



## SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Seattle City Hall, Room L280

Commissioners present: Juan Alonso-Rodriguez, Cassie Chinn, Dawn Chirwa (by phone), Jonathan Cunningham, Priya Frank, Steve Galatro, Terri Hiroshima, Jescelle Major, Quinton Morris (by phone), Vivian Phillips (by phone), Ayako Shapiro, S. Surface, Sarah Wilke (by phone), Sharon Nyree Williams (by phone)

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Lara Davis, Randy Engstrom, Kathy Hsieh, Amber Rose Jimenez, and Matthew Richter of ARTS and Deputy Mayor Shefali Ranganathan

Excused Absences: Tracy Rector

### **Call to Order**

Terri Hiroshima called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m., with an acknowledgement that we are meeting on Indigenous land, that of the Coastal Salish people.

**Motion:** Cassie moved to approve the March meeting minutes. Sarah seconded the motion. All present approved.

### **PAAC Update**

Co-Chairs Steve and Juan reflected on the Public Art Advisory Committee retreat which featured a two-hour discussion with the Public Art staff and was facilitated by Peggy Taylor. Overall, the retreat was an opportunity to address structural and process challenges; roles and responsibilities between PAAC and staff; how to support one another; and how to support the artists participating in the public art process. Specific actions explored include: articulating project goals upfront for all public art commissions, beginning all PAAC meetings with 30 minutes of an open session with staff and PAAC members, and standardizing evaluation criteria (i.e. a rubric).

### **Commission Advisory Strategies and Structure**

The Commission received an overview of one aspect of the racial equity work of ARTS, the Racial Equity Toolkit, by hearing from Matthew Richter's Cultural Facilities Fund toolkit project; ARTS is elevating opportunities for the Arts Commission to engage members of the community as official liaisons who represent community interests and needs. Additional opportunities to center communities in decision making were shared from Kathy Hsieh of the Cultural Partnerships team.

### **Racial Equity Toolkit | Cultural Facilities Fund**

Matthew shared an overview of how the Racial Equity Toolkit was used during the Cultural Facilities Fund project conducted last year, noting how Arts Commissioners served as advisors in the community engagement process. Commissioners inquired about how opportunities to benefit from the restructuring of



the Cultural Facilities Fund and its various offerings will be shared with the community and questioned who is responsible for filling the public benefit need associated with funding awards. Matthew indicated that the Spacefinder tool may have potential to address this communication feature and that the public benefit aspect will be collaborative. Commissioners also inquired about how people-of-color led organizations would be weighted during the decision-making process, if at all differently. Additionally, the Facilities & Economic Development Committee recently changed its name to Facilities & Equitable Development Committee.

### **Cultural Partnerships**

The grants platform primarily used by ARTS will no longer be available for use, which will impact the grant program schedule for 2018. While it is an unanticipated development, the situation presented an opportunity for research, development and testing of new software, with the guiding question, “How may we create more equity in our grant practices?”

In May, the Cultural Partnerships team will present a 30-minute session to align on opportunities for SAC-ARTS collaboration moving forward. Areas of alignment that communities of color have identified with GrantLAB and ArtistUp, in addition to other staff efforts to engage racially diverse voices in decision-making include: strengthening the language we use, building upon implicit bias training, centering people of color as panelists, and more. A preview of ideas Cultural Partnerships would like to share with SAC next month include: creation of a partnership between staff and SAC via a new committee, practice of presenting during SAC prior to a funding program launch; support with site visit efforts; and partnership opportunities to expand & deepen community reach.

Commissioners raised an inquiry regarding funding increases for individual artist programs, and it was noted that 2018 is the first year that the program has received a funding increase in recent memory; the importance of investing in individual artists as a strategy to increase equity was offered, and it was noted that while the cultural space program funding is increasing, it is critical to have a place to *create* the artworks so they can be featured within cultural and arts spaces.

### **Mayor’s Office Visit**

Deputy Mayor Shefali Ranganathan joined the meeting to share the Mayor’s Office vision with Commissioners. Ranganathan shared reflections about her experience with the multi-arts exhibit *Someday We’ll All Be Free*, by the Youth Leadership Board of Creative Justice an arts-based program that builds community with young people who are most impacted by mass incarceration, and she spoke about the excitement over the upcoming opening of King Street Station and its first exhibition. She also highlighted the importance of creating space for art to thrive in Seattle, recognizing the affordability crisis and the opportunities that exist via collaboration with the Seattle Arts Commission.

Commissioners emphasized opportunities to bridge the priorities of ARTS regarding cultural partnerships and racial equity, with new Commissioners, through relationship building and leadership cultivation from the arts & cultural communities we serve. While members are considering how the Commission will restructure based on emerging areas of opportunity, Ranganathan invited the Commission to share



feedback about improvements with the appointment process, noting that the various City Commissions have developed different approaches.

Commissioners posed open questions about what skill sets are needed; how to center the expertise and needs of working artists; and how to develop process improvements that are racially equitable and intersectional. The Get Engaged youth-focused leadership development program was also highlighted as an area of growth potential to ensure that participation is meaningful and mutually beneficial. Further, Commissioners discussed the impacts of homelessness and affordability issues being positioned against the arts in a more scarcity-driven narrative. Ranganathan shared that there is space and a place for arts within the larger affordability conversation and noted that arts can be a powerful voice in that conversation, emphasizing the Cultural Districts program.

Challenges about how individual artist funding or artwork commission opportunities impact working artists, especially those who are most impacted by structural racism and oppression, and who also serve on the Commission, were shared and the DM asked that ARTS investigate the rationale informing the policy restricting Commissioners from participating. In addition to recusing oneself in decision making, ARTS will follow up with Ethics to ensure that we are upholding our values of racial equity across our work. Lara Davis was invited to provide an overview of the Youth Arts Program opportunities during the May meeting, due to the adjustments in the agenda.

Finally, Commissioners inquired about how to map the assets and skills of the members of the SAC in service of clarifying what capacity needs exist, and how to create shared SAC goals to best align and begin to restructure committee work. Engaging in this exercise will help SAC determine what success looks like, how to measure it, and how to best eliminate the gaps in our efforts of achieving racial equity across the arts and cultural community.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.**