



## SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Seattle City Hall, Room 370

Commissioners present: Juan Alonso-Rodriguez, Jeff Benesi, Cassie Chinn, Dawn Chirwa, Steve Galatro, Terri Hiroshima (Co-Chair), Jescelle Major, Sharon Nyree-Williams, Vivian Phillips (Co-Chair), Tracy Rector (phone), S. Surface

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Randy Engstrom, Lizzy Melton, and Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar of the Office of Arts & Culture

Guests: Maria Kang and Lindsey Chen of the Office of Arts & Culture

Excused Absences: Jonathan Cunningham, Priya Frank, Quinton Morris, Sarah Wilke

### **Call to Order**

Vivian Phillips called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m., with an acknowledgement that we are meeting on Indigenous land, that of the Coastal Salish people. Phillips also stated that the Seattle Arts Commission (SAC) centers all its work within a racial equity lens.

### **Approval of the October Minutes**

S. Surface moved to approve the October Arts Commission meeting minutes. Jeff Benesi seconded the motion. All present approved.

### **Artist Coalition for Equitable Development**

The presentation from the Artist Coalition for Equitable Development was cancelled due to illness.

### **Reflections on Square Feet Seattle**

Cassie Chinn shared her reflections on Square Feet Seattle and began by offering thanks to members of the Facilities and Economic Development Committee (FED) and Office of Arts & Culture staff for their support of the event. Chinn noted that the keynote presentation by Moy Eng, Executive Director of the Community Arts Stabilization Trust in San Francisco, was a highlight.

Square Feet Seattle had a commitment to engage with people and organizations new to the event, with a focus on reaching communities of color. Commissioners reflected that many participants expressed excitement at learning about programs and opportunities for the first time, and that all appreciated having the space for these discussions. Many participants also expressed interest in attending similar forum-style events in the future and requested additional opportunities to share and engage in professional development. Commissioners expressed support for further outreach to communities of color and younger audiences for future editions of Square Feet Seattle.



Also included in the event was the Large Foam Check Challenge, in which attendees collaboratively developed projects and then selected one to receive the figurative large foam check. The selected project was Tiny Space for Community, a proposal to provide community with “tiny homes” for their use. ARTS and the FED are working together to explore the project’s feasibility.

Chinn noted that the FED is exploring the effects of the paid parking changes on Capitol Hill, which reduced some hourly parking rates while extending paid parking until 10 p.m. The FED conducted outreach in collaboration with the Capitol Hill Arts District and received mixed feedback on the changes. Chinn invited Commissioners to share with the FED feedback from community as they continue to examine impacts.

### **Impact & Evaluation at ARTS**

Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar joined ARTS in September as a Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow and Impact and Assessment Manager. Nguyen-Akbar shared with Commissioners a summary of survey data collected after the 2017 Mayor’s Arts Awards (MAA). The survey included questions about the nomination process, perceptions of the award, the MAA ceremony, inclusivity, and the value and impact of the awards.

Calandra Childers stated that ARTS’ goal was to assess the impact of the awards on the community as the Commission looks to the future for the MAA. The survey had a 10% response rate and offers some interesting and consistent feedback that can help guide and shape future editions of the MAA. Overall, feedback from the survey was positive.

Some survey respondents expressed uncertainty about the nominations process and many recommended that recipients be announced in advance of the ceremony. Commissioners expressed support for more clearly communicating to the public the criteria used to select the recipients, to guide those submitting a nomination and allow recipients to better understand why they were selected for recognition. S. Surface recommends recognizing jurors at the MAA ceremony and Dawn Chirwa seconds this recommendation.

Other recommendations from Commissioners included:

- having a juror speak about the recipient at the MAA ceremony to convey why they were selected for recognition;
- sharing quotes from the public nominations to highlight all those shortlisted;
- providing examples of how to complete a nomination;
- tailoring the nomination form directly to the selection criteria to help guide nominators through the process;
- contacting nominees directly for additional information, like resumes or bios, as a means of taking some of the burden of the nomination process off community; and
- adding selection criteria to the MAA program to allow the audience a better understanding of how recipients were selected.

Vivian Phillips recommends sharing relevant feedback around youth involvement and music with the Seattle Youth Commission and Seattle Music Commission as an opportunity for collaboration.



### **Community Development & Outreach Committee**

Sharon Nyree-Williams shared that the Community Development & Outreach Committee (CDO) is in the process of setting up a meeting to discuss next steps for the Mayor's Arts Awards (MAA) that will include members of the CDO, Priya Frank, Chieko Phillips, and the MAA Task Force. This group will consider and explore: the relationship between the MAA and Bumbershoot, how the MAA connect year-round and across years, the nomination process and categories, outreach and promotion, and the benefits provided by the awards.

Commissioners express interest in better communicating the value of the awards, as the awards aren't monetary in nature. There is also interest in exploring partnership opportunities as a means of promoting the awards and the recipients beyond the arts community.

Vivian Phillips asked when a full set of recommendations for the MAA will be delivered to SAC for review and Sharon Nyree Williams states that January is the projected completion date for the report.

### **Public Art Advisory Committee**

Steve Galatro provided an overview of the PAAC, including on-going discussions around better providing support for ARTS staff and navigating the Committee's role in situations where there are barriers to the successful completion of a project, as well as how equity work intersects with these topics. PAAC recently hosted Mami Hara, General Manager/CEO of Seattle Public Utilities, for an introduction that included an overview of PAAC's approach and oversight of the Public Art selection process.

### **Chair Report**

Vivian Phillips requested that Jescelle Major report on two initiatives: the Washington State Convention Center expansion project and a youth engagement project with the Design Commission.

Jescelle Major reported that the expansion team is working to fulfill their urban design component, which is not complete at this date. In addition, their Public Benefit proposal is being approved this week. Major asked for awareness and action from the Commission in order to ensure that the project is held accountable to the public and art expectations from the community. Their strategy around ensuring diverse calls for artists are not current with contemporary practice, and arts advisors and committees are having minimal meetings. The Seattle Design Commission has a subcommittee to review the art and Major suggests that an artist's voice would be a welcome addition. King County may approach the Office of Arts & Culture to assist with managing the public art process. Juan Alonso-Rodriguez asked if the Washington State Arts Commission is currently involved and Major reported that she is unaware of any involvement. Major will share critical dates and times with the Commission so attendance and involvement is possible. Vivian Phillips noted that she will share Councilmember Herbold's letter regarding the Convention Center for awareness.

Jescelle Major also reported on a youth engagement project with the Design Commission. She shared that youth opportunities have been limited for the Design Commission and this is a new partnership with Sawhorse Revolution to examine lost space across the City. They are collectively developing a design/build space where they can explore urban design prototyping with youth in the public realm. There



may be an opportunity to provide hands-on public art experience. Major will share out summaries of the project. The plan is to be active in the new year and follow student calendars.

Vivian Phillips requested key dates for Commissioners to keep on their calendars:

- Friday and Saturday, November 17 and 18 – Artists of Color Expo and Symposium. Calandra Childers will send the registration URL via email.
- Saturday, December 2: *The Every 28 Hours Plays* at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute (LHPAI), 3-6 p.m. 3 pm: Play reading; 4:15 pm: Clearing House of Information; 5 pm: Celebration. Presented by CD Forum, LANGSTON, NAAM, The Hansberry Project, and LHPAI.
- Friday, December 8: Equity Training for the combined Arts and Music Commissions at LHPAI. Training from 1-5 p.m.; mixer from 5-6:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, Dec 12: Commission Meeting

Vivian Phillips requested a review of the Arts Commission Roster and specifically the terms ending in December 2017. All Commissioners who are at the end of their terms agreed to reappointment.

### **Director's Report**

Randy Engstrom provided a report on the budget currently moving through City Council, which will be voted on Monday, November 20. The proposed Head Tax for Homelessness was defeated 5 to 4, and now City Council must find \$4M by Monday's vote. ARTS' budget includes:

- Expansion of the Cultural Facilities fund to \$1.4M in 2018 – the fund is currently undergoing a Racial Equity Toolkit process which will likely result in changes to criteria, the selection process, and the scale of fundable projects to make the fund more expansive. In addition, changes may make it more inclusive of DIY Safe Spaces recommendations from the Commission in 2016. In the future, the City may consider bonding against the fund to invest in property in communities that are at risk of gentrification.
- King Street Station – there is capacity to fully realize the vision of the new cultural space. The Programming Plan will be completed in December, following delays due to complications with ARTS' consultant. The project will go out to bid in January, construction is anticipated to begin in March/April, and move-in is slated for August/September. There are currently two positions that will be added to cover the expanded work – these include a project manager focused on the programming of the facility and a facilities manager focused on the building needs. We anticipate additional office and administrative needs that have not yet been resourced.
- A new agreement with the Office of Film and Music to expand our relationship to support the film community.
- Expansion of programmatic activity for racial equity work.
- Cultural Districts programming funding that will become part of the Office's baseline budget, as opposed to one-time support.
- Funds to ensure that The Creative Advantage can be expanded into every school by 2021, as well as expanding the scope of investments into youth homelessness and youth employment.



- In response to a question from Juan Alonso-Rodriguez regarding increases to the funding programs, Engstrom responded that an additional \$250,000 will be invested in grantmaking programs in 2018, and that the individual artist program is specifically increasing.

Engstrom reported that Tim Lennon was just named as the first director of LANGSTON and that ARTS is excited to bring that partnership forward under his leadership.

Engstrom reported back on several interrelated Cultural Space projects:

- Square Feet Seattle was a big success – the community requested information on how to build and hone their skills around property development, property management, and city processes. We may be able to accommodate some of these needs via the certification recommendation included in the CAP report. The final winner of the “foam check challenge” activity was Tiny Space for Community. We plan to hire Sawhorse Revolution to work on the project with us and may want to tie in to the previously mentioned work with the Design Commission and intersections with The Creative Advantage and youth investment.
- Investigating public development authority options – We are talking with law firms to see what is possible. We are also continuing work with Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) to learn what they have done in San Francisco and Framework, who helped draft the CAP report. We need to include the Facilities and Economic Development Committee (FED) in these discussions to ensure a good racial equity process.
- FED – We may consider a name change to “equitable development” from “economic development” to better reflect the Committee’s current body of work.
- We are examining how to focus on the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI), with communities and cultural districts as a focus. ARTS was invited to join the EDI sub-cabinet, so we are more aligned with the internal City process. A recommendation regarding the activation of temporary space that rose up from the City Leadership Academy and a letter from the Capitol Hill Arts District are being examined now.
- There is the possibility of a shared position between ARTS and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, which would help us in our goals of expanding the definition of cultural space for a broader community.

Dawn Chirwa asked Engstrom what is the top thing keeping him up at night. Engstrom responded that the continuity and accountability of the work is the major focus. There are many changes currently happening because of the administrative transition and he wants to ensure that the work keeps going. He also mentioned struggling with ARTS’ commitment to racial equity in terms of blind spots and finding a way to fail forward.

**The meeting went into Executive Session at 5:26 p.m.**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:51 p.m.**