



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

MINUTES

DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES REGULAR MEETING THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2020

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Commission on the Arts and Humanities was called to order at 4:00 pm, Thursday, October 15, 2020 in open session via the WebEx virtual meeting platform, with Kay Kendall, Chairperson, presiding.

Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kay Kendall, *Chairperson*; Stacie Lee Banks, *Vice-Chair*; Cora Masters Barry; Rhona Wolfe Friedman; Alma H. Gates; Kymber Menkiti; MaryAnn Miller; Cicie Sattarnilasskorn; José Alberto Uclés; Gretchen B. Wharton; Derek Younger

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Natalie Hopkinson; Maria Hall Rooney

STAFF ATTENDEES:

Heran Sereke-Brhan, *Acting Director*; David Markey, *Deputy Director*; J. Carl Wilson, *General Counsel*; Lauren Dugas Glover, *Public Art Manager*; Brian Allende, *Resource Allocation Analyst*; Jeffrey Scott, *Chief of External Affairs*; Patrick Realiza, *Social Media Specialist*; Khalid Randolph, Robert Nuñez, Travis Marcus, *Grants Program Managers*

Land Acknowledgment

The Chair read the acknowledgment of the ancestral lands of the Nacotchtank and Piscataway Peoples.

Welcome & Public Comment

Tatiana Rice made remarks introducing herself and her organization, BlkArthouse. Chris Naoum of Listen Local First made remarks on the challenges that for-profit music venues are facing as a result of COVID-19, and requested that CAH consider allowing applications for rent relief grants from these organizations. Aaron Myers made remarks in support of Chris Naoum's remarks.

Quorum

A quorum was determined to be present.

Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting's agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the September 24, 2020 regular meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

Chairperson's Report

Chair Kendall stated that, based on community feedback, a later start time and possibly a different day of the week for the regular monthly meeting would be helpful in allowing more community members attend, and that Monday's could be a good option given that theatres are typically dark on those nights.

Commissioner Miller moved that the regular monthly meeting of the full Commission be held, in general, at 5:30 pm on the third Monday of each month.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Friedman, Gates, Menkiti, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton, Younger

Noes: none

The motion was agreed to, 10-0.

Chair Kendall announced that the next meeting of the full Commission would be held on Monday, November 16 at 5:30 pm, and expressed her thanks and hope that the new day and time will be more accommodating.

Director's Report

Acting Director Sereke-Brhan gave the Director's Report, noting that CAH had just completed its first full year as an independent agency within the District government. Acting Director Sereke-Brhan introduced the following new staff hires and promotions: David Markey, Deputy Director; Alorie Clark, Arts Education Coordinator; Andia Evans, Staff Assistant; Alissa Maru, Public Art Program Coordinator; Robin Carr McClure, Attorney Advisor; and contractors Ashley Bynem, Lauren Wilson, and Krystle Seit. The Acting Director also noted that the agency's FY20 budget decreased by approximately \$2.5 million due to adjustments in tax revenue projections as a result of the impact of COVID-19, and that because the agency's budget is now funded almost exclusively from dedicated tax revenues as collected over the course of the year, which will require close monitoring throughout FY21 for any shortfalls. The Acting Director highlighted several items from the past fiscal year, including: the hiring of additional grant managers to make portfolios more manageable, as recommended by the Center for Effective Philanthropy in their recent survey of CAH's grantmaking; the successful distribution federal CARES Act relief funds received from the NEA; the successful completion of conservation work done on the Friendship Archway in Chinatown; moving FY20 curatorial grant exhibits to an online platform; supporting a livestreamed performance by Sweet Honey in the Rock at the Lincoln Theatre in celebration of Juneteenth; the work of the equity, inclusion, and belonging task force which will soon produce recommendations for how to make the work of the agency and our grantees more equitable and accessible; and successfully completing and submitting CAH's triannual on-year state partnership application to the NEA, with the inclusion of a proposed traditional arts program that would include Go-Go music.

Finance Report

Commissioner Sattarnilasskorn yielded the time to Resource Allocation Analyst Allende for the Finance Report. Analyst Allende reported that the city's anticipated revenues is taking a downward turn due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, resulting in a \$4.6 million reduction in the forecasted revenues collected from the dedicated tax for CAH; however, this amount has not been cut from the agency's budget but rather has been restricted and cannot be spent until those revenues are actually collected. The grants budget is still allocated in accordance with the various percentages established by statute. Analyst Allende also expressed his thanks to the staff and commissioners for the combined effort in distributing an additional \$2 million enhancement package to provide further relief to grantees at the end of FY20.

Public Art Committee Report

Public Art Manager Dugas Glover gave the report on behalf of Committee Chair Gates. Manager Dugas Glover reported that the committee had one grant recommendation for the FY21 Art Exhibition Grant (AEG) program, also known as the curatorial grant. The grant provides support for the development and public presentation of visual art exhibitions by District resident curators through grant support and use of CAH's exhibition space within the 200 I (Eye Street) Galleries or, if the gallery is unavailable due to COVID-19 public health issues, the on-line platform used for FY20 exhibitions. Applicants must be individuals with prior curatorial experience. This grant is competitive, with funding authorized from Neighborhood Arts Projects. Only one exhibition, applicant #2 in the committee report, is being recommended for FY21 due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

Commissioner Menkiti moved that the Commission agree to the Public Art Committee's recommendation for the FY21 Art Exhibition Grant in the amount of \$25,000.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Friedman, Menkiti, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton

Noes: none

NV: Floyd, Younger

The motion was agreed to, 8-0-2.

Grants Committee Report

Commissioner Wharton introduced the Grants Committee report, stating that the entire committee had reviewed the recommendations in the report more than once, and are all in support of the recommendations being presented. Grants Manager Randolph presented the recommendation for the East of the River (EOR) grant program. EOR supports qualified arts and humanities non-profits and non-arts and humanities non-profits to deliver exemplary arts and humanities experiences to DC residents who live east of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8. Activities may be projects that include, but are not limited to: dance; design; folk and traditional arts; literature; media arts; music; theater, and visual arts. FY21 saw a slight increase in the number of applicants over FY20 i.e. 32 versus 29. Two of the 32 applicants were deemed ineligible because of their location outside of Ward 7/8. EOR had previously been open to organizations located west of the Anacostia River, but offering programming east of the Anacostia River. It was decided by the Commission in Spring 2020, that organizations head-quartered in Wards 1-6, but offering programming in Wards 7/8, would no longer be eligible to apply to the EOR grant. As recommended by the committee, 26 organizations would be funded for a combined total of \$706,000, with the lowest award being 65% of the requested amount.

Commissioner Wharton moved that the Commission agree to the Grants Committee's East of the River grant program funding recommendation for FY21 as presented.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Floyd, Friedman, Gates, Menkiti, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton, Younger

Noes: none

The motion was agreed to, 11-0.

Grants Manager Nuñez presented the recommendation for the Projects, Events, Festivals for Organizations (PEF(o)) grant program. The PEF(o) grant program supports non-profit organizations who execute projects that promote arts and humanities activities to a diverse range of communities within the District of Columbia. The application is open to arts and humanities organizations and non-arts and humanities organizations. Organizations may apply for project support of up to \$15,000, and there is no matching requirement for PEF grants. In Spring 2020, Grants Dept. disbursed a survey of all grantees to determine the anticipated value of project-based grants for FY21. The robust response to the survey identified high value in participation. In an effort to reduce the budget for FY21, the Grants Dept. staff made two key changes: (a) maximum request decreased from \$20,000 to \$15,000, and (b) total budget allocated to the program reduced by 40%. PEF(o) saw a small increase in the number of applicants to the grant in FY21 i.e. from 41 to 49 eligible applicants, of which 21 were new applicants. As recommended by the committee, 23 organizations (12 applicants in cohort #1 and 11 applicants in cohort #2) would be funded for a combined total of \$304,449.

Commissioner Wharton moved that the Commission agree to the Grants Committee's Projects, Events and Festivals for Organizations grant program funding recommendation for FY21 as presented.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Floyd, Friedman, Gates, Menkiti, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton, Younger

Noes: none

The motion was agreed to, 11-0.

Grants Manager Marcus presented the recommendation for the Projects, Events, Festivals for Individuals (PEF(i)) grant program. The PEF(i) grant program supports individual District residents who execute projects that promote arts and humanities activities to a diverse range of communities within the District of Columbia. There is no matching requirement for PEF(i) grants. In an effort to reduce the budget for FY21, the Grants Dept. staff made two key changes: (a) maximum request decreased from \$10,000 to \$7,500, and (b) total budget allocated to the program reduced by 25%. PEF(i) saw a small increase in the number of applicants to the grant in FY21 i.e. from 67 to 77, of which 19 were new applicants. As recommended by the committee, 48 individuals would be funded at no less than 74% of the requested amount for a combined total of \$308,983.

Commissioner Wharton moved that the Commission agree to the Grants Committee's Projects, Events and Festivals for Individuals grant program funding recommendation for FY21 as presented.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Floyd, Friedman, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton, Younger

Noes: none

The motion was agreed to, 9-0.

New Business

Chair Kendall read the following recommendation from Commission's Task Force on Equity, Inclusion and Belonging:

"The Task Force recommends that the DCCAH conduct a survey in the next two weeks of all FY20 organizations that were grant recipients to gather information about their work, advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, and programming community engagement, and internal practices. Their responses will provide valuable insight to the Commission as we prepare to ensure that our practices enable resources to be fully accessible to all communities. The survey responses will be used solely for internal research purposes and will not be made public. The coded survey will be ready for distribution next week. and can be administered through Survey Monkey and will require minimal staff time to execute."

Commissioner Friedman moved that the Task Force's recommended survey be agreed to.

Roll call vote after discussion:

Ayes: Banks, Barry, Floyd, Friedman, Gates, Miller, Sattarnilasskorn, Uclés, Wharton, Younger

Noes: none

The motion was agreed to, 10-0.

Commissioner Floyd requested that the Acting Director present a more detailed vision of her plans for the agency moving forward, in addition to the items in today's Director's Report; and that meeting materials be sent to Commissioners within a more consistent timeframe.

Commissioner Miller requested that the link for the meeting be resent the day of the meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, Chair Kendall adjourned the meeting at 5:46 pm.

Minutes approved this 16th day of November 2020.