



## DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

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#### FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – JUNE 16, 2025

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The regular monthly meeting of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities was called to order at 5:33 PM, Monday, June 16, , 2025. The meeting was held in a virtual format in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, with participation joining via Zoom

#### **ROLL CALL**

- Roll was called; the following Commissioners were marked present:
  - Commissioner Sims
  - Commissioner Habimana
  - Commissioner Masters-Barry
  - Commissioner Butler
  - Commissioner Wharton
  - Commissioner Torres
  - Commissioner Brienza
- Commissioner Steadman

#### **QUORUM**

A quorum was established.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** Chairperson Reggie Van Lee delivered the Land Acknowledgment.

#### **GRANTEE ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:**

Abbey Alison McClain – Queer Art Salon/ Executive Director of Touchstone Gallery. The Queer Art Salon – Exhibition is Presented by Abby Allison McClain, and co founder/curator of the Queer Art Salon, Ashley Jay Williams. The exhibition opened Friday, June 13 and runs through August 1 in the Commission Gallery. The exhibit features 29 artists and includes virtual components with multilingual access (Spanish, American Sign Language, Vietnamese, Braille). This is the third iteration of the Queer Art Salon. This iteration features notable additions: artist stipends, professional documentation, QR codes linking to artist bios and portfolios. [2025 QAS Artists — art roving](#)

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Two members of the public signed up to speak:

**Johnny McCain** – not present at time of comment period.

**Marjorie Goldberg** – soliciting support for a senior artist living community and interest in working with government on this project.

#### CHAIR COMMENTS

Chairman Van Lee highlighted the agency's recent budget oversight hearing with over 30 constituents testified in support of CAH. There was strong community emphasis on protecting arts funding amid broader citywide reductions. Noted concern expressed about ArtWeek DC; Chair clarified that CAH's role is primarily as a convener, with private sector expected to lead the initiative moving forward.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT** | Aaron Myers, Executive Director

##### Key Highlights:

- Extended condolences on behalf of the agency following the passing of Ron Humbertson, CAH's longtime collections registrar.
- Announced the establishment of a quarterly staff award in Ron's honor: First recipient: Mrs. Carolyn Parker.
- Commissioner Retreat will take place June 23- 24 in the Commission Multipurpose Room
- Notes on Budget Oversight Hearing – More information can be found by searching FY26 Budget Oversight Hearing on CAH website.
- The proposed FY26 budget of \$45,731,408 marks a 10.2% decrease in the agency's overall budget from FY24 (inclusive of the fund balance appropriation) to FY26. Should CAH's \$977,000 grant from the NEA be rescinded, the overall decrease would rise to 12.1%. The proposed FY26 budget stipulates that CAH would no longer accumulate surplus tax revenue to be disbursed to the community in subsequent years, eliminating our Fund Balance. (more in the Director's report)
- Grants – July 1<sup>st</sup> will be the deadline to submit paperwork if you have not yet received your FY25 grant award
- CAH held a Space for the Arts Discussion at Theater Alliance on June 9<sup>th</sup> with SW BID, DOB and DMPED
- CAH has submitted waivers with OCP to continue work on the Strategic Plan

#### **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT** | Brandon Saunders – Chief Resource

##### Allocation Officer

- The finance team prepared a comprehensive report reflecting the agency's financial position as of June 11, 2025. A new column titled "Budget Reservations" was introduced in this month's financial report. It accounts for approximately \$881,000 in returned funds due to citywide Management Reform Plans (MPs), rescinded grants, and personnel services reductions.
- The available fund balance was reported at approximately 16.5%, indicating that CAH remains on track to responsibly close out the fiscal year.

- The administrative services budget breakdown showed that approximately 31.6% of that budget remained available, reflecting the impact of mayoral spending controls which restricted agency spending discretion mid-year.
- Mr. Saunders emphasized that while administrative constraints were applied broadly across agencies, CAH's ability to carry out its core mission was not compromised.

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**| Julianne Brienza, Committee Chair

The Governance Committee presented a proposed amendment to the Commission's bylaws: the creation of a new Committee titled the *Community Advisory Committee*. This proposed committee is defined under Article VI, Section 7 of the bylaws. The *Community Advisory Committee* is intended to strengthen engagement with DC's artistic communities and ensure that the authenticity of DC's cultural identity is reflected and supported through the arts. The committee will also work to extend the reach of the arts and humanities across all DC communities, with emphasis on historically underserved populations. The committee is expected to report to the Commission quarterly or as needed.

**Vote on Bylaws Amendment**

Chairperson Van Lee conducted a roll call vote:

- Commissioner Sims – Yes
- Commissioner Habimana – Yes
- Commissioner Masters Barry – Abstain
- Commissioner Butler – Yes
- Commissioner Wharton – Yes
- Commissioner Torres – Yes
- Commissioner Brienza – Yes
- Commissioner Steadman – Yes
- The amendment passed.

**GRANTS COMMITTEE REPORT**| Gretchen Wharton, Vice Chair

Our FY26 Arts and Humanities Education Project (AHEP), Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program (AHFP), Field Trip Experiences (FTE) and Capitol Projects (CP) Grant Programs opened on Wednesday, May 28th and will close on Thursday, June 26th at 10:00pm. Panels will begin in late July. As of the date 450 applications have been submitted to these categories. FY 26 Panels are underway with the grants team with hosting panels for GOS, East Arts and PEF I and O.

**PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE UPDATE**| Carla Sims, Committee Chair

Commissioner Sims introduced Karyn Miller to provide a comprehensive update on current Public Art initiatives. Public Art Report Included:

- Ongoing progress across multiple programs, including:
- Public Art Building Communities (PABC) grant program update
- Arts Exhibition grant program update
- Collection management improvement
- Advancement of the Art Collection Mapping Project in partnership with OCTO

- Development of a new one-year Public Art Plan for FY26.
- Management of over 320 applications for the FY25 Art Bank grant program, indicating strong continued demand.
- Response to the recent Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report concerning the Art Bank's 50-mile radius policy.

**ARTS EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE** | Hector Torres, Committee Chair

Key Updates:

- Arts and Humanities Education Program (AHEP) and Field Trip Experience (FTE) grants open through June 26<sup>th</sup>
- Celebrate the Creative Spark Residency program
- Poetry Out Loud – Benjamin Banneker Junior Nyla Dinkins placed amongst final 7 contestants at the national competition
- Word on Fire spoken World Poetry completion is coining in August.
- The Commission has 5 interns

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None raised.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None raised.

**ADJOURNMENT** | Reggie Van Lee, Chairperson

Next Commission meeting: **Monday, July 21, 2025, at 5:30 PM.**

Meeting adjourned at **6:36 PM.**