



## SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

Seattle City Hall, Room 370

Commissioners present: Juan Alonso-Rodriguez, Cassie Chinn, Dawn Chirwa (by phone), Jonathan Cunningham, Priya Frank, Steve Galatro, Terri Hiroshima (Chair), Jescelle Major, Quinton Morris (by phone), Vivian Phillips, Ayako Shapiro, S. Surface, Sarah Wilke, Sharon Nyree Williams

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Randy Engstrom, Lizzy Melton

Guests: Julie-C (ACED); Stesha Brandon, Rebecca Brinbury, and Board Members (Seattle City of Literature)

Excused Absences: Jeff Benesi and Tracy Rector

### **Call to Order**

Terri Hiroshima called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m., with an acknowledgement that we are meeting on Indigenous land, that of the Coastal Salish people.

### **Approval of the November Minutes**

Commissioners were unable to review the November Minutes in advance of this session. Review and approval of the November Minutes will occur at the February session.

### **2018 Work Plan Retreat**

Seattle Arts Commissioners and Seattle Music Commissioners participated in a half-day racial equity training on December 8, with a second half-day session scheduled for this Friday, January 12. Randy Engstrom stated that planning for the 2018 work plan retreat has been paused to let these half-day trainings roll out and provide time to discuss improved work plan integration with the Seattle Music Commission (SMC) and the committees associated with SAC.

Jonathan Cunningham asked whether SMC has completed development of their 2018 work plan and Randy responded that he does not believe that they have. Juan Alonso-Rodriguez asked what is driving interest in increased collaboration with SMC. Terri Hiroshima stated that the desire for increased collaboration between SAC and SMC developed from the expanded volume of work currently undertaken by both ARTS and the Office of Film + Music (OFM), which has underscored the importance of partnering with other departments to ensure the work is successfully completed.

Cassie Chinn stated that an additional planning session with ARTS staff in advance of the 2018 work plan retreat is desired. There exists opportunity for ARTS and SAC to work more closely together in 2018 and this planning session with ARTS staff would lay the necessary groundwork. This planning session would include members of the Facilities and Economic Development Committee (FED) and select ARTS staff.



Vivian Phillips requested an update on the status of the proposed name change for the FED and Cassie Chinn responded that the change will be considered at the FED's January 22 meeting.

The Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) will also hold a retreat, including a half-day with ARTS staff and a half-day of PAAC members only. At the retreat PAAC will consider questions around the goals of the Public Art program and how PAAC can better support ARTS staff, as well as considering new processes for carrying out their work.

Vivian Phillips requested an Executive Session at a future meeting to discuss the work with the Seattle Music Commission.

### **Racial Equity Training II**

Seattle Arts Commissioners and Seattle Music Commissioners have their second half-day racial equity training this Friday, January 12; this session will build on the previous half-day training in December. At that first training, participants began a power analysis of the Commissions and will go deeper into that work on Friday, with the goal of exploring how different Committees can uphold racial equity within their work in 2018. This process could be a solid foundation for development of the 2018 work plan.

### **Leave of Absence Policy**

The Seattle Arts Commission bylaws do not currently include a leave of absence policy. In past practice, when Commissioners have been unable to serve for a period, we have thanked them for their service and they have stepped down from SAC.

Steve Galatro asked whether Commissioners are responsible for drafting this policy. Dawn Chirwa recommended looking at the leave of absence policies included in bylaws of other Commissions and using those as a baseline. Terri Hiroshima recommended that the policy be kept relatively open to allow for some Commissioner discretion. Randy Engstrom asked Commissioners to consider what the time limit for a leave of absence would be and if appointment of an interim Commissioner should be part of the policy.

### **Presentation: Artist Coalition for Equitable Development (out of agenda order)**

Randy Engstrom introduced Julie-C, an artist, organizer, and member of Artist Coalition for Equitable Development (ACED) who has been involved in the hip hop scene in Seattle for 17 years. Julie-C distributed copies of the ACED Phase 2 Campaign Launch document and the group's most recent open letter to Paul Allen and Vulcan.

ACED is focused on highlighting and protecting the local community in the Central District and preserving space in the district for arts and culture. Julie-C noted that the group is not a formal organization interested in pursuing nonprofit status and does not have directors. ACED participated in the 2017 Upstream Music Fest + Summit as a means of highlighting their position and, to date, have submitted two open letters to Paul Allen and Vulcan. ACED has not yet received a response from Paul Allen or Vulcan.

Julie-C stated that ARTS has transformative power in the conversation about gentrification, displacement, and the preservation of cultural space, as seen in the foundation laid by the CAP Report and in ARTS'



Commitment to Racial Equity. ACED recommends that ARTS consider funding artists to map out the ecosystems that exist in their communities, to help identify emergency situations as well as potential collaborators for continued work.

Vivian Phillips asked what ACED is requesting of SAC at this time. Julie-C asked that Commissioners offer support in whatever way speaks most to them, including calling for a response from Paul Allen and Vulcan, supporting the five points outlined in the group's September 19, 2017 open letter, and/or sharing the work of ACED with their communities.

S. Surface mentioned that they were part of a group in New York City working toward similar goals and recommended that ACED build coalitions beyond the arts to further strengthen their voice.

### **Presentation – City of Literature (out of agenda order)**

Stesha Brandon, President of the Board of Directors of Seattle City of Literature, introduced herself and the other Board Members present, and distributed copies of a FAQ and Advisory Board list. The Board of Directors began working with the City in 2013 toward joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (CCN) as a designated City of Literature; this designation was granted in October 2017. Mayor Durkan will decide on any future collaboration or partnership between the City and Seattle City of Literature once her administration has had time to settle in.

Seattle is now among the 180 cities worldwide to receive a designation in one of the seven disciplines recognized through the CCN, and one of 29 cities worldwide with the City of Literature designation. This is a lifetime designation and a city may only receive designation in one of the recognized disciplines. Iowa City is currently the only other City of Literature in the United States, although other U.S. cities are part of the CCN in other disciplines: Design (Detroit), Gastronomy (San Antonio and Tucson), Media Arts (Austin), Music (Kansas City), and Crafts & Folk Art (Santa Fe and Paducah).

The designation provides the opportunity to participate in cross-cultural educational and professional development projects across the CCN. Seattle City of Literature's Indigenous writers' exchange is an example of this type of project. In August 2016 writer Elissa Washuta traveled to Christchurch, New Zealand to participate in a literary festival and in October 2017 Seattle hosted Maori writer Nic Low. They hope to continue this program with Christchurch, while also expanding it to cities in the CCN.

Seattle is also required to participate in projects led by UNESCO, such as a current project in which each City of Literature submits two poems to be included in a handbound book that will be presented to the organizers of the 2018 CCN Annual Meeting in Krakow-Katowice, Poland.

Seattle City of Literature has begun some of the racial equity related projects the group highlighted in their application. They offer free trainings and workshops to the literary community around topics of race and social justice, with some of these topics developed in response to requests from community. "Literary" is defined broadly in this context, to provide wide access to the workshops and trainings. Priya Frank asked how SAC can help promote these free learning opportunities and Stesha responded that she will add Commissioners to the email distribution list, so that they may forward the opportunities to their networks.



Other ongoing work includes examining the vitality of Seattle's literary community to build a methodology that can be shared with other cities in the CCN and adding additional Board members. Stesha stated that over the next three years they will work to build infrastructure and hire staff to create a sustainable organization.

Sharon Nyree Williams asked how Commissioners can best help support the work of Seattle City of Literature. Stesha requested support in helping to reach people, especially those who may not consider their work to be literary or see themselves as part of the literary community, so that the organization doesn't become an echo chamber. Terri Hiroshima offered the Commission's support in sharing the designation and asked if the organization is already connected to the Civic Poet. Stesha confirmed that they are in contact with Anastacia-Renée and that she is one of the two Seattle poets contributing a poem to the book for Krakow. Stesha also requested that Commissioners send her the names and contact information for any literary organizations they are familiar with that are not currently part of the Advisory Board, so that she may reach out to them.

Terri Hiroshima asked what assets exist to promote the designation. Stesha responded that several cities have developed literary walks around the designation and that they are creating a set of free digital assets that people and organizations can use to call out that they're part of Seattle City of Literature.

### **Mayor's Arts Awards**

A planning session for the Mayor's Arts Awards (MAA) was held on Friday, December 7 and was attended by Commissioners Juan Alonso-Rodriguez, Sharon Nyree Williams, and Tracy Rector, along with ARTS staff. Calandra Childers distributed a summary of the group's discussion to Commissioners. The planning session was driven by a need to understand and envision what the MAA are, and utilized creative facilitation to develop these ideas. Together the group created a set of guiding principles that should shape the MAA:

- Investing in and encouraging excellence;
- Validation of the arts and soul of the City;
- Humanization and breathing life into the arts and cultural organizations;
- Celebration and positivity;
- Education: opportunity to learn, expand networks, create awareness.

This group, together with the Community Development & Outreach Committee, will pull together recommendations that will be brought to the February Commission meeting for consideration.

Sarah Wilke asked whether announcing the recipients in advance of the ceremony was discussed at the meeting and Calandra responded that the topic wasn't covered in this session, as the group was focused on visioning.

### **Chair's Report**

Terri Hiroshima thanked SAC for the honor to serve as Chair and expressed her thanks that Randy Engstrom will continue as ARTS' Director. Terri announced that Priya Frank accepted the position of



Vice Chair, which is intended to build leadership capacity early in a Commissioner's service. As Terri will miss both the March and April Commission meetings, Priya will serve as Chair in her absence.

Priya Frank stated that the idea of the Vice Chair position is a new one and hopes that this initial test of the position will lead to the development of materials and policies that will provide a template for the future.

Calandra Childers mentioned that she and Amber Rose Jimenez are developing Commissioner onboarding materials that should create a smoother process for new Commissioners in the future.

### **Director's Report**

Randy Engstrom expressed gratitude that he will be continuing as ARTS' Director and his appreciation for both the work of ARTS staff and SAC. With the 2018 work plan under development and the CAP Report and Creative Advantage Progress Report completed, Randy feels well prepared for discussions with the Mayor and her staff.

Randy will travel to Washington, D.C. in January to chair the United States Urban Arts Federation Winter Meeting, which coincides this year with the winter meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and could lead to opportunities to engage in discussions around arts/cultural policy.

Randy highlighted several 2018 projects and areas of opportunity, including continued investment and work around The CAP Report, the work PAAC and ARTS staff are doing to re-envision the Public Art program, and the future move of ARTS' office to King Street Station.

Randy mentioned two upcoming events. First, LANGSTON's new Executive Director Tim Lennon started this week and a welcome reception will be held at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute (LHPAI) on Thursday, February 1 from 5.30 – 7.30pm. On Wednesday, February 7 LHPAI hosts a screening of Inye Wokoma's documentary *A Central Vision* that will be followed by a panel moderated by Vivian Phillips and including Randy.

### **Closing**

Terri Hiroshima called for any announcements or upcoming events Commissioners would like to share.

Ayako Shapiro shared that United Way offers a free tax preparation service for anyone who makes less than \$60,000 per year. Ayako will send information about that service to Commissioners so that they may share it with their networks. Calandra Childers stated that ARTS will share information about the service on social media.

Sharon Nyree Williams will lead a Cinema Dissection of Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* at SIFF on Saturday, January 20 from 11am – 5pm.

Priya shared that the Figuring History exhibition community celebration will be held at SAM on Thursday, February 17 from 5 – 9pm and includes a performance by musician Dr. Julian Priester.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.**