



Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

September 12, 2024

9:30am – 1:30pm

World Trade Center

401 E. Pratt Street, Ste 1400, Baltimore, MD 21202

In attendance:

Councilors: Albita Rivera, Chris Sloan, Greg Tucker, Senator Kagan, Joel Snyder, Ruby Lopez Harper, Shelley Morhaim, Marva Jo Camp, Monique Walker, Kathy Beachler

Staff: Cathy Teixeira, Chad Buterbaugh, David Mitchell, Derrick Quevedo, Lizzie Morales, Emily Sollenberger, Kirk Amaral Snow, Laura Weiss, Ryan Koons, Ryan Patterson, Steven Skerritt-Davis, Tammy Oppel, Brad Bittner, Jess Porter, Leslie Gillard, Nora Howell, Elizabeth Morales, Alysha Suryah

Call to Order

Ruby Lopez Harper called the meeting to order at approximately 10:15 a.m. and reviewed the guiding documents.

Creative Assignment

Ruby asked attendees to spend 15 minutes being intentionally creative.

Chair Remarks

Ruby lauded and acknowledged the MSAC staff for their communication efforts and work. She also acknowledged Council members for being participatory and being responsive. She also acknowledged new Council members, and acknowledged those involved in the new Strategic Plan.

Approval of June 6, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

Greg moved to approve the minutes. Marva Jo seconded the motion. Kathy abstained. All in favor, the motion passed.

Executive Director's Report (Skerritt-Davis)

- Steven acknowledged new hires to include Leslie Gillard, Brad Bittner, Jess Porter, and stated Ryan Patterson accepted the promotion to the Program Director position for Public Art.



- Steven stated 4 contractual positions have transitioned to permanent positions.
- Working on other position transitions and new positions.
- Special Projects and Grants Associate position posting is open until September 23. Steven asked the Council to share the posting for applications.
- Budget Cut Reviews - There was a special meeting regarding the budget cuts, with a condensed timeline.
 - Steven reviewed the FY25 Budget Reduction slides.
 - The budget cuts were discussed publicly in the July 23 Coffee with the Council.
 - A grant awards notification was sent to grantees.
 - Maryland Citizens for the Arts (MCA) made a substantial advocacy response to the budget cuts, for legislatures by the administration.
 - MSAC received several positive responses and thank yous from smaller arts organizations.
 - Received a response for clarifying questions from a larger organization. MSAC met with them and have not received a follow-up response to date.
- Grants Update - Steven reviewed Grants Update slides.
 - Steven gave a breakdown of General Operating Support, Legislative Line Items, Creativity Grant Budget and Monthly Programs.
 - There are 2 grantees from the Grants for Organization (GFO) portfolio that previously were approved to receive GFO grants. Their grants were smaller than grants typically received in the GFO category. Emily Sollenberger and Laura Weiss contacted all organizations in that position to request switching from GFO to Creativity Grants.

Discussion

- Senator Kagan - How do individuals and small organizations know about these grants? How much consideration for geographic diversity?
 - Emily - Creativity grants are the first stop for organizations and are seeing tremendous growth. Seeing record numbers on the Eastern Shore, Southern and Western Maryland. Able to support smaller organizations quicker.



- Other Updates:
 - Arts Incubator Workgroup has been formed. Steven thanked Senator Kagan and Delegate Pasteur for helping with establishing the workgroup. We're almost fully appointed, a report is due in January, and the first meeting will be in September.
 - Poet Laureate has been named, and the appointment will be confirmed on September 16 at the Clifton House. The First Lady will present a citation to Lady Brion, and the press release will go out after the event.
 - Annual Report Preparation - Our report is due to the General Assembly imminently. Steven thanked Chad and Alysha, and staff for their contributions. Steven will share with the Council when it's ready for publication.
 - NASAA Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award - The award will be presented to MSAC at the Assembly in San Juan, PR in October. The Land Acknowledgement Project is the recipient of the award. Steven thanked Ryan Koons for his efforts on the project, and will accept the reward.
 - Coffee with the Council - Steven is rebooting, and will reach out to Council members for topics. Some sessions will be topic specific and invite guests to present or be part of the conversation, and some will be an open discussion with constituents.
 - National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) - NEA has notified us of a routine procedural audit. We're also preparing our FY26 application for an NEA grant. We're able to apply for arts and health funding to plan or implement a project. Steven asked for ideas as we prepare the application.
- Email Updates - Steven emphasized the importance of responding to emails for Councilors.
 - Steven requested feedback from the Council as to why email responses have slowed. Greg suggested a text alert. Marvo Jo suggested a one day/week summary. Ruby suggested a due date in the subject line.
 - Leslie will send an email regarding panel monitoring to the Council soon.
 - Leslie can send a weekly update in "Inside the Council".



Discussion

- Marva Jo - Is there a list of opportunities for Council members to help with, such as conferences or events.
 - Can add to the top of "Inside the Council".
- Joel - Is there a role for the Governance Committee to help Councilors respond to administrative votes and observing panels.
 - Ruby will address in the Executive Committee report.

Staff Reports

- Panelist Data - Geographic Representation
 - Cathy reviewed the FY24 Panelist Review slide showing total panelists, total panelist-reviewed applications submitted, and the paper review, which compared panelist geographic representation vs. application geographic representation.
 - Cathy then reviewed a State region chart broken down by counties.
 - Doing well with representation in the Baltimore Region, as 51.6% of total panelists and 52.2% of total applications came from that region.
 - We could be doing better in the Suburban Washington Region and Southern Maryland Region.
 - Doing well with panelist representation in the Western Maryland, and Upper Eastern Shore Regions.
 - Doing well in most of the Lower Eastern Shore Region.
 - We only had 1 - 2 panelist applications from Calvert, St. Mary's, Caroline, and Somerset counties.

Discussion

- Councilors asked how many panelists we engaged in total?
 - 124 total panelists
- Joel - Would like more encouragement from staff and Council members to get more applications from various regions.
 - The staff acknowledged that as we build Program staff we'll be able to do more work in this regard.
- Accessibility Coordinator Updates - Lizzie gave her roles and responsibilities as Accessibility Coordinator.
 - Made some clarifying updates on the website's Accessibility page regarding contact information, grievance process, how to translate our website to other languages, and public services offered.



- Lizzie is working with staff and other stakeholders on updating and working on Section 504 Self-Evaluation Workbook, which is required for grantees by NEA, and is updated every 3 years.
- Lizzie and Ryan Koons are collaborating on the Tribal Accessibility Survey, which is a continuation of the Land Acknowledgement Project. A survey was sent through NASAA to gather information on how other state arts agencies have policies and practices to help serve tribal communities and other indigenous groups. Looking at strategies and models to adapt locally.

Discussion

- Ruby - Would it be helpful to connect to the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) to see if they have insights from the Tribal Communities on strategies and models? Yes. Ruby will provide a connection.
- Joel - Thanked Lizzie for her work on accessibility. Asked if the bi-weekly staff meetings were internal or open to the public.
 - Internal but some ideas on doing public-facing events.
 - Joel encouraged getting the word out to artists with disabilities, and audiences with disabilities.
 - Joel is willing to share a report from NASAA for new Council members, and would like a full review from MSAC on what's offered for accessibility projects through our existing categories.
 - Steven - MSAC is working on accessibility issues on an ongoing basis.

Discussion

- Marva Jo - What does accessibility encompass?
 - Physical, cognitive, or anyway the artist identifies as an accessibility issue.
 - What are the politically correct words to use?
 - Derrick - Identifies himself as a person who is disabled, but there's no universal language, as it's a personal choice.
- Joel - Added that there are invisible disabilities. Suggested avoiding euphemisms, but see the person with all kinds of abilities.

Executive Committee Report

- Ruby - Some of the updates from the committee meeting will be shared in the PPE Committee Report.
 - The Governance Committee is being asked to review the By-Laws and the Equity and Justice Statement for revisions.
 - Councilor engagement will be reviewed also.
 - Still need to seat a Governance Committee chair.



Fiscal Report/Finance Committee Report

- Joel - Concerned over defunding for the arts in the state of Florida, as well as cutting funding for the arts in Miami-Dade County, FL.
 - Joel thanked Brad and Steven for the finance data.
- Joel reviewed the reduction in funds from FY24 to FY25.

Discussion

- Confused by Special Request Grants being \$0, but there's an available position for a Special Projects and Grants Associate.
 - Steven explained the difference between Special Projects of the state arts council and the Special Request grant opportunity.
- Questioned reductions in Arts in Education, Grants for Artists, Professional Development, Touring, and Public Art Across Maryland grants.
 - Steven - showed FY24 actuals that will be in our final report. We were able to relocate with savings and general administration for salaries for the state hiring process to grant programs. Actual awarded amount final numbers in grants programs are actually higher than what was budgeted in the beginning of FY24.
 - Joel suggested adding this additional detail and actuals to the Fiscal Report.
- Questioned why the Independent Artist Awards line item is \$0 in FY25.
 - Steven - Staff made the recommendation to budget Special Requests Grants at \$0 for FY25 as a supplemental program due to budget cuts. Special Requests and Special Projects are two different things. Will talk offline regarding the difference between what Jess does and the vacant Special Projects position.
 - Brad - Gave his experience on gathering fiscal data.
 - Steven - Encumbered numbers are closer to awarded numbers due to the work of the Grants office.

Program Policy and Evaluation Committee Report

- Albita - Reviewed line items and the GFO policy in a meeting on August 20.
 - After good discussion, the committee decided to continue with the policy of making line items non-allowable income for the purposes of calculating GFO grants, and continue checking what other states are doing with their policies, including talking with other representatives from other states at the NASAA conference.
 - For FY26 we will continue doing what we're doing.



Discussion

- Senator Kagan - Is in support of removing line items.
- Councilors discussed any policy adoption would need to consider how smaller organizations would be affected; would need to include communication to legislators about the impacts; be rooted in ensuring individual organizations aren't being privileged over the group.
- Greg - Has spoken to the Governor about line items, and suggested drawing up a letter from the Councilors to make the case of removing line items to the Budget Committee in the House and the Senate. Joes was in support.
- Marva Jo - Stated that MCA tried an industry response to the Commerce Secretary, with sensitivity for MSAC.
- Albita - Reiterated that we are hoping to get more resources from other states, and keep moving the needle, but will be sure that policies won't negatively impact smaller organizations.
 - Steven - NASAA does compile policies from other states and territories, and we can invite them to a council meeting.
 - Cathy - Staff can offer creative solutions with a formula for balancing allocations of different size grantees.
- Folklife Network Proposal - Albita described the proposal.

Senator Kagan motioned to approve. Shelley seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

Strategic Plan Committee Report - AMS Presentation

- Steven gave the history of the Strategic Planning Timeline.
- Steven reviewed the 5 Pillars and their associated goals for the strategic plan; Access, Awareness, Connection, Equity, and Leadership
- Steven reviewed the Implementation; Public Presentation, Approval, Staff Implementation Plan Development.

Discussion

- Senator Kagan - Who's responsible for implementation?
 - Steven - Staff, however we want to invite everyone into implementing this plan, to include all of our grantees.
- Greg - Suggests a regular review of how the pillars are activated.
- Ruby - There has been discussion and consideration. Would like a report out from MSAC staff during quarterly meetings.
 - Steven states we will review and update every 6 months to our website in a slightly different format from the previous Strategic Plan.



- Chris - Needs more focus towards entrepreneurs, commerce, businesses. Feels the audience is for taxpayers.
 - Michele Walter (AMS) - The Leadership Pillar is meant to address this issue.
 - Steven - We will emphasize how the plan promotes economic vitality in the public presentation.
- Joel - Supports Chris' concern, in addition to Arts in Education, and access for people with disabilities need to be stressed in implementation.
 - Steven - Welcomes Council participation in the implementation process.
- Ruby - Suggests moving as a single body when approving the Strategic Plan.

Albita motioned to approve. Kathy seconded. Chris opposed. All others in favor, the motion passed.

Maryland Citizens for the Arts - Strategic Planning Data Presentation

- Dana Parsons (MCA) - Presented Strategic Planning Data slides.

Discussion

- Marva Jo - Concerned about ramifications of action items in plan. Need to make a strategy to educate those in power how to share without them thinking there's no need for them to exist. Need a mutually beneficial, all-inclusive equitable system.
- Ruby - Agreed with Marva Jo to distribute funds in an equitable way.
- Monique - Gave an example of the impact of SMART, which started a collective of volunteer based art allies.
- Greg - What happens next?
 - Steven - Taking the MCA information along with AMS, the staff will keep all this in mind as we work on implementation.
- Greg - What if arts agencies aren't adhering to recommendations and commitments?
 - Steven - Equity Pillar includes equitable practices and distribution of resources; under that we can create accountability policies for grant programs.
- Ruby - States arts agencies along with MSAC are trying to move equitable practices forward within bureaucratic infrastructure. We will continue to hold ourselves accountable.
- Leslie will share the full Strategic Community Gatherings report from Dana.



New Business

- Councilors were encouraged to share ideas for a location for our December meeting and to send Leslie any Equity, Justice, or Accessibility Sharing.
- Ruby - NASAA link on Accessibility, and the link to Indigenous People can be sent to the Council.

Final Remarks

- Ruby - Reflect on the work the Council does as a person, professional, councilor, and staff to gain more clarity on tolerance of what we're willing to fight for, push for, and support.
- Ruby - Thanked everyone for being present, open, supportive, and inquisitive, and thanked the MSAC staff.

Adjourn

Ruby called the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:19 p.m.