



Monthly Board Brief, July 2022

Outcomes/Impact.

1. HR and Hiring
 - Natalie Alfaro Frazier will be saying goodbye to Metro Arts at the beginning of August. Natalie has accepted an offer from County of Monterey in California as a DEI Analyst with the Civil Rights Office.
 - Marysa LaRowe has officially transferred to the Equity and Restorative Practices team. ERP have been given the “green light” to post the FT ASO2; Vanderbilt graduate student Karissa Coady joining SFI and ERP to complete practicum hours
 - On the Strategic Funding and Initiatives team, Jonathan Saad has come aboard as a contract Grants Manager, and Chuck Beard has been reallocated to manage the THRIVE program.
 - Applications for Office Support Specialist Position are closed, and Arts staff is currently in process of scheduling interviews with potential candidates.
 - In order to meet communication needs of the department, Mollie Berliss has been hired. She will assist in the interim until a permanent Communications/PIO can be hired.
2. FY23 Budget. The Mayor’s budget includes (for the first time) \$3M in grants funding for arts and culture.
 - Additional \$574,800 for grants, bringing us to \$3M for the first time ever
 - Additional \$75k for Thrive artist-led community projects
 - Additional \$25k for Equity Related Programming
3. Percent for Public Art Program. Staff are working with the procurement department to amend the artist contracts for %fund projects that require additional funding due to rising inflation costs. Several in-progress public art projects are moving into the design development and fabrication phases.
 - Community engagement and design development underway for the Donelson Library projects.
 - Design process underway for Nolensville Pike transit shelter artist-designed vinyl, WeGo has approved 4 of 5 sites and revised designs. The final location is being negotiated.
 - Fabrication of Kossie Gardner Sr. Park mural wall in process (August 2022 completion)
 - Fabrication of Mill Ridge Park public art in process (June 2023 completion)
4. Equity. Natalie Alfaro Frazier will be departing from Metro Arts effective August 5th; REAL Project Closeouts due in August
5. Strategic Planning. On pause while working through meeting logistics.

6. Youth Programs. POWER Youth will be wrapping up for the summer; planning for Restorative Arts redevelopment underway; DIAL internships wrapping up on August 11th

Key Upcoming Priorities

1. Restorative Arts relaunch/redesign to begin July 2022
2. FY23 Thrive guidelines posted and application will launch July 2022. Planning for community outreach ongoing.
3. FY22 Grants, Thrive and ABC grant closeouts coming in. All due June 15. Staff is reviewing.
4. Launch of Nashville Fairgrounds Public Art Phase 2. Created specifically as an opportunity for local artists, this call will be an action item in August with the goal of releasing the call to artists in September.



PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

Effective July 22, 2022

Community members may provide public comments about specific agenda items for Metro Arts Commission meetings using the new [Metro Arts Public Comment Form](#). This form ensures that comments can be easily shared with Commission and the public, and they are text telephone (TTY) accessible. Comments received at least two business days before a Commission meeting will be included in that meeting's board packet, which will be publicly available after the meeting [on the Nashville.gov website](#). Comments received after that deadline will be included in the following month's regularly-scheduled board meeting packet. Public comments must address a specific agenda item on the posted agenda of the Arts Commission, and they must be provided using the Public Comment Form. Comments received by email, social media, or on any other platform will not be accepted or included as public comments.

Please note: *As of July 22, 2022, we will no longer be accepting public comments about agenda items for Commission meetings via email. Instead, you will be re-directed to complete the online Public Comment Form.*

Public comment instructions are included in the public notice and [Metro Arts calendar of meetings and events](#). If you would like to receive updates about Metro Arts public notices, agendas, and minutes, you can [sign up on Nashville.gov](#). All Commission meetings are open to the public, are publicly-noticed, and are held in publicly-accessible Metro buildings or facilities.

Public Comment Guidelines:

Metro Arts Commission reserves the right to exclude public comments if they include statements that:

- are fraudulent, libelous, harassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise unlawful or inappropriate;
- promote or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, age, national origin, disability, creed, gender identity, or sexual orientation;
- target any ethnic, racial, age or religious group, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, gender identity or disability status;
- contain confidential information (e.g. HIPAA protected information), unless the information is about themselves and they are consenting to its public disclosure;
- constitute advertising or solicitation;
- contain information that may compromise the safety or security of the public, Metro government employees, or those in the care of the Metro Government;
- endorse illegal behavior or activity that violates any law or regulation;
- or fail to comply in any way with the Rules and Procedures applicable to Metro Government.

Additional Resources:

Questions, concerns, complaints, requests for accommodation, or requests for additional information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act may be forwarded to Metro Arts' ADA Compliance Coordinator: **Ian Myers, Metro Nashville Arts Commission, P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219-6300 Ian.Myers@nashville.gov, (615)862-6730, TTY Relay Service 800-848-0298**

INTERPRETATION SERVICES: Should an individual need language interpretation, Metro Arts will secure assistance using a Metro approved over-the-phone or in-person interpretation service. E-mail arts@nashville.gov in the language of your choice.

Si necesita ayuda con el idioma, háganoslo saber. Obtendremos un intérprete que puede ayudarnos a comunicarnos entre nosotros.

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مساعدة لغوية ، فالرجاء إخبارنا بذلك. سوف نحصل على مترجم يمكنه مساعدتنا في التواصل مع بعضنا البعض.

Ji kerema xwe em bizanin eger hûn bialîkariya înglîzî re pêdivî ye. Em ê wergirtineke kurdî bibînin ku dikarealîkariya me bi hev re biaxivin.

Metro Arts Commission Public Comment Form

(Launch online form at [Nashville.gov](https://www.nashville.gov) on 7/22/2022 if approved at 7/21/2022 Arts Commission meeting)

The Metro Arts Commission and its staff are committed to continuously elevating community voices. The opportunity to comment on agenda items before the Commission is a feature of all public meetings of the Commission and is available to residents of Nashville and Davidson County and non-residents committed to the work of Metro Arts.

This online public comment form ensures that comments can be easily shared with the Commission and the public and that the comments are text telephone (TTY) accessible. Comments must be submitted at least two business days prior to the public meeting to which the public comment pertains. Those comments will be included in that meeting's board packet and will be available [on the Nashville.gov Arts Commission board page](#). Comments received after the deadline will be included in the following month's regularly-scheduled board meeting packet. For more information, please refer to [Metro Arts Public Comment Policy](#).

First Name *

Last Name *

Suffix

Phone

Email

Which body does your public comment address? *

- Arts Commission
- Committee for Antiracism and Equity
- Grants and Funding Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Strategic Planning and Public Funding Committee

What is the date of the public meeting for which you are addressing a public comment? *

Which agenda item does your public comment address? *

Please use this link to access meeting agendas: [Arts Commission Meeting Listing](#)

Public Comment *

Association with Metro Arts

Please tell us more about your association with Metro Arts. In what roles or capacities have you come to know Metro Arts?

I have read and understand the [Metro Arts Commission Public Comment Policy](#) and agree to its terms and conditions. *

May 30, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you in regards to the charges laid against Janine Christiano and to express my support of her and her work with Metro Arts. I recently left Metro Arts as I accepted a transfer to another Metro department, so I might not be apprised of events that have taken place in the past six weeks or so. Given my time as Janine's colleague, however, I would like to share my experiences with this body and express that I do not believe these charges to be accurate. My apologies for not being able to attend in person, but I hope this letter will act as an adequate substitute.

When I first started at Metro Arts, due to several vacancies on her team, I was assigned to help support Janine through the height of Metro Arts' grants season (I would say April-June) as well as in developing the pilot year of the Diversity in Arts Leadership internship program. I was also tasked with working with Janine, and later Tre Hardin, to support the Arts Commission's Committee for Antiracism and Equity. I found working with Janine to be a valuable and rewarding experience, and Janine herself to be a very conscientious and justice-driven colleague who prioritized public service, particularly towards the arts community including individual artists and arts organizations. I have often seen Janine put aside her personal well being in favor of her role as a public servant, which she takes very seriously. In addition to this, I found Janine to be a manager that also remained conscious of the needs of her team as people and also the value of a good laugh even in the middle of stressful times. Since March 2020, the arts community has been in constant waves of crisis trying to manage through the pandemic, and I think Janine has done a great job of reacting to those needs as best as she can while also trying to build a healthy, productive environment for those who work under her.

I was quite shocked to hear about these charges and feel like they are incongruous with the Janine that I worked with for two years as well as the departmental context. Without the suggestion given the charge, I would not characterize Janine as aggressive or using aggressive language and certainly not as someone who would consciously and with ill-will intimidate another person. Instead, as described above, I would say she is very justice-oriented and passionate about pursuing and driving the equity goals clearly set by Metro Arts and the Arts Commission. I was particularly thrown by the assertion that Janine improperly communicated with Tre as the three of us were assigned to work together on the very intensive project of coordinating with the Arts Commission Committee for Antiracism and Equity. I did not personally ever experience Janine "managing" Tre, but it is true that we worked together closely as assigned and that we interacted with each other as colleagues. This was not an unusual state of affairs in such a small department. I also witnessed Janine use appropriate channels several times to bring up her concerns, and at those times, she communicated to me a desire to see positive change rather than negative repercussions.

The current situation at Metro Arts when I left and for the past several years is nuanced and complex, and it is my understanding that this situation is being addressed by several people including Andrea Blackman and Razel Jones whom I have great respect for. I do believe there is a situation at Metro Arts that needs to be addressed, and I am regretful that so many people feel they have been harmed in the process of trying to find a better way forward in line with the equity goals the department committed to. However, I do not believe that situation calls for disciplinary action against Janine. And though I know it is not the purpose of this hearing, I hope overall that this situation can be resolved through restorative practices instead.

Thank you for your consideration,

Grace L. Wright

From: [Amanda Autry](#)
To: [Arts \(Arts\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Arts Commission
Date: Thursday, June 16, 2022 9:36:02 AM

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Amanda Autry
District 24

I have written the Mayor and my Council Member to address what is currently happening at Metro Arts Commission.

I work in the arts nonprofit sector. I know firsthand Metro Arts Commission requires cultural equity information and work from grant recipients. However, I am concerned they aren't holding their own leadership accountable for treatment of their staff.

I am writing in support of the immediate reinstatement of Janine Christiano and a complete dismissal of charges from her personnel file.

Thank you,
Amanda Autry
District 24 resident

To the Committee for Antiracism and Equity, the Board of Commissioners, Metro Arts Staff and Metro Human Resources;

I am writing to urge you to look at these charges laid against Janine Christiano by Atilio Murga through an antiracist lens. If there is not one on the committee to judge these charges who has been through the two and a half day Crossroads Antiracism training who can bring that sort of rigorous analysis, I strongly encourage you to find such a person. I also urge you to make sure there is a person of color on that committee.

I also want to state what is obvious; that Mr. Murga has now filed complaints against two different women of color who were encouraging him to fellowship with people of color, deepen his professional development, and/or deepen his own understanding of racism. I also want to point out that these complaints were filed at a time when these women of color were in deep difficulty with the organization. The timing is deeply suspicious and I urge you to unravel the lies and falsehoods that are being told.

I will say that in the complaint against me that was filed in 2019, I had no knowledge of a complaint until my attorney and Metro Arts' attorney were in negotiation for about a month over my departure. In fact, on the complaint you can see where the date was changed — scribbled out — from July, after my departure, to June, before my departure. I don't want to imply that Mr. Murga's complaint was not valid — because if he was truly offended that I assumed that he identified as a person of color and would want to build community to survive an organization that had been tokenizing, toxic and psychologically violent to myself and other people of color, I apologize. I wish he had spoken up in the moment, "I don't identify as a person of color." However, as one for whom racial equity education was fully inside of their job description for grantees, artists, and staff — it should have been explained to him that I was doing my job by making the invitation.

As one who is outside now, but working with Ms. Christiano along with the Curb Center for the Racial Equity in Arts Leadership as a contracted consultant, in her capacity as the Strategic Funding and Initiatives Manager and member of CARE, it would seem like it would be in her purview to encourage a colleague who had not gone through a training course that had once been mandatory to complete the afore mentioned training. If the benchmark of making sure every employee has access and has completed training as a part of achieving the equity goals that Metro Arts once set for itself had shifted, that shift should have been made clear to Ms. Christiano. I'm curious and troubled about what might have changed the goal post.

I am curious how the work that Metro Arts has been chartered to do get done. Grants. Public art, THRIVE, REAL — all of that is extra. Grants are core to the mission and charter for the commission. The program has already be bogged down and plagued changes of knowledgeable staff and lack of community trust. With the employee now terminated who had been holding the work of funding initiatives — how will Metro Arts do the basic work of the charter?

As a former employee who worked very hard to secure and build a relationship with Crossroads, I am disappointed that their contract was willfully allowed to expire — as it is apparent that their consultancy is much needed now more than ever. A question that I ask executives and board members during my current work is: "Knowing we've all been socialized to protect whiteness and white normative values, how is white supremacy informing your decisions?" Perhaps the more pointed questions here would be, how have white normative values informed the decision to file charges against Ms. Christiano? And how have those values shaped the decisions to file complaints when the only Asian American employee and only Manager of color in the institution's history is challenging the practices, policies and white

entitlement to comfort? How is white supremacy and alignment with those values causing this process to be biased against those who have been calling for accountability and racial equity?

By continuing to dig in and reinforce white cultural values, Metro Arts is squandering this opportunity to be truly honest about where it actually is on the continuum of antiracism, and not living up to the ideals of its equity statement. This is an opportunity to rewind, reflect, and do some hard work of disentangling itself from the norms into which we have all been socialized. That takes work. That takes training. That takes accountability. That takes a contrite heart, mind, practice to repent for the racialized and gendered harm caused to staff in the present and past and to communities of color. This is an opportunity.

I write this knowing this will hurt my chances to compete for the Executive Director position; however I'm writing this because I still desire to see Metro Arts live into what it could be. Boldface retaliation is not living into what Metro Arts should be and professes to be.

I truly hope Metro Arts can get right sooner than later, if at all.

Waning, yet hoping for better,

Cecilia Olusola Tribble
Cultural Equity Consultant and Coach
Former Metro Arts Employee
Current Applicant for Executive Director of Metro Arts
District 1

Public Comment: Arts Commission: June 23 CARE

Dear Metro Arts Commissioners,

I am disappointed that you have failed the Nashville arts community. I wish I could say I was appalled at what happened and what was and was not discussed at the June 16 Commission meeting, but that would imply a sense of shock, of which I had none after witnessing nearly a year of chosen inaction, ignorance of what is happening in your department, and outright dismissal of public concerns.

I am disappointed that Commissioners Cheek and Alvis were so vehemently talking about how “harm was done” only **now** in reference to complaints against Ms. Christiano, and yet this Commission was so hesitant to use the word “harm” when talking about complaints against Ms. Vincent that also laid blame upon Mr. Myers & Ms. Kinslow & others. I am not here to invalidate Mr. Murga’s claim of discrimination - his perception is enough to make a claim that harm was done. There are plenty of inconsistencies in the Fact Finders' work and concerns in their bias to protect Metro leadership, but it's not my place to debate his complaint. However I will **always** point out the pattern of disparate treatment that has been and continues to be exhibited against women of color at Metro Arts. (And Ms. Vincent's claim is different too - the person who has all the power in a relationship can not claim “intimidation”, that’s like white people claiming reverse racism.)

I am disappointed in Commissioner Cheek’s scolding statement made directly to the public who took 2.5 hours out of their day to be there - Comm. Cheek you (and Mr. Myers and Comms Schmidt and Alvis and many others) have repeatedly acted as if we’ve only read what’s in the thoroughly-investigated press reports, as if we're just showing up and saying what somebody told us to say. Trust me, many of us have read all 5 Fact Finder Reports, the original complaints, reams of public comments, state and local regulations, we have attended these meetings and disciplinary hearings, and we have even listened / watched many of the interviews. We are **at least** as informed as the members of this Commission.

I am disappointed that Vice Chair Powell would not allow the public to respond to Comm. Cheek’s statement directly to us, despite the conversation that had JUST ENDED about how this Commission A) does not currently have a Public Comment Policy and B) you can make it whatever you want. And yes, I am a little disappointed in myself for not standing up and saying my piece anyway, but I too was tired and hungry after nearly 2.5 hours.

I am disappointed that apart from Cheek & Alvis, there was no discussion of the FORTY-TWO pages of public comments - all but 4 pages (2 submissions) of which were in support of Ms. Christiano. That included ignoring the petition signed by 184 members of the community (it’s 216 now), including former Arts & HR Commissioners, former Arts staff and DIAL interns, thought leaders in cultural and racial equity, and many local leaders in the arts and broader Nashville community. I know that many of the commissioners do actually read all of the comments (as Comms Byrd and Haynes mentioned), but the silence from the Commission on the **subject matter** of those comments is a choice that harms the community you claim to serve.

I guess I should amend my first statement - I was **appalled** to learn in the meeting that due to Ian’s class as a Civil Service employee despite his elevated role, the Commission does not legally have the power to remove him from that position. That is truly surprising, as Metro HR have **repeatedly** said they

have no power over the Interim Exec Dir as that power lies with the Commission. Does Ian report to anyone? If he does not, that seems a really convenient time for him to retaliate against the whistleblower who has for years attempted to engage MA staff and Commission in the difficult conversations of equity work and who bravely and publicly called out the years of discrimination by Metro Arts leadership. And that's an awfully convenient way for this Commission to avoid accountability for the years of toxic leadership at Metro Arts that continues, even though the Metro Charter states you are all - as a governing body - legally responsible for the Executive Director.

I am disappointed that - despite the hard work that Ms. Blackman and Mr. Jones are doing with the staff and CARE - this Commission is happy to maintain the status quo. I am hopeful in the work that they are doing, especially in the priorities they have set out for the new E.D., but that hope is tempered by the knowledge of everything that has and continues to occur within this Commission and Metro Arts leadership.

However, I am hopeful because Chair Schmidt took the time to write a public comment to deflect his responsibility by reminding the public (as he has now done multiple times) that the Chair is not solely responsible for the E.D., but the entire Commission is responsible as you ALL appointed him to that role. I am **hopeful** because that statement should be a reminder to all 14 Commissioners that your silence indicates your support of Ian as Interim Executive Director (and for those who aren't brand new, Caroline) and your support of Ian's decision to fire Janine in retaliation for being a whistleblower, likely in violation of Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-21-301(1). I am **hopeful** because I know that not all 14 of you support that, despite your unwillingness or inability to speak against Chair Schmidt or Mr. Myers in a Commission meeting. I am hopeful because I will continue holding the entire Metro Arts Commission - all 14 of you - responsible for the lack of accountability in Metro Arts leadership. I don't expect this Commission to accept that responsibility (at least not all 14 of you, and therefore the whole body), but I am hopeful that you surprise me.

I am disappointed that this body as it currently exists has failed in its service to the community, yet I am hopeful at the possibility for change.

Thank you for your time - I now understand that you can't respond individually because that would indicate an opinion or action of the full Commission which is illegal under TN Open Meetings laws or some such, and that's fine. Just remember at your next meeting that the Chair - who you can remove or continue to support - is speaking for all 14 of you.

Alan Fey, district 17 resident
arts administrator

P.S. - As much as I would like to be present at the CARE meeting, I will not be able to be there. I am submitting this comment in lieu of my physical presence.

From: Sheri Nichols Bucy <ilovebucy@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 27, 2022 2:36 PM
To: Myers, Ian (Arts) <ian.Myers@nashville.gov>
Subject: Please Post

Dear Commissioners -

When I first became a commissioner my duties and responsibilities were somewhat blurred. I knew very little about Metro Arts. I kept thinking a seasoned commissioner would soon be in touch with me to “show me the ropes” and give me further guidance as to how to navigate my role as a new member.

I soon learned that mine was a baptism by fire. I’m thinking now that maybe my lack of a formal orientation was partially due to the oncoming storm that was roiling beneath the surface at the commission.

I had no idea.

Then I met Janine. She was the first staffer to approach me. I liked her immediately. She answered my many questions and helped me to better understand what was needed and required at board meetings.

When I became chair of the Grants and Funding Committee, Janine mentored me through the process with ease. I relied on her guidance and knowledge of the grants allocations. And aside from a few missteps, I was grateful for her professional expertise and also her friendship.

In light of Janine’s exit, I felt in my heart that I should say those kind words on her behalf.

Now, after having read the HR reports and all the public comments, I’m still unsure what happened exactly. Much of it is “he said, she said.” As is the case in these matters, the truth lies somewhere in between.

I want to be very clear. I harbor no hard feelings toward any staffer or any of my fellow commissioners. I respect, admire and genuinely like all of you. These are difficult times.

Doubtful that any of my words will change the outcome of what has already transpired, but I felt the need to let you know what was in my heart.

Thank you for all the hard work you do.

Sheri Nichols Bucy

Sent from my iPhone

Public Comment 7-21-22 Metro Arts Commission Meeting

Dear Commissioners,

I am submitting a public comment because I know that I will not be allowed to speak publicly.

I am looking forward to hearing you all have a meaningful conversation about this Commission's public comment policy. As you know, I was disappointed to discover that there was no policy in place and yet Chair Schmidt has been rigid in ensuring that no members of the public are allowed to speak (indeed, not even members of CARE). I would simply ask that you err on the side of hearing "too much" from the public as you craft this important tool of communication and accountability.

I am looking forward to hearing how this Commission has implemented the six action items approved at the February 3 Commission meeting - these were supposed to be "reviewed in 3 months time", and yet here we are mid-July with not one discussion of these items. And no, an E.D. search would not stop you from doing this - many of you are artists, I know you can chew gum and walk at the same time.

Lastly, I am looking forward to hearing how this Commission will address the intentional failure of leadership from Chair Jim Schmidt. I am aware that his term as Chair ends in September - that is still too long. He has intentionally stifled public engagement, discussion within this Commission, and any real desire to move forward in a progressive way despite Metro Arts' public comment to equity. As a reminder - he explicitly absolved himself of any responsibility in his June 16 public comment, stating that he merely runs the proceedings of Commission meetings and that "the whole Commission provides oversight of the ED, not just the chair". All 14 of you are responsible for the intentional inaction and dismissiveness that comes from your Chair. You can make a motion to remove him from the Chair and the Commission immediately, or you can continue your approval of his failed leadership on this Commission and in the greater Nashville arts community.

Sincerely,

Alan Fey

District 17 resident

freelance arts administrator