

Public Art and Cultural Commission

January 26, 2012



Members Present

Jennifer Gordon
Gwynne Rukensbrod
Julie Calhoun-Roepnack
Honor Moor
Nancy Sokolove
Sharon Trammel
Robert Todd
Mark Koven (arrived late)

Staff Present

Diane Ruggiero, Cultural Arts Superintendent
Abigail Riley, Special Projects Coordinator
Jenny Bowen, Cultural Arts Administrator

Guests Present

Pam Myers, Asheville Art Museum
Chris Joyell, Asheville Design Center
Stephanie Moore, The Center for Craft, Creativity and Design
John Russell, Montford Park Players
Laura Hope-Gill, YMI

1. Meeting Come To Order

Robert called the meeting to order at 4:08

Robert says that the public comment time for each submitter of the NEA grant gets three minutes to speak. He informs the Commission members that their decisions should come from the written text in application, not what is spoken to during the public comments. He says that public comment is not required and he does not want to unfairly sway the decision if an organization decides not to utilize the time.

2. Approval of November Minutes

Robert says there is an error in the minutes at the bottom of page two in the second sentence of the last paragraph. He suggested the minutes be amended from "ad" to "and."

All were in favor of approving the minutes with the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Art & Cultural Commission Annual Report

Diane says that it the Commission is required to submit an annual report to the Mayor and Council each year. This document will be used to draft a presentation to the Council, and now is the time to make edits. She asks that the Commission members make a motion, and vote in order for it to be presented to Council.

Robert says that it feels good to read; however, when reading about the retreat, he took pause. Jennifer says that a retreat is knowledge gained working hard on issues. Gwynne asked what happened at the retreat. Diane says that the retreat is not public so it is not recorded and no motions are made so it is not official. Diane added that she will include a strategy for the retreat in the coming year.

Robert and Julie repeat that the annual report looks great. Robert says it is great to see what was accomplished over the last year and for new members to see what the Commission can do.

Gwynne moves to approve the annual report; Jennifer seconds the motion; and all are in favor. The motion passed unanimously

Diane gives a point of order to introduce the new Special Projects Coordinator, Abigail Riley.

4. Form Acquisitions Committee

Robert says the committee was always there, but it has not been active. Jennifer states that she wants to be on committee. Diane says the appointment needs to be made official by being acted upon. She adds that Harry Harrison was on it. Julie asks if he was head. Diane says that two members must come from Commission. She adds that the Acquisitions Committee had not needed to meet since Harry had left, but Diane now needs it to meet. The Commission needs to appoint members to it. Sharon says that she sits on another committee. Gwynne says that she wants it sit in on it. Diane repeats that Commission members are limited to two seats.

Gwynne makes a motion to accept Jen and Julie and members to the Committee; it is seconded by Nancy; and all approve. The motion passed unanimously.

Diane reminds the members that the committee is ad hoc, and it meets as needed. The members of the Committee wait for proposals that need to be considered. Then they meet. The Committee makes a recommendation to the Public Art and Cultural Commission; the representatives from the Commission can speak to the subjects during the Commission meeting and make a recommendation.

5. Subcommittee Roles and Responsibilities

Robert says that Honor and Nancy could not attend the November meeting. Therefore, the Commission tabled the action item for the January meeting in order to get more conversation on it. He instructed the members to look at the November minutes to remind themselves of previous discussion.

Diane says it was the drafts of each subcommittee. Jennifer says that she did not get a copy of the Education Subcommittee roles and responsibilities. Diane says that was already approved and she will send them all out.

Robert says three items came under discussion for Advocacy Subcommittee. He and Mark commented that Item V.2 could be split into two items: making “This Committee is tasked with promoting and recommending proposals” should be Item V.2 and “Defining best approaches and

presentations of proposals and who their listening audience is for proposal” should be Item V.3. Honor accepted changes.

Robert says that item V.3 needs a control measure in place as all Commission members can speak on behalf of the Commission. He wants a control measure for the Commission to speak as one body with the same message. Diane recommends obtaining an approval from the body before individual members speak to outside groups. Honor understands that the need for this and thinks it should have been worded that way.

Robert suggests that Item V.4 (attendance requirements) should be changed to 75 percent.

Honor feels the chair should be on this committee. Robert says that he is willing to participate.

Robert continues by reiterating Mark’s statements from previous meetings that advocacy is the members’ main reason for being on this Public Art and Cultural Commission, but they need education on how to properly do this. He says that this intent is not reflected in the subcommittee bylaws, but he urges members to take note as it is an important item.

Jennifer questions Item V.2. She thinks it will be easier if there are only preapproved proposals. Honor says that the bylaws should be changed to reflect this. She says proposals need to come here and be unanimously approved. Jen asks about further approval from the City. Diane needs to clarify “unanimous” to make the language official. Honor asks if it should be unanimous. Robert doesn’t think it needs to be unanimous. He asks if it could it be a simple majority? Diane says that Commission members can establish these rules as a subcommittee. She reiterates that it is up to the members of the Commission to determine management of subcommittees.

Robert says that maybe the roles and responsibilities should not read “unanimous.” Honor asks if it should be tied to dollar amount. Robert says that it needs to be an approved directive and yes move forward. It is a control measure. He asks if it would be acceptable to split Item V.2 into two items. He clarifies that Item V will now have six subsections. He adds that if these rules need to be changed in future, it will need to go to the committee. Thus, these rules and responsibilities need to be as accurate as possible.

If interested in serving, let Honor know.

Jennifer asks about the limit on service. Honor says it up to the Commission. She asks Diane about other committees. Diane says the maximum time allowed could mirror the service term on the Commission, three years. However, other committees have lower terms of service. She would recommend nothing greater than three years.

Jennifer says that fresh views are good, and she advocates for limiting the term of service. Honor says that this would help with community relations. Jennifer wants to edit the language to have a maximum of two terms of two years, including the chair. Terms are for two years with the option to having an addition term for another two years.

Mark Koven arrives, and Robert briefs him on business heretofore.

Jennifer moves to approve the Advocacy Subcommittee roles and responsibilities as amended. It is seconded, and all approve. Mark abstains. The motion is passed.

Robert clarifies the name of the Partnership Subcommittee is for historical purposes. The name does not imply a legal or contractual partnership. It is just a colloquial term for the subcommittee, which he would like to see reflected in the guidelines. Diane says that it should be in the document and will work itself out over time.

Robert asks if there is other business pertaining to the subcommittee roles and responsibilities.

Nancy wants to reiterate that the role is pre advocacy so that advocacy happens after and is to help find, guide or locate projects.

Jennifer wants clarity on the “recusing yourself” statement. She is confused. Nancy says that she took it from Mark’s Education Subcommittee verbiage. Mark says that it means that your vote on an issue will not help you politically or in a partnership with another organization.

Nancy says that it is important to know and understand the issues when the Commission is recommending funding projects. In addition, it is important to utilize the networking as a member to find opportunities. She adds that if a Commission member has a direct role, said member would know if there is a need to recues oneself.

Honor moves to approve the Partnership Committee roles and responsibilities as amended. Sharon seconded. All are in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Robert says it has been awhile since this process began.

6. National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant government partner recommendation

Three members recuse themselves: Nancy, Gwynne, and Mark. They step down into the audience.

Robert says that the Commission will be allowing the representatives from each proposal to speak for three minutes. He says that it is a presentation of what they have already submitted. It is not a question and answer session. He adds that the presentations will be given in alphabetical order.

Pam Meyers from the Asheville Art Museum: She applauds the Commission for their service. The Museum is in the middle of renovation and expansion. Its long range goals are to build a new building to anchor the Pack Square Cultural District. This project has been going on awhile. It has been approved by relevant city agencies, and it is a priority in the master plans around the City. It has been a year’s worth of community input, and it is ready to move forward without impediment. The next phase is design development and working with the design and arts community. Pam says that she wants to work with the City to help with next phase of design. She has a match in hand and a history of working with the City. She thinks it is an obvious partnership due to the opening of Pack Place and the building renovation is the next phase. She

adds that the Museum also has a long history of working with NEA and following grant guidelines. Pam handed out a picture of the new addition.

Chris Joyell from the Asheville Design Center: The Center wants to design and build bus shelters around the City. Chris says the Center asked for the minimum amount of money allowed by the grant. The bus shelters will incorporate recycled, repurposed, and sustainable materials. He says the shelters will express unique qualities for each neighborhood and meet design standards for the City. The Center will train community members to design the shelters. In addition the Center will work with Green Opportunities. The Center will not only be working with transportation but also individuals. The Center can provide shelters with creativity and imagination.

Stephanie Moore from the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design: She says that the City has embraced and strengthened the arts. There is a lot of value in crafts and its artists. The Center has been hurt due to the economy. She thinks that Asheville needs to start leveraging arts again and especially craft. She says that the City must reinvest and re-teach heritage in today's terms. She wants to reclaim Asheville's community identity for craft. If the Center is given the ability to apply for the grant, it will spearhead programming to educate on the current role of craft. The Center is working in all sectors to propel craft forward. Robert asks her to stop at three minutes. She continues that they want to mobilize networks and community to build their programming by March 1.

John Russell from the Montford Park Players: The Players want to cement the vibrant Montford neighborhood with a renovation of the amphitheater. John says that it will allow them to meet the needs and expectations of the community members. The Players have provided an outlet as participants and visitors in the area. He says that the Hazel Robinson Amphitheater is deteriorating, and the Players plan major upgrades including meeting ADA standards, guest services, and a new building that will feature spaces given to other performing arts groups. John adds that the Players have developed an audience that spans demographic levels. They have tracked 25 percent of out-of-state visitors to see the Montford Park Players have contributed to local economy. In addition, they provide local residents with a creative outlet. John feels that the project will provide a rare and wonderful experience. He thanks the Commission for the consideration of the Montford Park Players.

Laura Hope-Gill from YMI: Laura provided the poster for last year's Word Fest. She says that the demographic among the poets in the past have been mostly white people with only one minority group represented. She says that poetry helps us move through difficult times. She wanted to put this theory into practice. YMI asked how they could use this knowledge of poetry to help a community. They decided they could use this to heal the race divide. Now, they have had poets representing 23 different groups in the past four years of festival production. The goal is to fill the void that the end of the Dodge Poetry Fest in New Jersey created. That festival attracted 50,000 people. She thinks that Asheville could attract that many if it were given the opportunity to grow the Word Fest. She thinks that the City has an advantage for being better than Newark where the festival currently is. YMI has poets already lined up this year. She feels there are many voices that she wants to bring to Asheville to speak.

Robert says this ends public comment section. Diane gives an overview of the specific purpose of the Our Town grant. She provided the members with a summary, but she feels that it is difficult to capture all things the NEA wants for the grant for the grant in the small summary.

She says that this year is technically the third year of the award. The first year it was named the Mayor's Initiative Grant. In 2008-2009, the NEA gave funds for to local governments to provide funds for shovel-ready projects that had to stop due to a lack of funding. In its first year, the City put forward an application to acquire a piece of public art. It was seeking \$25,000 in matching funds. Last year, the City partnered with the Asheville Art Museum. This process for choosing an organization to partner with went through the Recreation Advisory Board last year. However, due to the increased roles and responsibilities, the Commission will now own this process.

The recommendation will be taken to the February 14th City Council meeting. They will be given all the proposals along with today's comments. Diane tells the members that Council may or may not accept the Commission's recommendation. The amount of funding to be asked for is very specific. In addition, there must be matching funds, and the organizations can not use Federal dollars for matching funds. However, in-kind matches can be used. These regulations are put into place in the spirit of collaboration.

Diane continues that staff reviewed the situation and made the determination that the City did not have a strong enough proposal. They opened up the process for other organizations that need a partner. The City of Asheville will partner with one organization in order to forward the process. Diane says that there should be a measurable benefit in the project proposed. When reporting is complete, there is an expectation that the organization has measurable statistics on the outcome of the project. It is important for the project that is chosen to have a sense of place. She adds that to revitalize local economies is also an important aspect of the project.

Robert gives a point of clarification. He says that YMI needs to apply for the \$25,000 award amount. Another clarification, he adds, is this is not an application for the NEA grant. This is to partner with Asheville.

Diane says that the Commission needs to keep in mind if the project will meet NEA guidelines.

Jennifer asks for a timeline. Diane says the NEA grant application is due March 1. Sharon asks if the Commission needs to make a decision today. Diane says yes.

Julie asks how they should choose. Diane suggests following Council's guidelines. Each member will be asked their recommendation, and the project with the most votes will be the Commission's recommendation. Council will make the final decision.

Robert summarizes what Diane stated as to what the NEA is looking for. He thinks that all proposals are ready to move forward within this year. He thinks they have all met that standard. He says the Commission needs to think realistically and critically from the NEA's guidelines and perspective. He adds that these guidelines are harsh and have a specific view of what they want to fund, which is a creativity and urban development.

Jennifer reiterates what Robert said. She adds that this is essential to who the members should select. It needs to be something that is realistic and can be accomplished in a small amount of time. And Diane adds with less money than in the past as the NEA awarded grants up to \$250,000 last year.

Honor asks if the NEA has the capacity to give \$150,000. Diane says that amount is within the guidelines. She adds that the NEA speaks to about the amount and how it is given.

Robert asks if the program is statewide. Diane explains that this is a national grant.

Jennifer asks if certain cities got permission. Diane says that last year organizations were asked to submit a proposal and, if selected, were invited to apply for the grant. This year however, the NEA is taking applications directly. She added that around 450 proposals were submitted last year. From the audience, Gwynne adds that 51 projects were awarded last year. She says that it is very competitive, and it is a nationwide competition. A project in Wilson, NC was the only grant awarded in North Carolina last year.

Julie asks if there was funding consistency last year. Diane says no.

Julie says there are three projects she would like to see accomplished, but she wants to lean toward the less expensive one. Honor says that does not have an impact on if the grant will be awarded.

Jennifer wants to highlight that the NEA is looking for creative and innovative projects that leads to job creation and getting the community invested in revitalization.

Honor asks how the Commission should proceed. She is concerned because she needs to leave.

Robert has a clarification. He asks if Diane and staff evaluated the submissions. Diane says she ensured that she checked with the NEA if there were any questions. She felt they all met the basic requirements.

Robert has a question regarding the Montford Players group. He questions the City of Asheville's buy in for renovating the Amphitheatre. The funding is not entirely in place. He asks Diane if it would be realistic to accomplish their project if it were chosen. Diane doesn't want to comment on how realistically it could be accomplished. She confirms that it is City property, and the players have been in conversations with Roderick and Debbie. However, they are not far enough along in those discussions to have everything worked out. The Players have done some renovations in the past. There is a new stage structure, and they have been good about communicating with the Department. She does not know if the City is ready to renovate the Amphitheatre, but the project has no impact on the City because it is for design drawings, not construction.

Jennifer says her concern is that they only have \$211,000 out of \$2 million committed. Sharon agrees, and says that it is a big project. She questions if it could be accomplished with the NEA funding. She loves them but, she does not think they are ready.

Jennifer says the NEA wants to see their money used.

Robert says the Commission's subcommittees can reach out to assist the Players, educate them, and offer guidance. For example, the Commission could tell the Players they need to secure more funding.

Jennifer says that if they are using City property, the Commission should help them with this project. Robert says the new roles and responsibilities forces the members to do this.

Robert thinks the decision should be based on a question of scale.

Jennifer asks if the members can choose their top two preferences. Robert approves.

Honor chooses the Asheville Art Museum and Design Center based on the NEA's guidelines. She says that the Museum has a long track record, has the ability, and is centrally located. She says that from an economic standpoint, these organizations are good for the region. They are easily prepared to be evaluated. She thinks the Museum is the best local organization for collecting data and improving upon itself. She adds that it is the largest visual arts organization in Western North Carolina. Although the grant is big, she thinks they can do it. She feels the same way about the Design Center. The Center has a good ability to work with local government. She says that she is thinking about all parts, not just one. Honor chooses the Asheville Art Museum as her first choice.

Sharron agrees with everything Honor said. She thinks the "funness" of the Design Center is wonderful and creative. She adds that the museum has the ability to carry it out. Its impact is big. The Art Museum is her first choice.

Jennifer says that the Design Center is the best project to fit the guidelines. She tells the Commission to go back to the NEA grant wording for "innovative". She does not feel that the Museum's proposal is innovative. They will finish the project. She thinks the Design Center is a better choice because it engages the community. She does not feel that that Museum project does that. Jennifer asks Pam Myers about the designer being from New York City. Pam answers that there are also locals working on it. Jennifer says the Design Center is her first choice.

Julie wants to group the Montford Community Players and the Asheville Art Museum together. She feels they are tied for her second choice. She feels they are both big, important projects, but she does not think the NEA will fund these projects, based on their criteria. She agrees with Jennifer and thinks the Design Center project will fulfill the guidelines. She adds that as a resident, she thinks there is a huge need for some changes and the Design Center's project is exciting. She feels there is something wrong with our community center at Montford. She hopes everyone can get the money for their project. The Design Center is her first choice.

Robert says that he feels bad if he implied the submitting organization needed to leave. \$425,000 is the total funds the organizations are asking. He does not feel this is a large amount. He feels

great about the proposals and hopes it is inspirational and in reach as the Commission moves forward to offer its assistance.

Robert chooses the Asheville Art Museum as his first choice and the Design Center as his second choice. He thinks these projects leverage the community with their programs and have a clear input and output. It is a matter of scale for him. Although the Museum applied last year and did not receive the grant, he hesitates to choose it. He thinks it might be due to larger community implication. He says that he is stuck on the matter of scale. He thinks the decision might come down to vote.

Robert has reservations about the Design Center because he is concerned that the Transportation Department will not partner with the Center. He asks Diane if Transit has been involved with the project and the Center. She says she talked to transit. She says they have all been working very closely together. Transportation has been working on a set of guidelines for shelter specifications. Transit is looking at it as the next step for bus shelters and using them as prototypes.

Jennifer says that the Design Center's project is a key component of the NEA's guidelines because it changes laws and policies. Diane says that was in their proposal.

Robert asks for further discussions. He summarizes everyone choices.

Jennifer does not think that voting based on the scale or size of the project will make a difference for the NEA.

Robert says that his decision is based on a question of scale, but he says he agrees with Jennifer. Although a museum is a typical institution, he does not feel the museum is under the same umbrella as other museums. He says it is interactive and innovative. The Design Center, he says, is serving schools and neighborhoods with 16 percent of transit users. He can see they have done their homework. He feels both are good for leveraging their work. His choice is the Museum for his number one, and the Design Center is his number two choice. He wants the Design Center to raise more money, but he still thinks it is an excellent opportunity.

Sharon adds that there are local people who have been talking about the Design Center's project. Jennifer agrees with Sharon. Sharon says there are other organizations that can work on this project as well.

Sharon moves for Council to support the Asheville Art Museum for NEA Our Town grant; it is seconded by Honor. The vote in favor of the motion is three. The vote against the motion is two. The motion is approved.

Robert asks for another motion.

Jennifer asks if when the Commission goes to Council, they can recommend both projects. Diane says that the expectation is that the Commission make one recommendation to Council.

Jennifer moves to recommend the Design Center for the Our Town grant; Julie seconds it. The vote in favor the motion is two. The vote against the motion is three. The motion fails.

Gwynne says in the future, she strongly encourages the members to attend the Our Town webinar the NEA offers. She says that many issues at play make it more competitive.

Robert thanks her and agrees. He adds that judging by the input and discussion, he could see that the Commission members were energized.

Jennifer adds that it is the role of the Commission to partner with these organizations in the future.

7. Cultural Arts Update

Diane says that she sent the update to everyone via email and hoped they read it. Robert thanks her and says that it looks good.

8. Old Business

9. New Business

Robert asks for an update on the timeframe of the retreat. Diane says that staff is looking at it and have action items for council. She adds that the Chair and Vice Chair positions are past their term limits and need to be voted on. She urges members to think about that for a future meeting. Julie asks if Robert can continue. Diane says there no term limit on these positions.

Jennifer says that she would like to be Vice Chair. Diane says action items will come. She tells everyone to think about who they want to nominate.

Robert clarifies they are not setting a date for the retreat yet.

Sharon asks if she needs to give Diane the meeting dates for the subcommittees. Diane says the Commission members are in charge of the subcommittee members. Sharon adds that she needs to see the logistics of the committee, and a cleaning procedure is needed.

10. Meeting Adjourned

Robert adjourned the meeting at 5:48.