.

Waters also created the \$100,000 modernistic metal tumbleweed sculpture at the city's park-and-ride lot near Tumbleweed Park.

“I took it in the shorts. Most artists would have said, ‘This is insulting; forget it.’”

Joan Waters
Chandler artist