



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

MINUTES NOTES

Metro Arts Board of Commissioners

August 17, 2023, 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Southeast Community Center

5260 Hickory Hollow Pkwy

Antioch, TN 37013

If you have any questions, please e-mail arts@nashville.gov.

There is a video recording of this meeting; [please click here for the video.](#)

Commissioners Present: Matia Powell (Chair), Ellen Angelico (Vice Chair), Dexter Brewer (Secretary), Darek Bell, Sheri Nichols Bucy, Marianne Byrd, Will Cheek, Clarence Edward, Janet Kurtz, Leah Dupree Love, Carol McCoy, Diana Perez, Paul Polycarpou, Jim Schmidt, Campbell West, and Daniel Singh (Executive Director, ex-officio)

Commissioners Absent: Campbell West, Will Cheek

Guest: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh (Metro Legal)

Featured Artists: Thaxton Waters, Alayna Anderson, Cynthia Harris and Yanira Vissepo

METRO ARTS MISSION:

Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

A. Featured Artist, Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

9:30

1. Chair Matia Powell called the meeting to order at **9:40** AM, all participants were welcomed, and the land acknowledgment was read.
2. The featured artist for this segment was **Thaxton Waters**. They shared their **spoken word**, which is integral to the Nashville art scene.

B. Public Comment

10:35-10:45

1. **Christien Hall**: Discussed the importance of conversations about grants, funding, and equity within Metro Arts. Emphasized the value of micro organizations and the need for change, commending Daniel Singh's efforts. Mentioned that the dissenting voices have been primarily from white individuals.
2. **Kathy Drew**: Reiterated concerns about equity and reaching underserved populations with tax dollars. Encouraged Metro Arts to be on the right side of history.
3. **Drew Ogle**: Recounted discussions from a grants committee meeting, addressing statements made by Daniel Singh and Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. Advocated for artists and expressed frustration at being labeled racist for advocating for their community.
4. **Benjamin (From Southern Word)**: Thanked staff and emphasized the importance of sustaining artists of color. Raised questions about the impact of the changes and implementation process, expressing concern about potential negative consequences and uncertainty.
5. **Rachel (Thrive Recipient)**: Shared her experience with the Thrive program, highlighting the positive impact of her project on the community and underscoring the importance of fair compensation for artists.
6. **Lydia**: Representing a nonprofit, discussed efforts to empower women in music and shared stories about young Egyptian girls aspiring to become songwriters.
7. **Brandon "Sunni" Corlew**: Presented a written comment that was not further summarized in the provided transcript.
8. **Shabaz Larkin**: Delivered a personal monologue about his background and identity.

C. Featured Artist

10:45-10:50

1. The featured artist for this segment was **Alayna Anderson, the co-founder of Nashville Women and Jazz and Founder and Director of Nashville**

Musicians for Change. They shared their **song**, which is integral to the Nashville music scene.

D. **Conversation with Commission and CARE**

10:50-11:15

Commissioner Chair Matia Powell mentioned that Metro Legal has invited a re-discussion about a prior vote involving race and support for BIPOC organizations, which has jeopardized our position. This prompts the need to rescind the previous vote, as recommended by Metro Arts, and initiate a fresh conversation on reallocating funding for a specific grant in line with our organization's priorities.

The Legal Department of Metro Nashville has suggested that the Grants and Funding decision made on July 20th be rescinded and re-voted upon, given that the original conversation around the vote was centered on race-related considerations.

To recap, in the previous meeting, we voted on selecting a funding model for scenarios to prioritize funding. We secured enough votes to endorse scenario A. Following this model selection, we voted on allocations within each funding category (THRIVE, micro, medium, large, etc.).

Commissioner Dexter Brewer motioned to revoke the voting structure adopted in the previous meeting, specifically Scenario A, the funding distribution/grant allocation model from the July 20th Commission Meeting. Commissioner Ellen Angelico seconded the motion, and it was subsequently approved.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell inquired about the need for discussion before proceeding with the votes, prompting Commissioner Leah Dupree Love to request a recorded explanation for Metro Legal's decision to rescind and revote. Daniel Singh clarified that while the discussions encompassed various factors such as zip codes, individual artists, council districts, and organization sizes, the emphasis on race prompted concerns about potential legal repercussions. Commissioner Jim Schmidt requested a direct explanation from legal, and Tessa Ortiz-Marsh from Metro Legal reiterated the same rationale previously presented by Daniel Singh.

The revoking of votes for the allocations for each of the following organization categories continued:

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind the vote on THRIVE funding allocation from the July 20th Commission Meeting, which was seconded by Commissioner Jim Schmidt. The motion was passed.

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind our vote to approve funding for micro organizations in alignment with Scenario A, which was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind our vote to approve funding for small organizations in alignment with Scenario A, which was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind our vote to approve funding for medium organizations in alignment with Scenario A, which was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind our vote to approve funding for midsize organizations in alignment with Scenario A, which was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

Commissioner Ellen Angelico initiated a motion to rescind our vote to approve funding for large organizations in alignment with Scenario A, which was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

E. Lunch Break

11:15-11:20

1. The lunch was provided by **Vibrant Meals** (formerly Eat Well Nashville), we thank them for their hard work, delicious food, and service.

F. Featured Artist

11:20-

11:25

3. The featured artist for this segment was **Cynthia Harris**. They shared their **art**, which is integral to the Nashville community.

G. Grants and Funding Committee (Committee Chair Sheri Bucy)

11:20-11:25

1. In a concise statement, Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy, the chair of the Grants and Funding committee, expressed her brevity after reviewing

clarifications on scenarios one through five. She highlighted her role in proposing the committee's endorsement of scenario one (also called scenario A).

The Grants and Funding Committee recommends Scenario 1 (also called Scenario A).

Chair Matia Powell initiated a motion to accept the recommendation from the Grants & Funding Committee, which was seconded by Commissioner Dexter Brewer. The motion was passed. Chair Powell Opened the floor for discussion.

After the motion passed, Commissioner Matia Powell initiated a discussion, during which Commissioner Marianne Byrd read a prepared statement. Commissioner Marianne Byrd expressed her concern about the complexities of the funding formulas and the communications she received. She highlighted the commitment to fairness and equity, referencing the committee for anti-racism and equity. Commissioner Marianne Byrd supported scenario 4, specifically leaning towards options favoring smaller organizations and individual artists. She emphasized the importance of honoring commitments made in previous discussions, aiming for equity to support smaller art organizations that have a meaningful impact. Commissioner Marianne Byrd urged caution in making promises for the future to maintain the commission's integrity and not cause irreparable harm.

During the discussion, Commissioner Jim Schmidt expressed concerns about promises made and questioned whether Metro Legal's caveat about holding organizations harmless was clearly communicated. Executive Director Daniel Singh clarified the administration's discussions with Metro Arts. Commissioner Schmidt also highlighted the challenges of budgeting and the potential pitfalls of allocating funds before knowing the budget amount. He supported an alternative to Scenario One. Commissioner Paul Polycarpou voiced apprehensions about promises and the need to implement changes carefully. He advocated for a gradual transition to prevent causing harm. Commissioner Jim Schmidt supported

Scenario Four, considering its incremental approach while emphasizing the importance of change.

Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy acknowledged the emotional public input and urged commissioners to consider both sides. She supported Scenario One but emphasized the need for future changes. Chair Commissioner Matia Powell noted the extended discussions on reallocating funding and the importance of moving forward. She advocated for prioritizing small organizations and individual artists to promote inclusion. Commissioner Ellen Angelico emphasized her commitment to leaving a positive impact and supported Scenario One for its community coalition-building potential.

Commissioner Diana Perez highlighted the long-standing discussions on funding reallocation and supported Scenario One in response to the community's needs. Commissioner Clarence Edwards stressed the significance of supporting small and marginalized artists. He supported Scenario One to address the needs of underserved communities. Commissioner Ellen Angelico noted her preference for Scenario One due to its inclusive potential.

Commissioner Darek Bell reminded the commission of the challenges of making everyone happy and encouraged focusing on the larger picture. He urged unity in the upcoming challenges and emphasized the need for collective leadership.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell acknowledged the passion in the room and highlighted the commission's commitment to fulfilling the long-discussed changes in funding. She stressed the importance of prioritizing micro and small organizations while recognizing all entities' difficulties. The discussion reflected differing perspectives on balancing promises, gradual transitions, equity, and the urgent needs of various artistic entities.

Commissioner Carol McCoy initiated a motion to call to question the vote, which Commissioner Darek Bell seconded. The motion was passed.

The voting began, and the motion for Scenario 1 was voted on by 5 Commissioners. A total of 8 commissioners opposed Scenario 1. There were no abstentions. The motion failed.

Commissioner Jim Schmidt initiated a motion to approve Scenario 4, which was seconded by Commissioner Dexter Brewer.

Commissioner Carol McCoy initiated a motion to call to question the vote. All were in favor, The motion was passed.

The voting to approve Scenario 4 began, and 8 Commissioners voted for the motion for Scenario 4. A total of 5 commissioners opposed Scenario 4. There were no abstentions. The motion passed.

The voting on the allocations began:

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell called for a motion to approve the THRIVE funding based on the allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Jim Schmidt initiated a motion to approve funding for THRIVE funding (individual artists and small organizations) in alignment with Scenario 4 at \$875,382.50, which Commissioner Paul Polycarpou seconded. The motion was passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell entertained a motion to approve the micro-funding based on the grant allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Marianne Byrd initiated a motion to approve funding for micro-funding in alignment with Scenario 4, which Commissioner Darek Bell seconded. The motion was passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell entertained a motion to approve the small based on the grant allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Jim Schmidt initiated a motion to approve funding for small in alignment with Scenario 4, which Commissioner Paul Polycarpou seconded. The motion was passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell called a motion to approve the small based on the grant allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Dexter Brewer initiated a motion to approve funding for medium in alignment with Scenario 4, which Commissioner Marianne Byrd seconded. The motion was passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell entertained a motion to approve the mid-size based on the grant allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Marianne Byrd initiated a motion to approve funding for mid-size in alignment with Scenario 4, which Commissioner Dexter Brewer seconded. The motion was passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell entertained a motion to approve the large based on the grant allocations in Scenario 4. Commissioner Carol McCoy initiated a motion to approve funding for large in alignment with Scenario 4, which Commissioner Jim Schmidt seconded. There were four recusals due to conflict of interest (Commissioners: Sheri Bucy, Janet Kurtz, Marianne Byrd, and Will Cheek). The motion was passed.

H. Public Art Committee (Committee Chair Campbell West) 11:20-11:25

2. Main Library Gallery (Location, Budget, and Recruitment) (ACTION ITEM)

- a. The discussion notes outline the action item regarding the Main Library Gallery's partnership with Nashville Public Library. The proposal involves programming for the mezzanine gallery at the Main Branch of Nashville, featuring three temporary exhibits annually, including the Lending Library Preview Exhibit and two curated exhibits based on a community-selected theme. The proposed budget is capped at \$50,000 from Temporary Funds, covering curator and artist fees, art handling, installation, and exhibit graphics. The opportunity is open to curators and artists residing or working in Davidson County. The call for submissions and community engagement would be widely distributed through various channels, including visual arts grantee organizations, targeted emails, Metro Arts, and NPL media.

The Public Art Committee recommends approval of the Nashville Public Library Main Gallery Temporary Art Exhibits proposal for 2024, open to Davidson County curators and artists and with a project budget not to exceed \$50,000 (temporary funds). Chair Matia Powell called for a motion to approve the Nashville Public Library Main Gallery Temporary Art Exhibit proposal for 2024, open to Davidson County curators and artists and with a project budget not to exceed \$50,000 (temporary funds). The motion was initiated by Commissioner Jim Schmidt and seconded by Commissioner Dexter Brewer. The motion was passed.

3. Lending Library (Locations, Budgets, and Recruitment) (ACTION ITEM)
 - a. The recap presents an existing action item involving a partnership with the Nashville Public Library from 2020-2021. This initiative focused on purchasing and installing wall-hung artworks using a percentage of funds for the city's collection. Sixty artworks were installed at Madison and Southeast regional branches, supporting local artists affected by the tornado and COVID-19. The proposal suggests expanding this partnership to new library branches, acquiring 60-80 artworks for installation. The acquisition budget is increased to \$200,000, with purchases directly from artists at a maximum price of \$2,000. Artists based in Davidson County are eligible, with up to three submissions allowed per artist and only one artwork purchased from each selected artist. The call for submissions will be widely distributed to visual arts grantee organizations through targeted emails and across Metro Arts media platforms.

The Public Arts Committee recommended the approval of Lending Library Phase 2 at East, Edgehill, Edmondson Pike, Green Hills, Hermitage, and Old Hickory branches, open to Davidson County artists and with a project budget not to exceed \$200,000 (Percent fund). Chair Matia Powell initiated a motion to approve Lending Library Phase 2 at East, Edgehill, Edmondson Pike, Green Hills, Hermitage, and Old Hickory branches, open to Davidson County artists and with a project budget not to exceed \$200,000 (Percent fund). The motion was initiated by Commissioner Dexter Brewer and was seconded by Commissioner Sheri Nichols Bucy. The motion was passed.

4. Permanent Supportive Housing (*Selection Panel*) (ACTION ITEM)
 - a. This permanent supportive housing project is located at 110 Jo Johnston Avenue. The project encompasses a 5-story structure with 90 housing units, an on-site clinic, caseworker offices, and laundry facilities. Bell Construction and Moody Nolan architects collaborate with stakeholders like Metro General Services, Metro Social Services, and MDHA. The artwork location is set on a retaining wall at the corner of Jo Johnston and 1st Avenue, potentially extending to planters. The project is expected to be completed by early 2024.
 - b. The Selection Panel Slate:
 - i. Megan Jordan (artist)
 - ii. Alisha Haddock (artist)

- iii. Briana Buford
- iv. Jonathan Sewell
- v. Kate Giordan
- vi. Cristalynne Dupree
- vii. Nicole Minyard
- viii. Jesse Call
- ix. April Calvin – Metro Office of Homeless Services (site sponsor)
- c. The Selection Panel Slate’s Non-Voting Members
 - i. Chair from PAC, ex-officio
 - ii. Metro Procurement Rep
 - iii. Design Team

The Staff recommends approval of the selection panel slate for the Permanent Supportive Housing Public Art Project. Chair Commissioner Matia Powell initiated a motion to approve the selection panel slate for the Permanent Supportive Housing Public Art Project. The motion was initiated by Commissioner Jim Schmidt and was seconded by Commissioner Dexter Brewer. The motion was passed.

- 5. Mural Assistance Program (*Daniel Singh*) (ACTION ITEM)
 - a. The Mural Assistance Program initiative stems from a 2018 recommendation in the Public Art Community Investment Plan. Originally, murals had short lifespans, but advancements in techniques, like printing on durable materials, have led to murals lasting 10-20 years. The Thrive process generated unexpected mural applications, prompting a need to align mural funding with public arts. Limited capacity delayed the program's launch, and other initiatives like NDOT's \$5,000 mural project and Participatory Budget efforts have led to uneven compensation for artists across departments. Seeking to address this disparity, Metro Arts proposes engaging a consultant with a \$25,000 budget to establish a mural arts program, which has received approval from the Public Art Committee. The study's funding will be sourced from the Public Art percent fund and not from the Grants pool of money for next year or in general.

- b. The Staff and Public Arts Committee proposes the approval of 31 Mural Arts Projects that originated from the Thrive initiative. The recommendation is based on the growth of techniques enabling murals to endure for over a decade. Inspiration is drawn from peers like NDOT's beautification efforts, Participatory Budget initiatives, and the Civic Design Center, which have progressed successfully. This approach also allows us to investigate digital options for expanding our collection and generating ongoing revenue for the artists involved.

The Public Arts Committee recommends approving the development of a Mural Assistance Program by hiring a mural consultant for up to \$25,000 and a community mural advocates panel (Percent fund). Chair Commissioner Matia Powell entertained a motion to approve the development of the Mural Assistance Program by hiring a mural consultant for up to \$25,000 and a community mural advocates panel (Percent fund). The motion was initiated by Commissioner Darek Bell and was seconded by Commissioner Carol McCoy. The motion was passed.

6. Bloomberg Grant Application

- a. Daniel informed us that on September 8th, there will be a finalist meeting with the Mayor and Bloomberg as we are among the 17 cities shortlisted for a million-dollar grant. If successful, this would entail increased efforts on our part, but it's an exciting prospect. The artist, Stephanie Pruitt Gaines, formerly a member of the public art committee and the commission, is collaborating with Judge Sheila Calloway to gather 10,000 fragments of poetry. These fragments will be woven into temporary public art installations according to Bloomberg Grant guidelines, aiming to engage the community and pave the way for Judge Calloway's Nashville youth campus for empowerment.

I. Approval of Minutes: July 20, 2023

10:45-10:50

Vice-Chair Commissioner Ellen Angelico offered a motion to approve the minutes from the July 14th Executive Committee Meeting, Commissioner Janet Kurtz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Chair Commissioner Matia Powell made a motion to table the July 20th Commission minutes in lieu of needing an amendment to remove Commissioner Dexter Brewer from Item C, Section 4, Page 5. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dexter Brewer. The minutes will be amended and approved at the next commission meeting.

Commissioner Dexter Brewer offered a motion to approve the minutes from the August 11th Full Commission Meeting, Commissioner Ellen Angelico seconded the motion. The motion passed.

J. Chair’s Appointments to Public Art Committee 10:45-10:50

1. Chair Matia Powell appointed the following commissioners to the Public Art Committee for FY24:
 - a. Dr. Cara Robinson
 - i. Department Chair of the Department of Social Work and Urban Studies in the College of Public Service at Tennessee State University
 - ii. 3-year term to Public Art Committee

K. Nominating Committee (Vice Chair Ellen Angelico) 10:45-10:50

1. Officer Recommendations
 - a. It was highlighted that officer recommendations for the upcoming term, starting November 1, 2023, are underway. As per the bylaws, officer elections are scheduled for September, following the submission of final recommendations by the Nominating Committee to the Commission. Currently, there are no officer recommendations except for the proposal to promote Commissioner Ellen Angelico as Chair for the next term. The roles of Vice Chair and Secretary still need to be filled within the committee.

The Nominating Committee recommends the following slate of officers: Commissioner Ellen Angelico as Chair for terms starting November 1, 2023. Chair Commissioner Matia Powell initiated a motion to approve Commissioner Ellen Angelico as Chair for a term starting November 1, 2023. Commissioner Dexter Brewer seconded. The motion was passed.

L. Executive Director’s Report 10:45-10:50

1. **Hiring:** Daniel reported on challenges with hiring due to changes in the pay plan and budget scenarios. Several open positions were put on hold, and despite recent openings, a hiring freeze was announced due to budget constraints.
2. **Project Delays:** The hiring freeze has led to project delays and ongoing capacity issues within the department. There are concerns about the ability to execute planned projects and meet timelines effectively.
3. **Capacity Issues:** Staff capacity remains a significant concern, exacerbated by the hiring freeze. Projects and timelines are impacted, and the department's ability to maintain operations is compromised.
4. **Cultural Planning:** Launching a cultural planning initiative is planned, but the current staffing challenges may impact its implementation. The department is considering pausing this initiative unless HR lifts the hiring freeze to ensure adequate capacity for its successful execution.
5. **Commissioner Involvement:** Commissioners discussed potential actions to address the hiring freeze, aiming to influence decisions and mitigate its impact on departmental operations and projects. Updates on this matter are expected after a meeting with HR.

M. Featured Artist

11:20-11:25

1. The featured artist for this segment was **Yanira Vissepo, a Puerto Rican artist and educator living and working in Nashville, Tennessee**, as a self-taught artist creating vibrant collage tapestries using techniques such as printmaking and hand embroidery. She shared their **information about her art and past accolades**, which are integral to the Nashville art scene.

N. New/Old Business

11:20-11:25

1. Commissioner Carol McCoy raised two points during the discussion. Firstly, she proposed implementing a policy to limit public comment time to five minutes, citing the need for efficiency and comparison to the Metro Council's practice. Daniel responded that a new law mandates a written policy for such limitations, and they are working on establishing it while aiming for a balanced approach.
2. Commissioner Carol McCoy's second concern focused on grant contracts. She suggested including a provision in these contracts to secure rights to the artwork funded by the Commission, ensuring Metro Arts' protection. Daniel explained the complexities of owning intellectual property and

mentioned that the industry does not handle copyright that way. Matia highlighted that this matter should be looked into by Legal, which Tessa Ortiz-Marsh from Metro Legal agreed to explore further and present at the next meeting.

3. The next meeting is October 19, 2023.

O. Adjourn Meeting

11:25-11:30

1. Chair Commissioner Matia Powell adjourned the meeting at **4:14** PM, with Commissioner **Ellen Angelico** seconding the motion for adjournment.