

## SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Remote – Zoom Conference

**Commissioners present:** Priya Frank (Chair), Quinton Morris, Steven Galatro, Dawn Chirwa, Cassie Chinn, Sarah Wilke, Sheila Ghaibi, James Miles, Yeggy Michael, Chieko Phillips, Jescelle Major, Kayla DeMonte, Mikhael Mei Williams, Holly Jacobson, Tracy Rector

**Staff in attendance:** Calandra Childers, Randy Engstrom, Allie Lee, Ashraf Hasham, Kathy Hsieh, Alex Rose, Erika Lindsay, Matthew Richter

**Guests:** Reese Tanimura (SMC), Brendan Kiley (Seattle Times), Dominique Stephens (MO)

### **Call to Order, Introduction, Land Acknowledgement (4:05)**

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

James moved to approve the commission minutes from March 2020. Tracy seconded. Approved.

#### **Public Comment:**

No public comment.

### **Welcome**

The group went around and each shared highlights about their daily work/life experience amid Covid-19.

### **Director Report**

#### **Briefing: Randy Engstrom, Calandra Childers**

1. Staff Appreciation
2. In mid-March, Randy was asked to step into a role as the philanthropy lead for civic relief and recovery for the City and has been tracking urgent and emerging areas of need.
3. ARTS, with several internal partners (including Department of Neighborhoods, Seattle Public Libraries, Office of Civil Rights, and the Mayor's Office), is working to support Social Cohesion for the City under the umbrella "Seattle Together." Goals of Seattle Together include:
  - Provide immediate financial support for impacted communities, organizations, and workers
  - Provide digital and analog content to residents, in particular vulnerable populations, by resourcing artists, organizers, and other cultural partners
  - Support and uplift mutual aid efforts
  - Create a framework to pivot into Recovery
4. Under the framework of Seattle Together, ARTS is focusing on public art interventions, streaming services, teaching artists online, anti-hate & anti-racism campaigns, and opportunities to invest in storytellers.

5. ARTS budget will take a hit due to impact on admission tax. Thankfully we are funded by 2 years prior collected taxes so we have a cushion, but we will not have the same revenue in the coming years and will need to make some tough decisions on how we prioritize support for this community. We will look to commissioners for input on what community and sector support should look like both now and as we look towards the future and pivot our work for long term impacts. We have done a lot of work on shaping our values and have built a lot of structures – now is time for these values and structures to go into play.

#### **SAC Questions/Comments:**

- How can organizations doing similar work to Seattle Together partner with the City to not duplicate efforts and be stronger together?
  - There will be a Seattle Together Community Advisory group for feedback loop. ARTS staff will follow up about this
- How will the City partner with those in the community doing content development?
  - Goal is to utilize the Seattle Together group and Seattle Together Community Advisory group to connect with work on the ground. We also want to translate cultural norms of different depts to work efficiently together
- How public is Seattle Together?
  - It has been announced at the Department of Neighborhoods webinar, there has been an ARTS blog post written about it, and we plan to have a website up in about 3 weeks.
- Is there a connection between Seattle Together efforts and All in Seattle efforts?
  - All in Seattle is an independent effort of funders, and several programs listed on their website are actually City programs. We plan to work closely with them and integrate their data with other organizations.
  - The City is tracking where funds have gone so far and where they are still needed
- Please tell us more about the [King County Creative Handbook](#) efforts.
  - This website is a one stop shop resource hub for grants information, small business support, public health, etc.
  - It includes a resources spreadsheet that ARTS staff generated (and continues to track)
  - The goal is to provide wayfinding for people who are overwhelmed by the amount of information out there. People want simple and clear “these are the steps” info.

#### **What Are We Hearing from Community?**

##### **Discussion: All**

- Dawn – The non-profit sector is screaming. The tax structure has changed, and this is changing the way people are contributing. Non-profits are clarifying how much of a tightrope they will have to walk on, particularly for independent artists. Need to think fundamentally about next 5-10 years of what impact will look like.
- Holly – The tightrope is real. There is opportunity to make changes to systems in place, but it will take time.

- Steve – Has been busy keeping Pratt afloat and trying to survive the crisis. Hasn't had much opportunity to hear from others in the community. Feels that we may not have the tools to adapt fast enough. Payment protection program wasn't set up for non-profits and feels at sea. As a mid-sized org, doesn't have the support like big institutions. Does have access to small relief grants, but that's not going to be enough to sustain. Not sure where real relief is going to come from.
- Guest (Jhoanna Whyte, Artist) – Individual artists have already been having a hard time finding and getting government grants. Can there be a workshop for how to apply to grants?
- Kathy – 1) Have noticed that organizations that are in a place for more forward thinking don't know how to plan so they are spending a lot of time coming up with multiple scenarios for what ifs and then ifs. It's a new ball game for cash flow and strategic planning since there are many unknowns. Lots of arts producers are planning to take the entire next year off – because even when the shelter in place is lifted, public confidence in going out will be different and artists getting together to work together is concern until a vaccine is developed. 2) Wealth disparity in Seattle is huge and is not visible in the media. There are many who cannot make rent or buy food, and this is very real in the arts community as well. There are racial and economic inequalities that are not being talked about in a significant way.
- Yeggy – In comparison to other cities, we are hearing that Seattle has been doing a good job in terms of support for community, especially in the arts sector. However, there is still more to do. Hearing from minority/immigrant artist groups - those already at disadvantage by the system and don't have a lot to begin with - that this situation has made is even harder for them. Many immigrant artists don't have a lot of family here – some of them are on their own and must rely on friends and community if they get sick or have issues, which is hard. Yeggy encouraged these friends to apply to grants, but none of them got anything. Feels it would be helpful to see data on who received these grants to figure out where the gaps are. We want to make sure to support artists that are underrepresented. We also need to think about life after the pandemic; many individual artists are not able to think about insurance, retirement, saving for the future, etc. Can the City establish something like a rainy-day support fund for underrepresented artists?
- Chieko – In regard to restructuring programs for this year, hearing from heritage groups and thinking about balancing relief and urgent needs with those who are still interested in creating and put their programs online but don't have equipment. Trying to serve all the varying needs within the field.
- Tracy – Landlords deferring rent payment means large debt after the crisis - debt is scary for artist communities and a lot of people don't know what is available or what kind of laws are in place to protect them
- Matthew – re: rent deferral: <https://durkan.seattle.gov/2020/03/to-ease-financial-impacts-of-covid-19-pandemic-mayor-jenny-durkan-signs-emergency-order-to-temporarily-halt-evictions-of-small-businesses-and-nonprofit-organizations/>
- James - Seattle is doing dramatically better than other cities and other outlying areas. Black and brown people that live on the outskirts are mostly impacted
- Kathy – Sharing info about the tax benefit for donating in case it's helpful to let your donors know or for Give Big small print, etc. CARES ACT Donation Incentives:

- For those who don't itemize on your income tax return, you may donate up to \$300 in cash to qualifying non-profit charities and deduct that amount "above the line" in computing your adjusted gross income.
- If you do itemize, you may deduct 100% of your cash donations to qualifying non-profit charities.
- Plus, the income cap on deductibility for corporate donations has increased from 15% to 25%.
- This year, the CARES Act includes greater incentives for donors! Deduct up to \$300 in cash contributions to qualifying non-profit charities, even if you do not itemize your deductions, and there is no limit on deductions for cash contributions for anyone who does itemize. Plus, the adjusted gross income (AGI) limitations on charitable contributions for corporations is increased from 15% to 25%.
- Cassie – In terms of space, predatory real estate practices are spiking now, which points to the need for communities of color to secure space in the long run. We need community controlled/owned spaces. There are people talking about how to elevate equitable development when recovery comes through – let's try to shed light on storytelling and story gathering – this would be a motivator as policies come into process
- Reese – Resource navigation has been an issue. A lot of information has been put up hastily, which is not accessible. Would like to figure out ways to help people through our organizations to offer navigation tools and help when people are applying for things like PPP. People in the know (that have finance teams or relationships with banks) are first in line, but smaller organizations are giving up and saying why put in all the work for only a slight chance. Some didn't even know small business funds existed. Advocacy is needed for:
  - Digital equity for artists
  - Music venue coalition (<https://wanma.info/>) came up with the following items:
    - Cash Assistance (Not Loans)
    - Rent and Mortgage Forgiveness & Reduction
    - Financial Payments & Assistance for the Workforce
    - Tax Relief
    - Insurance Relief & Revisions
  - Movement building – current crisis has exposed hardships for low and middle class, and there are a lot of grassroots people not getting invited to table where decisions are being made. There are grassroots org structures in place waiting to be better resourced (and have existed for a long time)
- Priya – Let's keep this discussion going. Please continue to convey community info to leadership so we can take this info and align with ARTS office work
- Quinton – Please send over any data solicited from community to Quinton

Meeting adjourned at 5:40pm.

**Other conversations from Zoom chat box:**

*From Alex Rose - City of Seattle to Everyone: (05:00 PM)  
is anyone here working on helping connect undocumented folks with relief?*

*From Dawn Chirwa to Everyone: (05:01 PM)  
This organization may be able to help: <https://www.nwirp.org/>*

*From Holly Jacobson to Everyone: (05:02 PM)  
Our friends at NW Immigrant Rights Project are doing a lot of that work.*

*From Alex Rose - City of Seattle to Everyone: (05:02 PM)  
nothing specific to arts/culture orgs tho?*

*From Holly Jacobson to Everyone: (05:04 PM)  
We (Path with Art) are connecting with our social service partners including those who exclusively serve immigrants like Casa Latina to connect them to tablets, community, and art opportunities. Just now rolling it out this and next week.*

*From Alex Rose - City of Seattle to Everyone: (05:05 PM)  
very cool, @holly*

*From Kathy Hsieh (she/her) to Everyone: (05:07 PM)  
Yes, the City is partnering with many groups on this and Andres Mantilla at DON mentioned a partnership with United Way around rent relief as well as a loan guarantee program for undocumented workers.*

*From Jhoanna Whyte to Everyone: (05:12 PM)  
Yes. I've talked to a few folks there. I'd like to know if there are grants for at home projects? Or grants that can make that type of an accommodation? Thank you. I'll follow-up with you later.*

*From Cassie to Everyone: (05:24 PM)  
Definitely the lack of materials/resources in language repeatedly comes up*

*From Alex Rose - City of Seattle to Everyone: (05:33 PM)  
perhaps a good time to appeal to the men's sports teams to pay into the ad tax!!*