



MINUTES

Metro Arts Board of Commissioners

May 18, 2023, 12 p.m.

Metro Southeast Building

Antioch Conference Room

1417 Murfreesboro Pk.

Nashville, TN 37217

Commissioners: Matia Powell (Chair), Darek Bell, Sheri Nichols Bucy, Marianne Byrd, Will Cheek, Clarence Edward, Leah Dupree Love, Carol McCoy, Diana Perez, Paul Polycarpou, Campbell West, and Daniel Singh (*ex-officio*)

Commissioners Absent: Ellen Angelico (Vice Chair), Dexter Brewer (Secretary), Janet Kurtz, and Jim Schmidt

METRO ARTS MISSION:

Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

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| A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement | 12:00—12:05 |
| B. Public Comment | 12:05—12:20 |
| 1. Derek Whitaker | |
| i. Grants & Funding | |
| 1. He participated in the commission's review panel, which he had done once before around 10 years ago and found it terrifying. However, this time, with the support of Dana and Chuck, he felt empowered throughout the process. The process was fair and inclusive, with gentle reminders that helped him navigate it successfully. He was grateful for the opportunity to contribute to funding for the arts, as he is a lifelong artist who believes in their transformative power. He expressed his appreciation for making the application process accessible to both the public and the review panel. | |
| 2. Alan Fey | |
| i. Comments on Advocacy | |
| 1. He collaborates with several arts organizations throughout Nashville and feels encouraged by the recent emphasis on advocacy work during meetings. In the past two weeks, he has noticed a significant focus on advocating for the arts, which is a positive development. He is pleased to see that efforts are being made to secure funding for the arts. | |
| 3. AJ | |
| i. Comments on Diversity of the Grants Panel | |
| 1. A year ago, he volunteered with an arts organization to apply for a grant but found the panel to lack diversity and felt it was a generic representation. However, his recent participation on the Metro Arts | |

commission panel provided a different experience as he witnessed diversity among the commission, members, and staff. This exposure to diverse perspectives and backgrounds has been valuable. Drawing from his own children's experiences, he recognizes the significance of art education in shaping the trajectory of young lives.

C. Approval of Minutes: April 18, 2023

12:20—12:25

1. No motion was made on minutes due to them not being printed.

D. Featured Artist: Alex Wong

12:25—12:35

1. Alex Wong delivered a captivating performance of his song "Permission" that left a lasting impression on both the commission and all attendees. His remarkable talent and musicality were evident, and his performance was truly extraordinary.

E. Chair's Appointments to Committees

12:35—12:45

1. Commissioner West appointed to the Executive Committee
2. Commissioner Darek Bell and Commissioner Carol McCoy have been added to the Grants & Funding Committee.
3. Commissioner Darek Bell, Commissioner Janet Kurtz, and Commissioner Leah Dupree Love have been appointed to the Advocacy Committee.
4. Commissioner Carol McCoy raised the question: Why are community members only included in certain committees, and not others?
 - i. In response, Commissioner Powell explained that the composition of committees was established in the charter based on the original formation and the specific needs at that time.
 - ii. Daniel Singh then weighed in, emphasizing that conflicts of interest could arise in grant-related committees, as individuals applying for grants may need to constantly recuse themselves from decision-making. However, he emphasized that community input is highly valued in all aspects of their work, as long as there are no conflicts of interest involved. He suggested that this issue could be discussed further during the ongoing cultural planning process, and that committee structures could be formulated differently in the future. To compensate, they have implemented a public grant editing process.
 - iii. Daniel concluded by encouraging open dialogue and questioning during the cultural planning phase to address such matters and shape future committees accordingly.

F. Committee on Anti-Racism and Equity (Diana Perez)

12:45—12:50

1. Committee Message
 - i. Insufficient funding in the arts has led to a divisive environment, where white organizations and Black, Indigenous, and organizations of color are pitted against each other in a zero-sum game. To rectify historical injustices and promote equity in the arts, collaboration becomes essential, and there is a pressing need to meet the increased funding requirements.
2. Special Called Meeting
 - i. Last week, CARE held a special meeting with Hillombo Consulting, with a primary focus on equity.
3. A New Recommended Framework

- i. CARE proposed a framework for artists and organizations to engage with Council Members, suggesting the utilization of surplus funds and funds allocated for public art projects in the Participatory Budget process to increase funding for Metro Arts.
- ii. They also recommend implementing this framework to the Commission, aiming to secure full funding for local artists and address historical inequities.
- 4. Personal Anecdote from Chair Angelico
 - i. Chair Angelico actively participated in Listening Sessions and a Staff Retreat, showing strong engagement. At the retreat, Ellen was excited by the enthusiastic staff participation and extensive discussions on equity, inclusion, transparency, and process accessibility.
 - ii. Additionally, Chair Angelico collaborated with staff members to strategize updating the bylaws for increased transparency and inclusion.

G. Public Art Committee (Campbell West)

12:50 —1:05

- 1. Action Items
 - i. Old Hickory Community Center Public Art (Finalist) — *A motion to approve of Gordon Huether as the artist finalist for the Old Hickory Community Center public art project was offered by Commissioners McCoy and seconded Commissioner Cheek.*
 - ii. Arthur Avenue Public Art Lighting Project (Semi-Finalist Artists for Invitational, Selection Panel) —
 - 1. *A motion to approve potential artist slate for invitational call for the Arthur Avenue Underpass Public Art Project was offered by Commissioner McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Polycarpou.*
 - 2. *A motion to approve selection panel slate for invitational call for the Arthur Avenue Underpass Public Art Project was offered by Commissioner Perez and seconded by Commissioner Nichols Bucy.*

H. Grants and Funding Committee (Sheri Bucy)

1:05—1:10

- 1. Committee Message
 - i. Sheri passionately appealed to all the commissioners, urging them to advocate for additional funding. She expressed the challenge of having more approved applicants than the available funding can support. To streamline the process, Sheri introduced a concise 35-second elevator speech that she recommended all commissioners use when making this plea.
- 2. FY24 Grants Program Operating Support Updates
 - i. Daniel provided an update on the current situation, sharing that 92 submissions were received, with 88 of them meeting the qualifications for review. The total operating grant request for FY24 amounts to \$5,066,380, representing a substantial 60% growth.
 - ii. Notably, 34 new organizations have submitted proposals, out of which 32 have budgets under \$500,000. This growth in the micro-medium categories aligns with the goal of equitable funding, making a stronger case to the council due to the available data.
 - iii. Regarding THRIVE, there has been a significant increase in proposals, rising from 22 last year to 156 this year, marking a 600% surge. If all proposals were fully funded, approximately 2 million would be required.

- iv. To achieve these results, the staff has conducted over 55 one-on-one clinics and more than 100 phone calls, putting in significant effort to gather and process these numbers.
 - 3. FY23 Community-Led Grant Editing Process Updates
 - i. The Listening Sessions saw a remarkable turnout with 128 participants, marking the highest level of engagement in the past five years. This significant participation greatly contributes to centering the community's voice and ensuring their perspectives are heard.
- I. Advocacy Committee (Will Cheek) 1:10—1:25
- 1. Comparison Study
 - i. We are advocating for a budget allocation of \$12 million, which is 1% of the \$30 million arts budget.
 - ii. The budget chair is suggesting a revised budget from the Mayor's proposal.
 - iii. The first work session will take place before May 25th, and we urge participation from the public budget committee and council members.
 - iv. A recent study conducted by Metro Arts revealed that the arts budgets of major cities suffered when integrated into the overall budget.
 - v. Nashville's commitment to the arts is currently ranked low on this list. It is crucial to enhance our dedication to the arts to uplift our position in this regard.
 - 2. Commissioner West inquired about whether it was permissible to ask if any commissioners had relationships with the Budget Chairpersons.
 - i. Mattia proposed having a point person create a proposal for making the ask on behalf of the commission.
 - ii. Councilmember Van Reese was mentioned as the individual making the ask to Councilmember Rhodes.
 - iii. Daniel suggested that Berkley Ellen and Van Reese could approach Councilmember Rhodes about the matter.
 - iv. Commissioner West and Commissioner Bucy committed to contacting Nancy and Berkeley respectively to inform them.
 - v. Daniel further suggested reaching out to other caucuses such as the Women's, LGBT, and Men's Caucuses.
 - 3. Council Advocacy
 - i. A proposal is underway to establish the Advocacy Committee as a standing committee. This dedicated committee will prioritize and focus on advocacy efforts, recognizing the significance of such work for local artists.
- J. Ethics, Conflict of Interests and Open Meetings Requirements 1:25—1:45
- 1. Metro Legal representative Macy Amos delivered a presentation outlining the essential guidelines that the Commission Board and Metro Staff must adhere to.
 - 2. This included a training session to ensure all members understand their ethical obligations, such as recusal when necessary, disclosing pertinent information about agenda items, and complying with the regulations of the Open Meetings Act.
- K. Executive Director's Report 1:45—1:55
- 1. Hiring
 - i. Efforts have been made to implement Andrea Blackman's recommendations, which span five pages, resulting in progress. Multiple staff retreats have taken

place to foster unity among affinity groups and align internal practices with external restorative work.

- ii. However, the recruitment process has posed challenges, including difficulty in finding a suitable recruiter. Fortunately, someone has been secured for this role to ensure full staffing by the upcoming fall. Currently, there is a shortage of six positions that still need to be filled.

2. Cultural Planning

- i. Upcoming activities include public-facing town halls, meetings, and the search for a co-chair, which will keep everyone busy.
- ii. Efforts are being made to organize all commissions and committees to convene on a single day, allowing external facilitators to align vision and goals with staff, thoroughly address needs, and set a common goal. The aim is to present the budget ask during the Commission meeting on August 17th.
- iii. On June 14th, there will be a Mayoral Forum held at the Children's Theatre, focusing on equity and the arts. Attendance is encouraged, and spreading the word is greatly appreciated.

L. New/Old Business

1:55—2:00

1. Joint Commission and C.A.R.E.
 - i. The meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2023, from 9 am to 2 pm.
2. Next Meeting
 - i. The Next Commission Meeting will take place on July 20th.

M. Adjourn Meeting

2:00—2:05

1. Chair Mattia Powell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM.