

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, June 8th, 2021

Remote – Zoom Conference

Commissioners present: Quinton Morris (Co-Chair), Sarah Wilke (Co-Chair), Cassie Chinn, Chieko Phillips, Kayla DeMonte, Holly Jacobson, Yeggy Michael, James Miles, Steve Galatro, Vivian Hua, Rick Araluce, Vanessa Villalobos, Dawn Chirwa, Ebony Arunga, Racquel West, Dawn Chirwa

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Allie Lee, Kathy Hsieh, Ashraf Hasham, Erika Lindsay, Kelly Davidson, Jenny Ku, Jenny Crooks, Alex Rose, Tina LaPadula, Jason Huff, Pam Inch (SHR)

Guests: Ethan Anderson, Jabrii Polk, Mayor Jenny Durkan, Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington, Maritza Rivera (MO), Sharon Williams (CD Forum, former SAC member), Reese Tanimura (SMC)

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

Approval of Minutes:

Postponed to July due to time.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Executive Session:

Quinton announced that the Arts Commission goes to Executive Session for 20 minutes until 4:30pm. The purpose of the Executive session is to address the performance of a public employee (RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)).

All members on the call, except for the Arts Commissioners were asked to exit the meeting and return at 4:30pm.

Arts Sector Discussion with Mayor

Briefing: Calandra Childers, Mayor Jenny Durkan, Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington

- Mayor greets the group. Mentioned the need to focus on arts, culture, and nightlife because there will not be a recovered and returned city of Seattle if we don't have them and if we don't learn the lessons and focus on equity and rebuilding.

- Quinton asks Mayor thoughts on 3 topics:
 - o Admissions tax
 - o Hope Corps
 - o ARTS Director Search

- Mayor's response to 3 topics:
 - o Admissions tax (*how do we backfill and support when there is reduced admissions tax due to state of events*): Not a clear response for that at the moment since we are now just coming out of the pandemic and seeing what the next phases look like and how to bridge all the gaps. But mindful that admissions tax is important to the health of arts and culture.
 - o Hope Corps: For rescue funds, we put things in buckets and created some latitude within those buckets - wanted to reach some overarching goals by doing that. For community recovery, which is 23 mil for small business and neighborhood/downtown recovery, all agreed on the need to center funds for cultural organizations with a focus on building equity. This includes:
 - 7.4 mil for direct financial assistance and access for capital through grants and flexible financing options for small/micro businesses and non-profit orgs to stabilize and pivot;
 - 1.7 mil for commercial affordability grants focused on how folks can keep doors open like long term leases, acquisitions, tenant improvements, etc. that build community wealth – this is modeled on things we know are greatest barriers;
 - 2 mil for strict cultural organization stabilization grants;
 - 800k-900k for technical assistance for small businesses and cultural organizations;
 - 10 mil for downtown/neighborhood recovery – centered on the needs of community/neighborhood organizations and focused on the ability for arts and cultural organizations to be in the mix to get grants to move that program. Also finding ways to utilize downtown businesses and organizations to give enough resiliency to carry them through not just this year but build a foundation for next year, so when the economy comes back there will be some bridge funding. There will be RFPs for some \$ and areas where Hope Corps would be a good fit.
 - o ARTS Director Search (*Director Search Advisory Committee expressed reservations with a rushed timeline that doesn't allow enough time for community engagement. The committee recommended the need for a deep understanding of the sector's needs to be reflected in the job description with feedback provided by community. Also feels careful to associate Arts with a process that might not be community driven in an authentic way. Quinton asked: What is your timeline, how much time will there be for community feedback, and why is the director search so important to you right now?*):
 - Agree that deep community engagement is important and necessary for this search, all the more in arts and culture, and given where we have been through with the pandemic and the need to focus on equity.
 - Also believe that deep community engagement will be doable with Arts Commissioners - the connectors to community - to advise on how to build a search committee and be advocates for getting engagement on community feedback. Committed to designing a robust community engagement process with SAC.
 - Re: timeline – want to proceed before term ends because feels arts and culture is important. Early on in term when evaluating the need to change directors one important criteria was whether they were supported by and reflected

community. Feels the ARTS director hire this year will provide continuity because it will be values based and not politics based.

- SAC Questions/Comments:

- Admissions tax is only added to women's sports and not men's sports, which feels overlooked.
 - This is a mechanism at state level, but it is definitely an equity issue and should be looked at long term.
- How are you supporting arts and culture between the two different types of funds – rescue dollars and City annual budget?
 - Rescue plan dollars are separate from annual budget, and we are currently in the process of turning in our annual budget to Council. For annual budget we generally do baseline budget, which is taking all depts' programs plus cost of inflation for employees and contracts as the core, then looking at what other demands are and what's left. At the moment it is hard to know how much of a recovery there will be – our revenue projections come at the end of the summer. Rescue plan \$ will help augment some of our resources. As for rescue plan dollars, we have half of the funds for this year and the remaining half can last through 2024.
 - Not all arts and culture related, but we also have the equitable community investment taskforce's recommendations on 30 mil for equity-based investments in the Black community
 - Also announced yesterday the strategic investment fund, which 30 mil for acquisitions to offset gentrification and displacement.
- What will the next 50% of rescue plan funds go to and will arts and culture be represented in that?
 - Some of those funds will be decided on by the next Mayor and next Council. Some will be allocated in this budget which will last until 2024 and Council will discuss what they want to keep in reserves and what they want to use some for. At this time, it is hard to know how and when those \$\$ will be used.
 - No one thing is identified specifically in the rescue plan package. It's better to say "creative industry" because if you specify items out it reduces that item to a specific amount, and some will need more than others. Arts and culture is included in the rescue plan in multiple places; once it passes legislation, DM Washington is willing to unpack it for the group and walk us through where it shows up, so we know where to access the \$\$.
- What does it take to put arts and culture as a budget line in the general fund if we have to keep it under the creative industries umbrella? There is a sense of needing to validate the arts financially – what would you counsel us on that looks at the post-Covid world?
 - All of above strategy is needed for the arts. It would be good to sit down with DM Washington, who can walk the group through where opportunities are so we can give to arts and culture organizations. Part of this is pure technical assistance so people know where to ask for funds and how to ask for funds. Part of this is on the City, but also part of this is for SAC to step up and magnify the

message to get this info out. The more voices get amplified on something, the more likely it will get \$\$.

- Need to think more about what the cohesive arts and culture ecosystem looks like and how to support each part of it. Particularly how do we support artists who can't afford to live here or have a venue to perform at. We need to push on all fronts. PDA will also be a potent tool not only for City budget but also for using it to build synergies with the county, state, business, philanthropy, etc. – and building something so we don't have to rely on the fight for dollars with City budget every year.
- Re: Director search timeline and Mayor's desire to build in continuity and priority – With what is happening in community and those that feel excluded, process is super important. Some of this work really takes time, even for commissioners, to go out and canvas then come back together as coalitions of other coalitions. Feeling rushed coming from us is really coming from the voices that we are hearing. Commissioners haven't even had a chance to get the word out. Winter is as far as we can even start to plan things, let alone how can we get community engaged. Understand that this is a delicate topic, but it really is the process that would make a difference for equity and having more voices at the table.
 - Would be willing to look at the timeline and think on it a bit. Want to make this process realistic and fair. Will sit on this issue and follow up with SAC to figure out how we can mitigate / figure out a realistic plan.
 - There are pros and cons of pushing the timeline out. For instance, it is hard to get a new mayor's attention as an interim director. Also if we wait for the next mayor to have a search we will not have a new director until maybe end of next year (there will be multiple director searches and each take 3-4 months). Concerned that it may send a wrong signal for arts and culture in the city and wouldn't give the political weight and momentum we need right now, particularly for the PDA to get up and running.
- What is the plan for spending the recovery dollars?
 - Will vary depending on the bucket – some will be RFPs, some direct assistance, etc. Goal is to streamline as much as possible while being thoughtful and get money into peoples' hands as much as possible. There are two parts 1) what is the recovery part to jumpstart the economy and remove barriers and 2) directly to folks to get them through - most anxious to get out direct assistance (1st half of funds which will be going out this year).
- Do you have recommendations for us around other opportunities within infrastructure/human services for artists to contribute to the livelihood of the city?
 - We need to maximize those opportunities. Talked about the need to knit together the recovery work to harness the talent and artists of Seattle. Arts community has been key to the wellness and healing of city during Covid.
 - Need to figure out at a larger scale both how to activate the city with arts and culture and how to tap into the wealth of talent to express the grief and create optimism and hope. Everyone is ready to have some fun, how do we do that as a city.

- Re: opportunities for arts community within infrastructure – Mayor will make it a challenge to department directors to incorporate.
 - As downtown recovers, empty storefronts will be an opportunity for artists/creatives to come together, especially for BIPOC communities.
 - Re: jumpstart funding strategy, is there anything for us to consider regarding your approach that will help us as we put together our advocacy plans together and think about strategies?
 - Mayor does not see there being a jumpstart pot; there is a general fund where pressures and demands on a general fund is formed together when allocating \$\$\$. Mayor sees budget holistically.
 - Will continue 100mil investment into communities, which will be roughly divided between a taskforce approach, a participatory budgeting approach, and an investment to stop displacement approach. Trying to build in a way to this an make ongoing commitment of City of Seattle
- Mayor's ending remarks: We are ahead of where we are in terms of reopening, which will make a difference on what venues can open and what kind of events community can have. If there are any important community-based events that you can think of that honors the need to be reflective and grieve but also pivot towards how to celebrate and come together – we are not generally issuing event permits at this time but – would be open to that!
- DM Washington will circle back with the Director's search timeline.

Created Commons Presentation

Briefing: Jenny Ku, Jason Huff

- Created Commons is an expansive multi-agency initiative that centers, engages, and employs artists, communities, and cultural workers to activate public space for community connections, resonance and resiliency. The program leverages multi-agency collaboration and the Office of Arts & Culture's inclusive programming and activation models to support economic and community recovery. Created Commons builds on the momentum of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Stay Healthy Streets and Stay Healthy Blocks and the success of our Viaduct Arts Festival and ALL RISE programs to activate our City's space in vibrant and creative ways in the Summer months of 2021.
 - Funding from Public Art program
 - Locations: Pioneer Square, Chinatown International District, Othello, Rainier Beach, Westwood, South Beacon Hill, Downtown core
 - Seattle Public Utilities thematic notes (for reference only, activation/programming are not required to be within these themes, but many artists and orgs are already working within these themes): Community Centered, One Water, Zero Waste nexus and interconnection with racial, climate and environmental justice and the Arts.
- SAC Questions/Comments:
 - Are there similar components with the Hope Corps program?

- Created Commons is part of the Hope Corps umbrella – it is on our radar to make connections. There will be documentation and feedback loop for Hope Corps in the long term
 - Civic impact/softer impact should be evaluated and documented (for example, through interviews with those involved).
 - For the viaduct event previously, there was a podcaster who was on site documenting and talking to folks.
- (Optional) ways for SAC to engage
 - Google Form <https://tinyurl.com/2021CreatedCommons>
 - Contact jenny.ku@seattle.gov

Directors Report

Briefing: Calandra Childers

- Mayoral forum and survey engagement – A survey will go out to candidates soon. SAC planning work is happening via CIC and we are seeking more orgs/folks to help with logistics.
- Former ARTS staff member article – directly related to issues of structural racism and white supremacy culture; POC were pitted against each other and harmed in this structure.
 - Affirming that ARTS is an anti-racist workplace
 - Office is having internal conversations – revisiting what is happening on a day-to-day basis and who we are today in 2021 and working together to move forward
- SAC Questions/Comments:
 - Suggests reaching out to the City Ombud office.
 - Even when there is an internal reporting tool, people are not inclined to speak up.
 - Creating systems within systems causes distrust. There may need to be another solution.
 - Are there opportunities for working alongside other departments?
 - There was an open letter from OPCD from women of color, which touched on similar issues.
 - What opportunities could there be for exerting leadership across City?
 - There are other networks also raising these issues and Change Teams across the City – there are ways to uplift and strategize together and we are picking a thread. Let's continue to discuss at SAC meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40pm.