



Minutes
Metro Arts Board of Commissioners
November 16, 2023, 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Metro Office Building
Development Services Conference Room
800 President Ronald Reagan Way/800 2nd Ave S
Nashville, TN 37210

Commissioners Present: Ellen Angelico (Chair), Diana Perez (Secretary), Sheri Nichols Bucy, Marianne Byrd, Will Cheek, Clarence Edward, Carol McCoy, Paul Polycarpou, Jim Schmidt, Campbell West, and Daniel Singh (Executive Director, *ex-officio*)

Commissioners Absent: Dexter Brewer, Janet Kurtz, Darek Bell, & Leah Dupree Love (Vice Chair)

Metro Staff: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh (Metro Legal), Lora Fox (Metro Legal), Anne-Leslie Owens, Atilio Murga, Jesse Ross, Christiana Afotey, Daryn Jackson, Claudia Lawhon, Chuck Beard, Jonathan Saad, Ian Myers (virtual), Marysa LaRowe, Asia Pyron. Jessica Ingram.

Featured Artists: Rev. Davie Tucker, Commissioner Maryam Abolfazli

METRO ARTS MISSION:
Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

- A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement
1. Chair Angelico called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. She welcomed everyone and directed members of the public to sign in, designating if they wished to speak during public comment. Chair Angelico led the reading of the land acknowledgement.
- B. Public Comment
1. Chair Angelico expressed appreciation for the public's interest and commitment to Metro Arts. There were several public comments received through the online portal prior to this meeting that was shared with the Commission in their Commission packets prior to the Commission meeting.
 2. Executive Director Singh introduced all the new hires on staff publicly.
 3. Claudia Lawhon introduced each of the following Public Comments:
 - i. Celine Thaxton, Chatterbird founder, spoke about Grants.
 - ii. M. Simone Boyd, North Nashville resident, spoke about funding and staff operation concerns.
 - iii. Lydia Yousief, Elmahaba Center, spoke about the MHRC and process concerns.
 - iv. Sangeetha Ekambaram, Nashville artist, spoke about focus on equity via Grants.

v. Lee Carrol, Nashville Opera staff, spoke about the MHRC.

C. Arts Spotlight: Art Up Nashville, Duncan McDaniel

1. Public Art Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens introduced Duncan McDaniel and Art Up Nashville. Duncan spoke about his creative history and professional stories about his company and his art.

D. Featured Artists: Friends Life Community

1. Artist and Organizational Support Coordinator Chuck Beard introduced the four artists and Friends Life Community staff who were commissioned via Friends Life Community to create four original artworks for the four Commissioners who officially rolled off the Commission after this current meeting. The artists were Caroline Walker, Stormy, Emma Irby, and Lauren B. The prompt they were given for the commissions were, “What does art mean to you?” Jennifer and Bridgette spoke a little about the project and introduced each artist and their artwork to give to the Commissioners in person.

E. Legal Update on MHRC Complaint

1. Lara Fox updated the situation with the MHRC so that Derrick Smith talks to the HRC and Tessa Ortiz-Marsh talks with Metro Arts to confirm various jurisdictions in this case.
 - i. The HRC complaint has nothing to do with the Grants funding process.
 - ii. Questions about private counsel was directed to Metro Legal.

F. MHRC Update: Rev. Davie Tucker and Commissioner Maryam Abolfazli

1. Commissioner Maryam Abolfazli spoke briefly about a lot of things not working at various levels, but the HRC is only talking about the specific complaint. She talked about the Executive Committee that meets once a month and then everything else goes to the staff. She said all the meetings are recorded and are online. Reminded everyone to let the process take course and that their staff are working on this. Ultimately, the mission of the HRC is the dignity for all Nashvillians, that all parties are heard, and that equity is upheld no matter what happens.
2. Rev. Davie Tucker spoke about the mission of HRC. He then recapped the history of the Grants within the official complaint and giving context to updates from Metro Legal. This Commission does have the power to get outside counsel if the findings are not agreeable to the HRC findings regarding Title VI. Ultimately, the HRC will issue an official opinion. Rev. Davie Tucker gave his opinions regarding race and discrimination surrounding the legal context of this issue, referencing Supreme Court rulings. He also went into the personal opinions of the nature of this entire situation ongoing, stating historical notes and timelines with Metro Arts.
3. Commissioner Edward asked how the current investigation will affect the Commissioners and even other Commissioners who will not be on Commission moving forward.
4. Rev. Davie Tucker mentioned that it is now an inquiry and not an investigation, but the District Attorney’s office would do the actual investigation. The HRC goal is to mediate an outcome for both parties moving forward.
5. Commissioner Schmidt asked if the impact of the change of the vote will be in consideration surrounding the investigation.
6. Rev. Davie Tucker clarified who wrote the complaints and what they are wanting.

G. Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity

1. Chair Angelico spoke on behalf of CARE from a recent meeting that there be a recommendation that CARE's charter be in line with all of the Commission's By-Laws and charter. CARE also recommended the two-day equity training with Commissioners and Staff early this Spring to take place too.
2. Chair Angelico mentioned all the recommendations from the Executive Committee meeting that took place prior to this meeting with the following suggestions:
 - i. It was recommended that an orientation with HR with Executive Director Singh very soon. They also mentioned a more regular budget report needed soon too. And, finally, more advice is needed on better relationship building with other programs and organizations.

H. Public Art Committee

1. Looby Community Center Mural Public Art, Finalist Recommendation
 - i. Public Art Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens gave a full recap of the participatory budget project involving the Lobby Community Center Mural Public Art project. She explained how the budget takes care of all the Metro Arts responsibilities in the entire project from start to finish. She explained the process of how the panel came to their recommendations and then also recommended by PAC.
 - ii. Commissioner Edward asked how the artists who were not selected in the process were informed about it and future opportunities.
 - iii. Public Art Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens clarified the process and mentioned that future discussions would be ongoing with new Public Art Manager Jessica Ingram and artists.

A motion to approve Creative Girls Rock as artist finalist and Omari Booker as alternate for the Looby Community Center mural public art project was made by Commissioner Byrd and seconded by Commissioner Polycarpou. Approval was unanimous and the motion passed.

2. Permanent Supportive Housing, Finalist Recommendation
 - i. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens gave a full recap of the project with General Services regarding the Permanent Supportive Housing project at 110 Jo Johnston Avenue. The artwork will be on the retaining wall on location. There were 19 eligible applicants, and the panels chose and PAC recommended Omari Booker as finalist and alternate as Queen Bee Ink.

A motion to approve Omari Booker as artist finalist and Queen Bee Ink for the Permanent Supportive Housing public art project was made by Commissioner Byrd and seconded by Commissioner Bucy. Approval was unanimous and the motion passed.

3. Lending Library, Revised Locations and Schedule Recommendation
 - i. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens gave a full recap of the Lending Library project and revisions recommended on locations due to ongoing conversations with the Public Library.

- ii. Commissioner Bucy asked are their packaging concerns about the artwork as it gets checked out from libraries.
- iii. Chair Angelico said they have careful packaging for all orders.
- iv. Commissioner Perez asked if the call for Lending Library is open to all Davidson County artists.
- v. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens clarified the guidelines.

A motion to approve change in Lending Library Phase 2 locations to now include Donelson, East, Green Hills, Hermitage, and Old Hickory branches was made by Commissioner Schmidt and seconded by Commissioner Cheek. Approval was unanimous and the motion passed.

- 4. Donelson Library-Interior Artwork-Sitework Budget Recommendation
 - i. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens gave a full recap of the Donelson Library-Interior Artwork-Sitework and Budget involved. There were example images shown from various angles from the inside and out. She then explained how Metro Arts supports the artist and the artwork throughout the entire process and beyond. For this project, there was more budget needed to complete the approved final design.
 - ii. Commissioner McCoy asked for finance clarifications in the process and where the new money comes from on this matter.
 - iii. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens clarified the percent funds for the Public Art projects.
 - iv. Ian Myers also explained more of the percent fund budget and process.
 - v. Commissioner McCoy read a lot of personal notes with questions about emails and being heard.
 - vi. Commissioner Byrd explained their understanding of this project.
 - vii. Commissioner Schmidt explained historical context of Public Art funds.

A motion to approve additional sitework budget up to \$25,000 for the Donelson Library public art project was made by Commissioner Schmidt and seconded by Commissioner Polycarpou. Approval was unanimous and the motion passed.

- 5. Temporary Art on Metro Property Guidelines Amendment Recommendation
 - i. Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens moved to defer this Action Item to the next Commission meeting due to time constraints.

I. Grants and Funding Committee

- 1. Action Items
- 2. Updates
 - i. Executive Director Singh explained the reasons about the timelines for FY25 Grant processes being moved up so the calendar and the call is better to get to the Mayor for the budget asks.
 - ii. Executive Director Singh explained how the Thrive and Operating Grants funds have gone out to date.
 - iii. Commissioner Schmidt asked how the funds for Thrive and Operating Grants have been communicated to the public about contracts and the Grants.

- iv. Grants Manager Jonathan Saad explained the historical process regarding timelines and emails that went out to artists and art organizations about funds. He also spoke about how the funds may change depending on the time the funds are available to Metro Arts from Metro Finance, but the percentages will stay the same from the awards.
- v. Commissioner McCoy explained her take on contracts and government funds.
- vi. Commissioner Schmidt suggested that Metro Arts has better communication about context of the contracts and grants moving forward.

J. Chair's Updates and Committee Appointments

- 1. Chair Angelico mentioned the update about Carlton Wilkinson joining the Public Art Committee
- 2. Chair Angelico also mentioned they would like to have someone take their role as Chair of CARE moving forward.

K. Executive Director's Report

- 1. Hiring Update
 - i. Executive Director Singh updated everyone about the newly hired positions and onboarding processes.
 - ii. Executive Director Singh mentioned the updates of all contract positions moving forward too.
- 2. Project Delays / Capacity Issues
 - i. Executive Director Singh reiterated updates about the Public Art project delays that were previously mentioned by Public Arts Collection Manager Anne-Leslie Owens.
- 3. Staff/Commission training and retreat
 - i. Executive Director Singh spoke about Andrea Blackmon's recommendations for trainings for Staff and Commission moving forward.
 - ii. Executive Director Singh also mentioned that he is open to hearing all suggestions from Commission and others regarding trainings and scheduling suggestions moving forward.
 - iii. Commissioner McCoy asked most of the new staff who they are and what they do. She continued to ask questions about all of the Metro Art budget findings and was concerned about the font size of the printed handouts several times.
 - iv. Executive Director Singh answered all of Commissioner McCoy's questions.

L. New/Old Business

- 1. Commissioner McCoy asked the Commission if it would be possible to have a new standing committee with finance and budget reports.
- 2. Lora Fox mentioned that that would be possible.
- 3. Commissioner Cheek asked for a motion to set up a standing Finance & Budget Committee.
- 4. Commissioner Schmidt seconded that motion.
- 5. Communications Manager Daryn Jackson spoke up over the Commission and to note it in the minutes and for the record that she and others observed Commissioner McCoy asked the new Finance Director Christiana Afotey about her professional background and qualifications to be the Metro Arts Finance Director and didn't ask the same personal questions to any of the other new hires recognized during the meeting and during

Commissioner McCoy's time of multiple personal questions and concerns about Staff and Metro Arts operations in general

M. Adjourn Meeting

1. Chair Angelico adjourned the meeting at 2 p.m.