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**SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION**

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Virtual Meeting

(Only Zoom due to tech issues in conference room)

**Commissioners present:** Kayla DeMonte, Yolanda Spencer, Megan Kiskaddon, Linda Lowry, Yoon Kang-O’Higgins, Leslie Anderson, Vanessa Villalobos, Avery Barnes, Dhyana Garcia

**Staff in attendance**: Allie Lee, Gülgün Kayim, Kelly Davidson, Kathy Hsieh, Ashraf Hasham, Jason Huff, Blake Haygood, Jeremy Beliveau, Otts Bolisay

**Guests:** Don Fels, Ed King, Brianna Canning, Amy Dukes, Lydia Aldredge, Chris Woodward, Luis Adan Jimenez, Jo Mikesell, Cynthia, Kate Nagle-Caraluzzo, P Elster

**Call to Order, Introduction, Land Acknowledgement (4:07)**

* Kayla called the meeting at 4:07pm
* Review of SAC meeting purpose, procedure, agenda
* Spotlight on local Indigenous artists
  + Louie Gong <https://louiegong.com/>
    - Founder of <https://eighthgeneration.com/>
    - Activist artist
* Approval of minutes
  + Vanessa moved to approve the April minutes. Avery seconded the motion. Approved.
* Public Comment:
  + Brianna Canning gave public comment in support of the Creative Advantage program.
  + Chris Woodward gave public comment expressing interest in admissions tax revenue.
  + Lydia Aldredge gave public comment in support of the Paragon sculpture.
  + Cynthia gave public comment regarding the potential arts connection with the City’s digital kiosks.

**Directors Report  
Briefing: Gülgün Kayim**

* ARTS Strategic Planning update
  + First officewide Assembly (offsite work planning session) held in late April at the Pacific Northwest Ballet. Staff also visited Path with Art – a great example of creative placemaking in our community. Understanding how to be nimble, work across divisions, learn about creative placemaking, prioritize work, etc.
  + Two more Assemblies will be held this year.
* Budget update – Allie McGehee
  + Entering executive phase of budget
  + April budget forecast showed significant shortfall in general fund and payroll expense tax
  + Rebalance process
  + ARTS is predominantly funded by Municipal Art Fund and Admissions Tax; less affected
  + Budget packet is due on 6/10 – we follow instructions by Mayor’s Office (MO)
  + Working closely with City Budget Office (CBO) on financial plan (5-year budget plan & exercise we do each year)
  + ARTS is on same-year funding model
  + Now is the time that SAC works on letter to MO, close to 6/10 date as possible – issues facing sector, recommended priorities to consider esp during lean times and federal impacts
* NEA update
  + Recipients of NEA funding received termination and withdrawal letters
    - Creative Advantage and work with OPCD have been impacted and they have submitted appeal
  + ARTS has posted available information/resources on blog: <https://artbeat.seattle.gov/2025/05/08/emergency-resources/>
  + ArtsWA will continue to get its funding, good news.

**SAC Questions and Comments:**

* Kayla – What is the difference between Strategic Plan and Cultural Plan?
  + Gülgün - Strategic Plan is focused on internally getting ARTS office organized and set up, talking about aspirations toward community, and reorganizing ourselves; the Cultural Plan will be community focused and external facing.
* Megan - How confident are we in the NEA appeals process given the NEA staff have largely resigned? <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/arts-directors-exit-the-national-endowment-for-the-arts-1234741434/>
  + Gülgün – important that we’re on the record, legal action being made by City, hard to say how things will play out
* Ed - Will there be an updated version for the Creative Economy Report, last published in 2019?
  + Gülgün – In conversation with OED on that, they carry the work; hopefully yes, but unsure at this time.
* Vanessa - I'd love to highlight how significant it is to continuously advocate for preserving the admissions tax to support ARTS, even during "good" years.
* Kayla – What are the potential changes or challenges that could impact ARTS?
  + Allie - 6 things we have with varying potential low risk of reductions are cultural preservation fund 4.6M from last year (1M every year for 4.5 years; general fund); Hope Corps Ballard and Hope Corps Capitol Hill; Strategic Investment Fund; Interbay activation funds; and carryforward items from previous iteration of Hope Corps.
* Vanessa – In addition to preserving funding, we are stronger with our collaborations. Would like to see opportunities to have further discussion on how to be integrated, negotiate with other projects like the City’s digital kiosk project, and help give back to community; would like to connect to things that SAC may not be aware of.
  + Kayla – Yes to SAC working with goals of the City to achieve what we’re trying to do.

**Co-Chairs Report  
Briefing: Kayla DeMonte, Holly Jacobson**

* Welcome new commissioners!
  + Ed King (Pottery Northwest), Kate Nagle-Caraluzzo (Town Hall Seattle), Jo Mikesell (Shunpike) introductions; awaiting confirmation hearing by City Council.
  + SAC 101 will get scheduled for new commissioners; existing members welcome as well
* Quick review – [SAC 2024-2025 Goals](https://protect2.fireeye.com/v1/url?k=31323334-50bba2bf-31321b84-4544474f5631-18db3503f31b7039&q=1&e=a03bceaa-04d2-4b23-adac-5755c65a6717&u=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fdocument%2Fd%2F16v5oViKL0yU0ASiEZ87pQHiyMMAuwkeNxZlCtXPUsyw%2Fedit%3Ftab%3Dt.0)
  + Focus today on Goal 1: Advocacy
    - Budget letter to Mayor coming up; SAC Co-Chairs will do first draft then share with full SAC for review and feedback. Primary message - Maintain funding for ARTS
    - Partnering with Inspire WA to get training on advocacy; more to come.
* SAC Annual Retreat
  + 8/12 (T); will figure out details in coming months. Likely to be second half of day.

**Committee Deep Dive – Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC)  
Briefing: Yolanda Spencer, Jason Huff, Blake Haygood**

* Yolanda gave an overview of committee work. Currently seeking co-chair.
* Jason and Blake gave an artwork overview, condition overview, project history of the Paragon Deaccession.
  + Jason - We don’t take deaccession lightly, however they do happen and typically when we have these, they’re usually for a loss of site or irreparable damage to a piece that can’t be replaced. This artwork has wooden components 30’ in the air – the wood has reached a state of degradation where something needs to be done, especially considering its height, it’s a public safety issue.
  + In April, Public Art Advisory Committee reviewed and recommended approval to deaccession Paragon. Next step is for SAC to vote on the deaccession today.
  + See detail overview, condition, and project history in April PAAC minutes.
  + Jason provided considerations of how to proceed
    - Artwork installed prior to Lane Lawsuit (2005) which restrict use of SPU funds
    - Maintenance Funds limited
    - Port of Seattle property
    - Public Safety (artwork fenced off since June 2024)
    - Replacement proposal overview
      * Notified artist that Artwork could not be replaced with PA funds
      * Artist request fundraising campaign – never materialized
      * Artist proposed having volunteers remove, rebuild the artwork (Sept 2024)
        + Crane services from Nucor to remove wood
        + Boat building from South Seattle CC (uncompensated)
        + Donated new wood and material
        + PA identified risk, Law found a path forward
      * Replacement proposal:
        + Artist offered opportunity to fulfill replacement proposal
        + Replacement would remain in the collection during fabrication
        + Artist rejected proposal due to insurance cost
        + PA offered to cover CGL Insurance
        + Artist refused
        + PA will leave the steel structure up for a year if he decides to take the deal
      * Recommendation for Deaccession
        + Repair is not possible with PA funds
        + Safety concern – endangering public safety
  + Don Fels gave an Artist Response
    - Wood was used for the boat structure very much on purpose, engineered and design to be out of harm’s way
    - Reflect the history of the site – wooden canoes of the Duwamish, wooden boats to head to see – we’re a place of wood and wooden structures
    - Claims the harm came from bureaucratic neglect – was delivered and given instructions to power-wash and reseal
      * Carried out over 2 decades, one time
    - Claims that ARTS has stopped caring for the artwork
      * Has “years of emails” that the work needs attention but that she was unable to complete the work
    - Repeatedly asked for maintenance and asked the port to prune the trees
      * Claims both agencies ignored requests
    - Claims the ants were never sprayed, and the trees never cut back
    - ARTS claimed none of his proposals were permissible, but he was never allowed to speak to the legal department directly
    - Nucor steel had agreed to move the sculpture – they would not be volunteers
    - Claims he was offered no support from ARTS or the City, even though the artwork belongs to the City.
    - Insurance cost was not the reason he rejected the contract – the reason is all that the contract says is what he has to do to satisfy the city, not one line about what the city or ARTS would do to help the project succeed. Didn’t sign for that reason.
    - It should be noted that great chunk of production costs were provided by the Port, not the City
  + Artist’s new proposal - In partnership with the Seattle Parks Foundation, Don Fels would work with Nucor to design, and they would fabricate a replacement for the decayed boat structure. A pared down abstraction of the boat would be produced in steel, with a few judiciously placed wooden elements, primarily the large ribs, included to suggest and recall the wooden boat. If using the existing wooden elements proves infeasible, we would fabricate new ones from donated old growth fir, with the old boat pieces serving as patterns.
    - Gülgün – This new proposal just came through a day ago and details have not been addressed, and there are no resources to do the work; we are still in the same place. Noting that deaccessioning is not a closed door. There is room to consider re-accessioning a new structure.

**SAC Questions and Comments:**

* Megan – Acknowledges the David and Goliath situation and dynamic with City and acknowledges to be one’s own advocate as artist. Question – sounds like there is room to have the two proposals mutually exist – to deaccession current structure but still leave room for new steel structure to be reaccessioned.
  + Jason – Deaccessioning the existing work allows it to change and ensures public safety.
  + Don – Not in disagreement if deaccessioning the existing work allows it to come back in; need help in working with government.

As the deciding body, SAC proceeded to move and vote on the Public Art Advisory Committee’s recommendation to deaccession the Paragon public artwork.

Kayla moved to deaccession the Paragon public artwork as advised by the Public Art Advisory Committee’s recommendation and noted that following the deaccession there will be room to consider and re-accession a new structure. Yolanda seconded the motion. Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 5:24pm.