



Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2023
10:00am – 1:00pm

In attendance:

Councilors: John Schratwieser, Lily Bengfort, Delegate Cheryl Pasteur, Chris Sloan, Joel Snyder, Paige Hernandez, Shelley Morhaim, Tonya Miller Hall, Albita Rivera, Greg Tucker, Ruby Lopez Harper,

Staff: Steven Skerritt-Davis, Alysha Suryah, Cathy Teixeira, Chad Buterbaugh, David Mitchell, Emily Sollenberger, Kirk Amaral Snow, Laura Weiss, Liesel Fenner, Ryan Patterson, Nora Howell, Rosa Chang, Ryan Koons, Tammy Oppel, Derrick Quevedo

Call to Order

John called the meeting to order 10:01 a.m. and reviewed guiding documents

Creative Assignment

Albita led the Creative Assignment - Pits and Peaks

Approval of September 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Lily moved, Shelley seconded, no abstentions, minutes are approved

Executive Director Report

Steven Reviewed

- Staffing updates
- Grantmakers in the Arts conference participation
- National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Leadership Forum participation
- Changes to Commerce Department reporting requests
- Poet Laureate Selection Process Updates

Staff Reports

Grant Programs Trends Summary

- Cathy presented data from across programs,
- Steven overviewed staff discussions about ways to address capacity around application volume and applicant frustration with



reduced number of grants (compared to Arts Relief levels) and reapplications

- Shelley suggested more staff discretion in recommendations and that the small, community-focused programs are very appealing
- John raised that considering the roll of state arts agencies and being clear about that in the strategic planning process could be helpful, noting that the council can only do so much and cannot be all things to all people.
- Cheryl added that it is important to be clear that MSAC support is not just for larger groups, and we must continue to offer support for smaller groups, repeat applicants who haven't been funded
- Joel questioned if capping grants given in particular categories would be possible, balancing breadth of funding vs. giving fewer larger grants; Steven clarified that it is MSAC's practice to award full requests within funding ranges for project grants- trusting applicants to ask for what they need and honoring those requests - and emphasized that staff was at the beginning of the conversation
- Ruby added that capping grants isn't unusual from an equity perspective

Arts Capital

- Ryan Patterson gave updates on the Capital Grant program building process

Executive Committee Report

John reviewed the Interim Officer Election process following Jackie Copeland's passing and his stepping down from Vice Chair due to other commitments.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

Steven gave updates about the strategic planning process

- Committee meeting in the afternoon
- Survey upcoming
- Council/Staff Retreat in March

Program Policy and Evaluation Committee Report

- GFO non allowable line items policy vote:
 - All in favor, no abstentions, motion is approved
- GFO non allowable line items timeline vote:
 - All in favor, no abstentions, motion is approved
- Arts capital policy vote:
 - Ruby moved to accept the recommendation, John seconded, all in favor, no oppose, no abstentions, motion is approved



- Grants for Artists policies vote:
 - John moved to accept the recommendations, Chris seconded, all in favor, no oppose, no abstentions, motion is approved

Finance Committee Report/Fiscal Update

- Steven explained due to the Fiscal Officer position being vacant, no update has been prepared. Staff are working with the Commerce Budget Office on an update and will have one for the next meeting, if not sooner.

Matching Funds Waiver

Staff presented a recommendation for a one-time waiver for the Grants for Organizations match requirement for Baltimore Festival of the Arts due to minimize the impact of match requirement on organizations recovering from the pandemic and experiencing leadership transition.

- John expressed concern with funding the organization for three years with little activity; Emily explained that they have received funding as other organizations have during the pandemic and clarified other waivers have been approved in the past
- Chris asked about the source of other funds; Emily explained that they come from City and sponsorship funds
- Joel shared John's concern
- Ruby raised that the pandemic and its effects are still being felt, asked about other underlying issues
- Chad raised that MSAC is currently considering professional development curricula on the topic of seeking funding
- Lily asked about the income used to calculate the grant amount and asked if staff had confidence that the organization was on its way to recovery; Emily explained that the re-use of financials that MSAC allowed during the pandemic kept the grant high and future grants would be based on more current financials
- John raised that it was likely Artscape only happened in 2023 because of MSAC funding, this is precarious for an organization and not responsible for the field
- Chris noted that the amount of the error is larger than some county arts agencies have budget for, called it a bailout
- Joel agreed but noted the pandemic as an extraordinary experience
- Steven noted previous approvals of match waivers due to pandemic in the spirit of minimizing the impact of the pandemic; expressed confidence in direction of leadership and improving relationship between the City and organization
- Ruby cautioned about being too risk averse in decision making



- Albita asked about ensuring that this doesn't happen again; Steven explained that using more current financials will help guard against an impossible match requirement
- Councilors discussed the wisdom and fairness of a waiver and added amendment of approval on condition that no further match waivers be granted to this organization.
 - Ruby moved, Joel seconded, in favor - Joel, Albita, Lily, Ruby, Shelley, Paige, oppose - Chris, John, no abstentions, motion is approved

Legislative Outlook

Nicholas Cohen, Executive Director of Maryland Citizens for the Arts shared a preview of the legislative session

Interim Elections

Interim chair elections nominees: Chair: Chris, Vice Chair: Albita

Other noms: none

- Interim Chair vote: Lily moved, John seconded, all in favor, no oppose, no abstentions, motion is approved
- Interim Vice Chair vote: John, Lily 2nd, all in favor, no oppose, no abstain, approved

Accessibility, Equity, and Justice Sharing

Grantmakers in the Arts Training available in May

New Business

Final Thoughts/Adjournment

John adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m.