



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

Minutes

Budget and Administrative Oversight Committee

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

12:00PM-2:00PM

Metro Office Building

800 President Ronald Reagan Way

1st Floor, DSC Room

Nashville, TN 37210

Commissioners: Beverly Watts (Chair), Campbell West, Heather Lefkowitz, and
Timothy Jester

Commissioners Absent: John Nefflen

METRO ARTS MISSION:

Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

A. Welcome and Call to Order

- Chair Beverly Watts called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.
- Commissioner John Nefflen was absent due to a client commitment.

B. Public Comment (12:05-12:25 PM)

- No public comments were submitted or made during the meeting.

C. Discussion: FY25 Budget (12:25-1:25 PM)

1. Legal & Finance Update

- Beverly Watts acknowledged the oversight role of the committee and thanked the commissioners for their presence.
- Mentioned the absence of Commissioner Nefflen but confirmed the quorum for conducting business.
- Reiterated the procedural requirements for appealing decisions to the Chancery Court of Davidson County.

2. FY25 Budget Presentation by Amanda Deaton-Moyer (Finance Department)

- Amanda Deaton-Moyer provided an update on the FY25 budget.
- Mayor O’Connell’s budget address emphasized a “lights on” budget reflecting flat revenues.
- Despite significant departmental requests, most were not granted, maintaining a status quo budget.
- The appropriations for operating grants and Thrive funds were moved to an administrative account.
- The release of these funds is contingent upon an annual report to the Metro Council and the signing of associated contracts.

Thrive Awards

- **Tessa's Update:**
 - Confirmation of Amanda's assessment of Thrive awards paid and processed.
 - Additional letters scanned in recently, totaling slightly more than 62.
 - Approximately 7-8 letters returned to Metro due to disagreements over language.
 - Ongoing review of edits and revisions with MHRC to resolve acceptable language for both Metro and Thrive awardees.
 - Daily discussions via email and phone with Thrive awardees and grant organization awardees about their concerns.
 - Collaborative efforts with Amanda and Miss Sidney Davis on project scope, reporting timelines, and addressing individual concerns.
 - Acknowledgement of challenges and the need for individualized attention to both organization and Thrive awardees.
 - 70+ Thrive awardees and 100+ grant awardees being managed on an individual basis.
 - Contracts for grants will follow a process involving DocuSign after the return of the grant funding plan, which will be attached to the contract for signature and payment processing.
 - Emphasis on the contractual nature of the process similar to Thrive but differentiated by being a grants contract.

Collaboration with MHRC

- **Tessa's Response:**
 - Collaboration with MHRC is part of conciliation efforts due to language concerns in letters sent to Thrive awardees.
 - Efforts are ongoing and involve frequent communication and adjustments.

Budget Updates

- **Amanda's Update:**
 - Last year’s budget included an extra \$2 million, bringing the total to \$3.3 million, which was part of a surplus declared by the council and became available after the audit was approved on February 7th.

- **Chris's Update:**
 - Follow-up required to confirm submission of the Arts Commission's budget by the May 8th deadline.

Annual Report

- **Amy's Query:**
 - Clarification on the nature of the annual report to the council.
 - Confirmation that Metro Arts had an annual report in 2020-2021, but not in the past two years.
 - Agreement on the need for visibility and understanding of past reports to guide current work.
 - Chris to ensure the latest annual report is available for review.
- **Chair Watt:**
 - Acknowledgement of the limited information available since February.
 - Numerous issues persist, including complaints, payment issues, and HRC-related matters.
 - Emphasis on the ongoing nature of these issues as they relate to FY24 and FY25 budget concerns.
 - Introduction of Commissioner Lefkowitz's efforts in compiling a letter addressing these challenges.

Review of Commissioner Lefkowitz's Letter

- **Commissioner Lefkowitz:**
 - Sent a letter to Chair Sepulveda in preparation for the upcoming Rules Confirmation and Public Elections Committee meeting.
 - Shared thoughts on supporting boards and commissions, reflecting personal insights and experiences without prior consultation with other commissioners.
 - Key points addressed in the letter include:
 - **Challenges Faced:**
 - High turnover with six new commissioners in December and January.
 - Lack of institutional history and knowledge.
 - **Suggestions for Improvement:**
 - **Application Process:**
 - Specific questions tailored to the Arts Commission.
 - Consideration of different modes of expression (e.g., video responses).
 - Detailed narrative on candidates' histories and roles.
 - **Role-specific Criteria:**
 - Defining desired roles and capacities for commissioners.
 - **Equity and Support:**
 - Acknowledging time commitment challenges and barriers to participation.

- **Institutional History Preservation:**
 - Maintaining information repositories and compliance with record-keeping.
- **Role Clarification:**
 - Clear guidance on the commissioner-director relationship.
 - Effective performance reviews and delineation of duties.
- **Training Modules:**
 - Consistent training on DEI, anti-racist principles, and other relevant topics.
- **Communication Guidelines:**
 - Clear guidelines for interactions with media, council, and public.
 - Open Meetings Act compliance.
- **Meeting Support:**
 - Providing parliamentary support and increasing meeting accessibility.
- **Council Committee Collaboration:**
 - Strengthening ties with council committees to reduce turnover and support chairs.
- **Restorative Justice:**
 - Prioritizing restorative practices within racial equity work.

E. Next Steps & Timeline:

Review of Commissioner Lefkowitz's Letter

- **Chair:**
 - Thanked Commissioner Lefkowitz for compiling and sharing the letter.
 - Acknowledged the value of having written documentation to reference.
 - Provided an overview of the letter, which included thoughts on the selection process, institutional history, and the importance of context and training.
 - Emphasized the need for clear role definitions, director supervision, and community engagement.
- **Chair's Summary of Key Issues:**
 - **Commissioner Selection and Role Clarification:**
 - Importance of understanding who the commissioners are and how they are selected.
 - Need for clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, especially concerning director supervision.
 - **Institutional History and Context:**
 - Recognized gaps in the current understanding of the Commission's history and processes.
 - Highlighted the need for comprehensive documentation and institutional memory.
 - **Training and Development:**

- Importance of anti-racism training and other developmental programs for commissioners and staff.
 - Acknowledged the discomfort that can arise from such training but emphasized its necessity for deeper understanding.
- **Process and Standard Operating Procedures:**
 - Identified the absence of a standard operating procedure (SOP) as a critical issue.
 - Requested a review of current processes in public art, community engagement, and operations to identify gaps.
- **Community Engagement and Perception:**
 - Discussed the need to address community perceptions and repair relationships.
 - Mentioned the importance of understanding how other successful groups operate and what makes Metro Arts a reputed organization.
- **Connection to Council:**
 - Emphasized the importance of maintaining strong ties with council committees.
 - Highlighted the need for better communication and collaboration with council members.
- **Commissioner Watts:**
 - Noted the importance of understanding Metro Arts' reputation and the factors contributing to it.
 - Emphasized the need for ongoing orientation and training for new commissioners.
- **Commissioner Lefkowitz:**
 - Mentioned the wealth of historical data available in the shared drive.
 - Suggested potential partnerships for evaluating programs and collecting data systematically.

Action Items

- **All Commissioners:**
 - Review Commissioner Lefkowitz's letter and provide feedback or additional suggestions.
- **Chair:**
 - Request chairs of committees to review current processes and identify gaps.
 - Facilitate discussions with staff to address issues and improve processes.
- **Staff:**
 - Assist in compiling and synthesizing existing processes and documentation.
 - Provide support in identifying and addressing gaps in current practices.

Next Steps and Timelines

- **Short-Term (Next 30-60 Days):**
 - Conduct a thorough review of current processes and SOPs.
 - Compile feedback from commissioners on Commissioner Lefkowitz's letter.
 - Initiate discussions with staff to address identified gaps.

- **Mid-Term (Next 60-90 Days):**
 - Develop a comprehensive plan to address community perceptions and repair relationships.
 - Establish clear role definitions and training programs for commissioners and staff.
 - Strengthen ties with council committees and improve communication strategies.

Committee Work and Functions

- **Chair:**
 - Emphasized the importance of committee work in developing policy and processes.
 - Stressed the need for committees to function consistently with the organization's goals.
 - Highlighted the roles of different committees, including Public Art, Community Engagement, Strategic Funding, and Operations.
- **Commissioner Lefkowitz:**
 - Suggested that each committee should review their charters to ensure alignment with their goals and responsibilities.
 - Noted difficulty in locating some committee charters and requested assistance in gathering them.

2. Review of Bylaws and Charters

- **Chair Watts:**
 - Recommended that committees review their charters and the organization's bylaws.
 - Mentioned the importance of having bylaws as living documents that can be updated as necessary.
 - Proposed that committee chairs ensure their operations align with the bylaws and charters.
- **Commissioner Lefkowitz:**
 - Acknowledged that the CARE Committee charter was available but noted difficulty in finding others.
 - Highlighted the need for Metro Legal involvement in reviewing and attending committee meetings to ensure compliance and support.

3. Operational Overview and Staff Needs

- **Chair:**
 - Discussed the need to understand how work is accomplished within committees and the organization as a whole.
 - Identified the importance of getting input from staff about their needs and any gaps in knowledge or resources.
 - Suggested that four staff members (Public Art, Strategic Funding and Initiatives, Community Engagement, and Finance and Operations) provide insights into their current processes and needs.

Proposed Schedule for the Rest of the Year

- The committee will discuss and finalize the schedule during the July meeting.
- The chair will send a draft schedule to committee chairs for feedback.

Committee Feedback and Work

- Committee chairs will be asked to review and provide feedback on the proposed schedule and tasks.
- The chair will compile and send out a comprehensive letter outlining the proposed tasks and timelines.

Preparation for July Meeting

- Committee members are encouraged to read the bylaws and the latest annual report (FY21) available on the website.
- Commissioner Lefkowitz and Commissioner W will assist with historical and institutional information.
- The chair will draft a letter for committee chairs, to be revised based on feedback.

Interim Director Status

- Awaiting information on the appointment of an interim director.
- The chair will update the committee as soon as more information is available.

Shared Drive and Document Management

- Members can submit documents and resources to the chair for organization and distribution.
- The shared drive will be updated with all relevant materials for committee access.

Next Steps and Timeline

- Finalize and send out the draft schedule and letter to committee chairs by Thursday.
- Review and discuss the compiled feedback during the July meeting.
- Ensure all committee members are aligned on the focus and direction based on bylaws and the annual report.

F. Old/New Business

Old Business:

1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Minutes from the previous three meetings will be reviewed and voted on in the July meeting.

2. Internal Audit Timeline

- No new updates on the internal audit timeline.
- Public comments received have been addressed.

New Business:

1. Oversight Committee Scope

- Review the committee's scope based on the initial memo, covering HR, legal, and finance aspects.
- Ensure all areas are addressed to move forward with community funding and projects.

2. Program Development and Process

- Identify areas for process development or enhancement within the committee's scope.
- Public Arts and other program committees to share their processes and developments for broader understanding.

Comments and Questions:

- Members are encouraged to send any additional comments or questions to the chair.
- The chair will ensure all feedback is incorporated and shared with the committee before the next meeting.

G. Meeting Adjourned at 1:25 by Chair Watts.