

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

Hybrid Meeting - In-Person @ King Street Station 3rd Floor Panel Room OR Zoom

Commissioners present: Vee Hua, Vanessa Villalobos, Chieko Phillips, Holly Jacobson, Leslie Anderson, Ricky Graboski, James Miles, Jessica Caudle, Mikhael Williams, Kayla DeMonte

Staff in attendance: royal alley-barnes, Allie Lee, Kathy Hsieh

Guests: Matthew Richter

Call to Order, Introduction, Land Acknowledgement (4:11)

Approval of Minutes:

- Comment – Chieko suggested to add the following note/statement to the excerpt on page 2 regarding the Cultural Space Liaison Position not continuing into 2023:

Members of the FED had the opportunity to meet with royal about what has shared in Oct meeting—that the Cultural Space Liaison position was not being rehired. royal clarified the position formerly called the Cultural Space Liaison at ARTS is accounted for in the 2023 budget as a cultural districts liaison. This is a full time, advisory level position. The scope of work for this position is not determined.

- Chieko moved to approve the commission minutes from October pending the addition of the note/statement mentioned above. James seconded. Approved.

Public Comment:

- No public comment.

Information: Cultural Space Agency Q & A

Briefing: Matthew Richter, Interim Executive Director of the Cultural Space Agency

- Matthew provided a summary overview of the Cultural Space Agency – The Cultural Space Agency is a mission-driven, values-based cultural real estate development company chartered by the City of Seattle as a Public Development Authority (PDA). It is designed to secure long-term affordable commercial cultural space with community partners; to build community wealth through direct investment in real property; to create opportunities for ownership of commercial cultural space; and to partner with communities of color, with a particular focus on the needs of Black and Indigenous communities.
 - For example, the Cultural Space Agency partnered with Rainier Avenue Radio to acquire the Columbia City Theater. Rainier Avenue Theater owns 70% and the Cultural Space Agency owns 30%. The Cultural Space Agency acts as a managing partner and manages the real estate, while Rainier Avenue Radio occupies the theater and programming.

- The idea for the Cultural Space Agency grew out of the CAP report – [30 Ideas for the Creation, Activation & Preservation of Cultural Space](#)
- Its launch is the culmination of the City’s nearly decade-long focus on addressing critical issues facing Seattle’s cultural spaces and encouraging folks in the private and public sectors to lower hurdles for cultural spaces.
- Learn more at <https://culturalspace.agency/>

Questions & Comments:

- VV – In 2020 there was talk about a pipeline of organizations in the ready. I can imagine that is growing. How would organizations not on your radar be able to organize to get support or partnership from the Cultural Space Agency? Especially thinking about Latinx and Indigenous communities that have been left out - how can organizations be more tactical about getting support for programming?
 - MR – People can go to our website <https://culturalspace.agency/> and click on the “submit an idea” button to propose a project. There is also a governing council and constituency - the property investment and programming partnerships committee - who looks at project ideas, organizations with whom to partner, and spaces. This would be the pipeline committee involved in the conversation. The most interesting Latinx organizations we are working with now are Nepantla Cultural Arts Gallery and Cultivate South Park. There are multiple paths to connect with us, either through the folks on the governing council and constituency or through the website “submit an idea” button. Agree that as the city, county, community, etc. pivoted into a more conscious racial equity stance in philanthropy in the last 5-10 years, the Latinx community has been left out. The leadership of La Sala is on our constituency committee, and we are trying hard to make sure that community is well represented.
- CP – One of the things that came up at the last SAC meeting was around staffing; the different leadership structures at the organization and how they are separate from the City. Is there anything you can add on that that could be helpful?
 - MR – The City used to and now the Cultural Space Agency directly runs [the B.A.S.E. program](#), each cohort spends a year looking at cultural space and real estate, and once graduated they can join the constituency by a vote of the exiting membership. About 60 people have graduated from program and about 40-50 people consist of the core group. One of the things the constituency does is they nominate the governing council and board of directors. The governing council is 18 people, all of whom have been directly nominated by the constituency, embedded by them, and embedded by the Mayor’s Office and City Council. And then there are also staff – Matthew and Ebony Arunga are the interim staff as the organization has just started the process of hiring permanent staff. The organization’s connection to the City is that the Mayor’s Office and City Council approve the board of directors. Typically in PDAs, the Mayor appoints 1/3 of the board and City Council appoints 1/3 of the board. So it’s important that we found the most community rooted piece of the organization to generate the nominations. The Mayor and Council both have approval authority but the organization has maintained the nominating authority internally to the constituency – the most grassroots element of the organization. We are sort of behind the veil of City government from one

perspective - often people say a PDA is an element of government; from another perspective it's a non-profit, an autonomous organization. It is autonomous in terms of decisions around resources and programs - the City's limit on that is to potentially replace the governing council. If the City wanted to for example move a piece of property owned by City Light to Parks, it could do that with some bureaucracy, but behind the veil of City government, so it's much easier than giving a fire station to a community organization. Often we talk about PDAs as living behind the veil, which allows us to be directly supported by City government to greater or lesser degrees – that's a function of legislation, executive departments, and City budgeting. So one of the things we had explored in the run up to creating the PDA was a half million dollar subsidy for the Cultural Space Agency to ensure that its baseline needs were met. But when COVID impacted the admissions tax, the budget on which the half million dollar commitment was based disappeared on it's way out the door. So the City created a onetime \$1M allotment to stand up the Cultural Space Agency, spread out over 3 years. This has been the basis on which the organization has been built administratively. The organization has raised \$23.2M in the last year for capital projects and programs within organization, all currently balanced on an administrative base supported by the \$1M allocation. Currently looking for a strategy to ensure that we can effectively move the \$23M into projects with an administrative base that is going to continue.

- VH - What is the best way that you see SAC or arts community at large supporting the Cultural Space Agency?
 - MR – Support with how projects come into the pipeline - making sure that we are hearing about things where there is need. Making sure we are not overlooking, or people aren't assuming that we are already connected with projects that we might be looking for. Support with aiming people towards us with interesting projects is key. Greatly appreciate the advocacy from SAC that has been going on so far.
- HJ – Can you please break down the sources of the \$23M raised?
 - MR - 7 figures and above include 4Culture, City of Seattle Strategic Investment Fund, Paul G. Allen Foundation, Vulcan, Satterberg Foundation, and some anonymous high net worth individuals.
 - MR – Also, PDAs are not subject to the same rules as 501c3 organizations.
- For more questions/information, please contact Matthew at matthew@culturalspace.agency

Information: Sound Transit West Seattle/Ballard Extension (ST3) Impacts

Briefing: Holly Jacobson

Holly provided an overview of what is happening at the Seattle Center campus in regard to ST3 and the impact on the arts community there.

- There are concerns within the arts community mainly regarding the construction around Mercer and around Republican; 3 options are being proposed, which each impact and have potential repercussions on the organizations in different ways.
- Arts organizations in the area are already trying to recover from the pandemic and Mercer mess.

- This is a culturally rich arts corridor, and they are trying to work with Sound Transit around mitigation and trying to make sure the arts community is well represented in one unified voice. This has been difficult since with all three options there will be some organization(s) that will be negatively impacted.

Questions & Comments:

- RG – Have been involved in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement process since before the pandemic; for The Vera Project one of the Republican options could lead to relocation and two of the listed options would mean Vera would have to move, and it will be hard to afford a new space without city subsidy.
- HJ – There’s been a bit of change since the arena, but the Seattle Center is a place where there is a lot of cross pollination of arts organizations working together.
- VH – How is it possible that annihilation could even happen?
 - HJ – Arts and culture is taken for granted.
 - RG – Advocacy power of the arena, and there aren’t a lot of options; routing through the city is an easier path than through residential areas. Also the structures around the Seattle Center were built unstably during the world fair, and the level of vibrations from the drill underground could be potentially catastrophic.
- HJ – Determinations will be made in February.
- CP – If the current 3 options are all negatively impacting the arts community, is there a possibility to create a different option? How far can our advocacy go?
 - RG – The third option didn’t exist until later, and there might be an option that could be a mix and match. We need to get ST to do appropriate research, but they don’t want to revisit that portion.
 - HJ – Maybe the advocacy opportunity is to say quit messing with arts and culture, we are an economic driver, and don’t keep thinking we are expendable.
 - MW – I like this message and it’s salient that we are not just an economic driver but community engagement and cultural drivers too. Would like some transparency around feasibility studies – what are they planning to do to mitigate the annihilation of arts organizations? What are the avenues we can explore?
 - RG – Suggests connecting with Holly on this issue separately, before moving forward.
- MR – Julia Levitt a strong advocate for organizations on the Seattle Center campus and may be a good point of leverage and a useful partner.
 - HJ – FYI, Robert is leaving in January and Julia is going on maternity leave soon.
- VH – Who is the higher entity involve? County? City?
 - HJ/RG – There is a board, which includes electeds from the City and County and mayors of cities in Greater King County as well.

Co-Chairs Report

Briefing: Vee Hua, Vanessa Villalobos

- **Next Budget Committee Hearing Opportunity is on 11/15**
 - Are there volunteers who would like to go and provide comment re: items we asked for in the proposed budget response letter to Council?
 - Chieko Phillips plans to comment.
- **ARTS Director Position Hire HR Update**
 - In response to SAC's request last month to hear from SDHR on the ARTS Director position hire process, Maritza connected SAC Executives with SDHR staff Pam Inch, who attended the October SAC Executives meeting to answer questions and provide an overview of the timeline and general process of the search.
 - Planning is starting now through the end of the year, and starting in January, SDHR will start holding conversations with the community, employees, and a selection committee and will convene groups accordingly.
 - We asked for a community process, and they said they would keep us informed. It was not clear what the community process would look like, so SAC should discuss this.
 - Pam mentioned that one of the tools used in past was through survey to get feedback from the broader community on skills and the capacity of director. She also mentioned the possibility of syncing up schedules of community process with SAC meetings, so they can share out.
 - They hope to have a final decision by the end of April 2023.
 - Pam indicated that her office welcomed the idea of getting further input from the SAC.

Questions & Comments:

- HJ/VH – It was helpful to have Pam come and talk to us.
- HJ – How are they defining community process? How are they defining community? Need clarification.
 - CP – The process didn't sound like it would be community-led.
 - VH – Pam did say she would get input from SAC.
 - MW – Who will be shaping the scope of the job description? The arts sector has changed dramatically over the past few years, and this could be an opportunity for community to engage and weigh in on salient needs of the arts community broadly.
 - KD – After last month's CIC meeting, where we discussed a community led process for the permanent director position, Mikhael drafted a letter to the Mayor with these asks.
 - CP – In terms of finalizing the letter – would the broader SAC have interest in reviewing?
 - KD – Yes, Kayla will send to SAC to review and comment.
- CP – How should we set the 2023 workplan for SAC?
 - VH – Vanessa said that she wants to send a message out to all SAC to figure this out.
 - CP/KD - CIC and FED have workplans for 2022
 - CP – We usually have a retreat around April, but would like to do it earlier this time around.
 - MW – Recall in the past SAC had November retreats to prepare for the following year's workplan ahead of time.
 - HJ – Since it's already November, having a retreat this year is not going to happen; can we plan something in January?

- CP/MW – Maybe in the November and December committee meetings, committees can raise some priorities and bring it to the retreat in January, and at the retreat everyone can work on a plan that is comprehensive.
- VH – Confirming that we will plan for a January retreat.

Directors’s Report

Briefing: royal alley-barnes

- royal noted that the letter to the Mayor regarding the permanent director position search is a great idea and encourages SAC to send it.
- **ARTS Updates**
 - Budget – We are awaiting final City Council and Mayor 2023 budget decisions and will share the information once made available to us.
 - New Exhibition at ARTS - [IMMINENT MODE: US On View at ARTS @ KSS](#) - *IMMINENT MODE: US* is an immersive exhibition that pairs built environments with one-of-a-kind fashion. The exhibition features installations by eight teams that explore the broad theme, US, asking artists for a deeper examination of where we’ve come from, why our ancestors immigrated to this land, and how our cultural differences can find harmony. Each team will explore and celebrate their unique cultural heritage and express that through their work.
 - Tragedy at Ingraham High School – Would like to take a moment to mourn the student who lost their life and the Ingraham High School community impacted by the act of gun violence today.
 - Allie Lee will be going on parental leave starting mid-December and will return in mid-June. The office plans to hire an out of class staff to fill in for Allie.

Meeting adjourned at 5:16pm.

Zoom Chat:

Due to a technical error, the Zoom Chat for this meeting was not captured.