



## METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

### Minutes

**Executive Committee**

**November 16, 2023**

**11:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.**

**Metro Office Building**

**Development Services Conference Room**

**800 President Ronald Reagan Way/800 2nd Ave S**

**Nashville, TN 37210**

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Dexter Brewer, Darek Bell, Diana Perez (Secretary), Janet Kurtz, Carol McCoy, Leah Dupree Love (Vice Chair),

**Metro Staff:** Chuck Beard, Atilio Murga, Jesse Ross, Christiana Afotey, Daryn Jackson, Anne-Leslie Owens, Jesse Ross, Jonathan Saad, Claudia Lawhon, Metro Legal: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh and Lora Fox

### METRO ARTS MISSION:

#### Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

- A. Call to Order
  - a. Chair Angelico called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. They welcomed everyone and directed members of the public sign in, designating if they wished to speak during the public comment.
- B. Public Comment
  - a. Chair Angelico expressed appreciation for the public's interest and commitment to Metro Arts. There were no public comments.
  - b. Executive Director Daniel Singh introduced all of the new Metro Arts' staff to the Commission.
- C. Executive Director Check-in
  - a. Chair Angelico gave a brief introduction and recap of the hiring of Executive Director Singh, praising the new staff hires and the enthusiastic energy of the recent CARE meeting, and wanted to have an open, honest, public meeting to talk about everything going on surrounding the business of operations with Metro Arts.
  - b. Chair Angelico had a few points of concern for conversation.
    - i. The first concern from Chair Angelico was Metro Arts not building good relationships with other Metro departments. Chair Angelico spoke about Executive Director Singh has been fully transparent with emails via other

departments, one with HR about an audit and another with Finance about budget concerns.

- ii. The second concern from Chair Angelico was the operations conversations about around process of grants, money not going out in a timely manner from the public standpoint, and also internal transitions from new hires and other staff job duties.
- iii. Executive Director Singh asked that Ian Myers address first the HR and Grants allocation concerns. Ian Myers explained how the Grants were held up with Finance and Legal actions and an additional delay has happened because of Metro procedural actions outside of Metro Arts (Finance and Legal again). Things are moving forward with final contracts that have gone back and forth between Metro programs surrounding contract language.
- iv. Chair Angelico asked for clarity about the differences of amounts of money from contracts and finance for Grants that were voted on by Commission.
- v. Ian Myers clarified that these are all unforeseen circumstances within Metro internal processes.
- vi. Commissioner Schmidt asked if there were checks of the amount of half of what was voted upon in the Grant allocation votes.
- vii. Ian Myers explained how the annual budget process works within Metro and Metro Arts.
- viii. Executive Director Singh explained in more detail the specifics of process for Legal and Finance via Metro.
- ix. Lora Fox spoke on behalf of Metro Legal to say that there has not been good communication between Metro Legal and Metro Arts at this time, and the conversation regarding Metro Legal responsibilities has been misunderstood as far as their actual role. She mentioned she knows Metro Finance is also frustrated.
- x. Commissioner Bucy suggested that there needs to be more/better communication between Metro Arts and all the Metro programs and asked what can be better.
- xi. Executive Director Singh asked that Ian Myers visit the HR concerns in question.
- xii. Ian Myers said that all the new hire transition concerns have been taken care of sufficiently and all new hires are in the system and are paid on time and there were some staff transitions that affected the timely nature of everything recently.
- xiii. Executive Director Singh spoke up to answer all the concerns. He gave empathy to Chair Angelico for their anxiety about the new role as Chair and their concerns for everything going on. He addressed the following notes:
  1. Communication gaps are happening all over.
  2. Within the first month of being a Chair, there have been four different directions that Chair Angelico has wanted to go but Executive Director Singh must research and spend time for each of those new things versus doing all the other operational staff work that needs to be done.
  3. Regarding the Grants contracts, this year's legal approval was different than what was approved last year. Either Finance or Legal has to tell Metro Arts how to navigate the new budget allocations because this isn't a regular process for Metro Arts.
  4. Race couldn't be used in the internship program last year, and Executive Director Singh has worked with Metro Legal to work around what Metro Arts can work around to make programs happen that everyone wants.

5. Similarly, in the Disparity Study, there have been various answers from within the same Metro Legal teams.
  6. Regarding the Thrive and Operating Grants delay, there were process delays within the terms of grants and terms from Finance that changed from last year to this year without being on the same page.
  7. Regarding HR concerns, there haven't been any orientation or planning on that relationship with so many things going on in the past and currently with an HR charge and audit ongoing.
  8. Executive Director Singh ended his answer by saying that he is here to help the Commission and the Staff as much as possible in every way.
- xiv. Chair Angelico thanked Executive Director Singh for his answers, and then spoke to the flawed system that we all must work in with Metro and possible strategic differences between Commission and Executive Director Singh.
  - xv. Lora Fox spoke up in defense of Chair Angelico's concerns saying they are getting a lot of conversations from other Metro Directors and people from Mayor and others speaking about unrest with Metro Arts.
  - xvi. Executive Director Singh said he has been at every meeting mentioned by Lora Fox.
  - xvii. Commissioner Schmidt said that clear gaps of communications and need to be at a better place than everyone throwing knives at everyone. There needs to be an actionable item of orientation with everything HR for Executive Director Singh immediately set up from the Commission. Commissioner Schmidt said that everyone wants to do the best possible for everyone.
  - xviii. Executive Director Singh recapped the reality of the new staff with the old staff that has been carrying an impossible load of work.
  - xix. Commissioner Polycarpou asked to know more from Executive Director Singh and Staff moving forward because feels like nobody knows what they need to know to help.
  - xx. Chair Angelico recommends 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.
  - xxi. Commissioner Cheek mentioned that others in the city are having serious questions about everything going on at Metro Arts with relationships and money and advocacy moving forward because of external impressions. He is very concerned about what the budget will look like for the arts next year if Metro Arts doesn't get better.
  - xxii. Commissioner Schmidt suggested monthly Commission meetings again.
  - xxiii. Chair Angelico repeated that an orientation with HR with Executive Director Singh very soon. They also repeated a more regular budget report needed soon too. And, finally, more advice is needed on better relationship building with other programs and organizations. And potential for more regular Commission meetings.
  - xxiv. Commissioner West spoke similarly to sentiments mentioned by Commissioner Cheek about community concerns.
  - xxv. Chair Angelico wrapped up the meeting by suggesting the few items they repeated several times as action items to make progress on and talk about at the next meeting.

D. New/Old Business

E. Adjourn Meeting

a. Chair Angelico adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.