

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, July 14th, 2020

Remote – Zoom Conference

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

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Randy Engstrom, Allie Lee, Alex Rose, Kelly Davidson, Kathy Hsieh, Jenny Ku, Jenny Crooks, Sandra Boas-DuPree, Lovell Davis, Sheila Moss, Erika Lindsay, Amanda Licorish, Flossie Pennington, Mike Davis, Dominique Thomas, Dominique Stephens (MO), Meghan Sebold (OED)

Guests: David Toledo (public comment), Reese Tanimura (Seattle Music Commission)

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

Approval of Minutes:

Chieko moved to approve the commission minutes from June 2020. Cassie seconded. Approved.

Public Comment:

Public comment was provided by David Toledo.

ARTS Black Love Union (BLU) Letter

Black staff at ARTS collectively wrote a letter to the entire ARTS staff listing demands broad across the ARTS office's work that address Black staff needs and Black communities' needs. With BLU's permission, the letter was shared with SAC prior to this meeting. Co-Chairs acknowledged BLU's leadership, their courage to speak up, and that SAC is a safe space to express concerns.

SAC responses:

- Chieko – Acknowledges the letter. The demand around the Mayor's Arts Award (MAA) aligns with discussions already going on at SAC. Supports the suggestion to use this budget to acknowledge BIPOC and QTPOC individuals and orgs, supports the idea to pause MAA this year, but would also like to think about what happens going forward. A BIPOC/QTPOC subcommittee could support artist activists and discuss changes to method of reallocation.
- Cassie – Acknowledges the letter. The demands contribute to the city overall and prioritizing them is important. As we think about being action oriented, where should the different actions live (different committees)? There are demands that directly relate to Facilities & Equitable Development (FED) committee that can be incorporated into workplan (building / rebuilding BIPOC spaces, LHPAI facilities care and activation)
 - Sarah – Acknowledges the letter. Re: building / rebuilding BIPOC spaces, would like to hear more specifics. There are opportunities to learn and listen more with FED.

- Dawn – Acknowledges the letter. How do we actualize the demands and what are the next steps? What would be the implications for budget, reallocation, and what are the obstacles? Could discuss at Cultural Investments Committee.

Black Love Union responses:

- Amanda – BLU believes that the demands are reasonable at that ARTS will meet them. The demands were scaled down to what was thought to be achievable. Would like to clarify that the demand around accepting grant applications for King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap counties refers to Black artists and Black led/focused orgs – the intention is to reverse gentrification.
 - Steven – Acknowledges the letter. Feels it would be helpful to know what the aspirational version of this letter is, so SAC can set as vision.

Co-Chairs will follow up with BLU regarding the letter.

Mayor’s Arts Awards (MAA)

Two weeks prior to BLU’s mentioning of repurposing MAA, Quinton had drafted a proposal about repurposing/reallocating MAA funds for Black-led storytelling on the Seattle Channel, having a community component, and creating a subcommittee with ARTS staff, commissioners, and community members to work on this special project. Based on Vivian Phillip’s Creative Economy report last year, there is evidence that people feel MAA does not represent our artist community and re: Quinton’s proposal, the City is not in a position to be in a celebratory mood.

SAC comments:

- Cassie – Appreciates the idea and as subcommittee comes together, would like to think about integrating support for Black-owned businesses and galleries / economic impact.
- Chieko - ARTS is great at making sure people get compensated, would be powerful if ARTS or SAC could address the history of Black culture, perhaps a value statement from leadership that shares the reason for the idea, what art reparations could look like
 - Quinton - Yes, but we don’t want a temporary fix. Black community wants change and it’s a change in processes. The overall theme we are hearing is that Black folks are not heard and seen, we need to empower them and let their stories be told.
 - Chieko – To change the system beyond the moment, we also think about what changes need to happen now so programs like this can continue on.
- Quinton – Would like to reach out to Vivian Phillips to lead this project. A subcommittee with come together after this meeting and put together a blueprint. Will report back.
- Kayla – How much is the MAA budget and will it be enough to cover what is being proposed?
 - Calandra - \$25k is allocated to the event and there may be other partners we can call upon to build on the work
- Steven – MAA has been problematic for a long time, can it continue to be a Black-centered event?
 - Quinton – Let’s continue to discuss this in following meetings.
- Yeggy - How will the videos affect legislation/policy? Policy change is important to the struggle.
 - Quinton – The new subcommittee can talk about this, will bring back to August meeting.

- Priya – This project will be a good way to follow up on last month’s BLM solidarity emails. Should think of ways to partner to bring in additional resources. Perhaps partnerships / effort will be larger than this one project and will spread out to wider community

The SAC came to a consensus (by hand vote and chat box vote) on reallocating Mayor’s Arts Awards resources to Black-led storytelling and creating a Black-led subcommittee to plan / program the work. Will do a follow up at the next meeting and will have a proposal for the project and recommendations on how to go forward.

Calandra recommended the need for a plan to message out this pivot to community.

Facilities and Equitable Development (FED) Committee Update

- Sarah – Cultural Space Agency update – ARTS submitted a briefing memo to the Mayor 10 days ago and we are waiting to hear back. FED met with Pacifica Law Group, who suggested three areas to shift with the governance structure.
 - First, recognizing the PDA as a vehicle to shield the City’s liability is the fundamental purpose of a PDA – concern with proposed structure was that there was a level of City control that eliminated that separation and shield of liability.
 - Second, the role of the Constituency as proposed could impede the operation of the PDA and make it less nimble because when you have two large groups, it’s hard to get to a common end point in a timely manner or sometimes the Constituency is engaged up front but then lose interest over time, which makes it hard to gather to act. Suggested to appoint board members that are reflective of Constituency groups and are put into the role in order to act as the voice and bring the influence to those Constituency groups. Doesn’t mean there can’t be an advisory role for the Constituency groups.
 - Third, the overlap of the PDA and the nonprofit such that they are not two distinct entities is of concern – from a legal perspective this doesn’t work and there needs to be enough separation so they don’t appear as one sole entity and just acting under two different names.
- Cassie – B.A.S.E cohort update – we have two years of cohorts that have been training, networking, and building capacity for BIPOC orgs. Current B.A.S.E cohort has continued to meet virtually and have met with others doing similar work nationwide. Recently met with folks doing community wealth building and learned about their model and reclaiming space. Current cohort graduates this fall and there will be a graduation ceremony in October. Will have our third cohort afterwards.

Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) Update

- Steve – Acknowledges efforts of the public art team to pivot and reallocate time to many new projects post-pandemic; Public Art in Your Front Yard, partnership with OED on business murals for BIPOC businesses, temporary projects in parks, artist residency for Waterfront, shifting the Solar Awareness project to virtual platform, public art boot camp relaunch to a year-long cohort model, e-museum civic art collection, etc.

- Priya – was on the panel for the Waterfront residency and the process was incredible. Excited about the support they are giving to the artist.
- Calandra – Jason Huff has stepped in as interim Public Art manager (original plan to hire this position didn't happen due to City's hiring freeze)

Directors Report

- Acknowledges BLU letter.
- Current priorities include community wealth building, reimagining work/civic narrative, digital equity, how we center youth voice, etc. We have an opportunity to look at recommendations from last year's Creative Economy Roadmap report and do the work.
- Shout out to Jason Huff, Tiffany Hedrick, and Matthew Richter who were able to safely transport the CHOP murals to KSS for temporary storage. ARTS will work with CHOP organizers and artists to help them catalogue and determine how to preserve / exhibit the work. The City will not own the work – the goal is to get them back to their artists.
- Figuring out what an inclusive creative economy could look like (ex. green new deal). We need community to drive this and need to figure out how the City can support.

Chairs Report

- Quinton - SAC budget letter update – Wanted to wait to finish / submit the letter until after this meeting to reflect perspectives re: BLU letter and MAA and make sure everyone is heard before moving forward. Co-Chairs will finish the letter and send to SAC for review. The letter will be different from previous years in that it will address a reimagination of arts in Seattle, recovery efforts, what we've learned so far from COVID-19, rent relief for organizations, digital equity, and how the Mayor can support SAC through anti-racist lens and artistic lens.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.