

Public Art Board

April 28, 2011



Members present:

Robert Todd, Chair
Honor Moor
Mark Koven
Sharon Trammel
Jaan Ferree
Julie Calhoun-Roepnack

Staff present:

Megan Shepherd, Special Projects Coordinator
Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent
Jenny Bowen, Cultural Arts Specialist
Roderick Simmons, Director

Guests present:

Robert called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

1. Approval of March Minutes

Mark motioned to approve the March minutes, Honor seconded, all approved and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Art Budget

Roderick described the two systems the City can use to acquire public art: pay-as-you-go and debt financing. City Council has requested the Public Art Board review the CIP priority list (which includes maintenance as well as enhancement and acquisitions), based on the 2009 conservation inventory. The Board is also responsible for making recommendations on future allocations.

Because of the funding structures, any large project or acquisition will have to be placed on a long timeline in order to save adequate funds. But the planning stages can happen at any point. After several years, this should create a predictable funding/work cycle, where one project's funding is ready while another is in the planning phases.

Council would also like for the Board to consider a policy for artist selection that is focused on regional artists. However, state laws regarding contracting must still be adhered to.

Robert asked if, because money is coming from CIP funds, acquisitions must be "objects," rather performances or temporary pieces. Roderick said that CIP is for assets

with a 30-year lifespan or more. So, funding for a performance would have to come out of the operating budget. So, for programming, the Board and staff will need to work with Council to build that into the operating budget.

Roderick clarified that there are various CIP categories: IT/technology and fleet are separate categories, for example. Staff can buy computers as part of the new recreation center and use CIP funds. Small things, like bus wraps and projectors, come out of the operating budget. Funds between CIP and operating cannot be transferred. He also noted that the operating budget has been flat for the past few years.

Robert felt that the Board could communicate more with Council, both showing appreciation for the 1% art allocation, and advocating for increased programming funding. Diane said staff presents the programming plan to Council in October, so we should start planning for it now. She suggested designating a sub-committee or a few members who she can keep up-to-date about programming.

Roderick said the Department would like to have a more consistent funding plan. That way, if funds aren't allocated one year, we will know exactly what the impact would be. It will also help us as far as fundraising, donations, and corporate partnerships.

Roderick emphasized that the priority list is flexible. If a great opportunity comes up, the Board can reevaluate the list. Robert asked how the pay-as-you-go system works, and if the money ever gets reassigned to other projects. Roderick said usually not; because it's a CIP allocation, those funds can't be used for operations (like pot hole fixing). If the City felt like it might have to cut projects, it would definitely come before the Public Art Board.

Diane said that next month, the Board will be asked to take action on the presented material regarding these budgetary and planning issues. She offered to meet with anyone or any committees that have questions.

Robert had heard of a new pending state legislation where, if a local contractor comes within a certain margin of the lowest bid, they will get the opportunity to match that bid and be selected. It was not known if this would be applicable in this case.

Roderick also said that we will build in a percentage for public art to each new departmental project. The goal is 1%, but it depends on what makes sense for each project. These might not be included in the priority list. For example, Town Branch Greenway will have public art funding, but it's not on the list. The Public Art Board will work with the project architects to select the artwork and artist.

Julie asked if the Board should liaise with the Greenway Commission. Roderick felt that they can operate effectively independently.

3. Role of Public Art Board

Robert reported that he, Honor and Diane met with some of the Downtown Master Plan Cultural Arts Implementation Committee members to coordinate scope and operations of the two groups. The Committee gave them a list of concerns related to arts and culture in Asheville. Many focused on events and festivals and the difficult permitting process. However, some of those permitting processes are simply going to be tedious and might not be able to be improved significantly. Robert felt like the festival permitting process wasn't really the purview of the Public Art Board. The Committee felt like the City had no appropriate board or commission to bring these issues to. The Committee would like more support for cultural events from the City and a smoother process.

Another of their concerns is the lack of an artist database. HandMade has a database, but just for craftspeople. They are also interested in continuing to find support for and highlighting the economic impact of the arts. Other concerns included (or things they identified for their new proposed committee to do):

- Marketing for projects and arts
- Resource development (fundraising)
- Education
- Advising to City Council (on public and private projects)
- Advocacy on Asheville Area Arts Council
- Collusion rather than competition
- Cultural programming, especially coordination with other sectors

After hearing about the Board's expanded scope, the Committee felt better about some of these issues and that there's an opportunity to have most of their needs addressed by the Public Art Board. There will also be positions opening up soon on the Public Art Board, should some of these members wish to apply.

Jaan's only concern was the festivals piece and where those issues might be directed. Diane said that outdoor special events permitting was in Cultural Arts until last year; now it's in Building Safety and it's up to them how they want to run it. Cultural Arts used to hold quarterly meetings for the public about how to fill out the permits. Last year, Cultural Arts processed approx 475 permits. So, people are clearly figuring the process out. Many of these are 5Ks, not a lot are arts festivals. So it could be a sticky issue for the Board to cover. She and Roderick are meeting with Building Safety and will discuss this issue.

Board members expressed their enthusiasm for expanding their scope to include cultural arts and cultural programming. At this time, however, they were not interested in handling festivals or the Nature Center. Honor felt like the expanded scope might change the composition of the Board, too—maybe include some event planners or naturalists. Mark felt like the Board should still be flexible about festivals and the Nature Center—if a cultural arts group wants to do a performance at Bele Chere, for example.

Diane said that Arts Parks at Bele Chere hasn't had a chair for the past 4 years, so the jury process and other arts-related activities aren't particularly strong. Bele Chere might have a stronger arts component if more arts professionals got involved. All Board

members were encouraged to attend Bele Chere, think about it, and make a decision afterwards. Until then, festival or Nature Center issues will be decided on a case-by-case basis. The Public Art Board will have the option to “pass” on an issue.

Diane will draft roles and responsibilities for the Board’s new scope. Then the Board can work on the wording/tweaking.

4. Public Art Cleaning Day

Jenny said there are 32 plaques that will need to be cleaned. On Friday, May 27th, the conservator will be here for two hours to demonstrate as a group the cleaning techniques. She can do up to 15 people in a group. The Board determined that 12-2pm works best. The training will be held at City Hall.

The Public Art Cleaning Day will be Saturday, June 4, from 9am-1pm (subject to change). The Public Art Board will be the stewards, overseeing the volunteers. The rain date will be Sunday, June 5 from 2-6p.m.

Board members requested that staff videotape the training for future use. Jenny will follow up with GreenWorks, the Urban Trail Committee, UNCA students, and Pack Square Conservancy to see if they are interested in being partners. We are looking for day-of volunteers as well as partners and trainers. We will also work with the City’s process to recruit volunteers. There will be a dress code requirement because of the chemicals.

Board members and staff discussed details of the event: music, publicity, refreshments, Mobile Art Lab presence.

5. New Business

Mark reported that he will attend the Americans for the Arts conference.

The meeting adjourned at 5:47.