



CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING

May 8, 2019

6:00 P.M.

Savannah Cultural Arts Center
201 Montgomery Street

MEETING MINUTES

Present: *Commissioners:* Darren Bagley-Heath, Eddie Edenfield, Barbara Essig, Linda J. Evans, Patrick Kelsey, Kristopher Monroe, Courtnay Papy, Sue Ruby, Tanet U. Taharka-Myers, Anne Allen Westbrook, Debra Zumstein

City Staff:

- Lissette Garcia Arrogante, Director, Cultural Resources
- Luciana Spracher, Director, Municipal Archives

Absent: *Commissioners:* Lisa Clark, Andrea Hall-Houston, Janice James, Jan Kramer, Alix Laincy, Kareem McMichael, Linda Wilder-Bryan

I. **Determination of Quorum/ Review of meeting minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Coco Papy, Chair.

Quorum was determined and the March meeting minutes were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Vice Chair Evans. A Commissioner seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously carried.

II. **Announcements**

Chair Papy congratulated Ms. Arrogante on work done for the Cultural Arts Center opening. Commissioner Ruby noted that whoever picked the talent did a wonderful job as it covered everything from dance to reading and the kids were exceptional. Commissioner Essig thanked everyone who supported the dedication of the Ben Tucker Theater. It was a personal touch to the night and they took really good care of Mrs. Tucker. Commissioner Monroe thought both programs were particularly memorable. Commissioner Ruby thought the staff directing people and answering questions was also helpful. Commissioner Essig asked how many people attended the opening. Chair Papy said they would have to go back and look at numbers but she's confident it was at least 300 people.

Chair Papy asked commissioners to let her or Commissioner Evans know anytime they might have a conflict of interest as applications for the larger investment and weave-a-dream programs are beginning to come in.

Commissioner Evans asked that commissioners assigned to organizations should be allowed to give their evaluations first and then any other commissioners who attended those events can give a report after.

III. Cultural Program Assessment and Reports

Deep Center

Commissioner Edenfield noted that he is assigned to Deep Center but was not added to the email about the event so did not get to attend. Commissioner Evans also noted that her name should be on the list of evaluators for Deep. Chair Papy announced that the evaluator names may be wrong due to the transition from the previous Cultural Services Contract Coordinator and that commissioners can let her know if there is an error and she will correct it.

No commissioners attended any Deep Center events.

King Tisdell Cottage Foundation

One of the commissioners attended the Hebrew Origins lecture on April 24 at the Beach Institute. She reported that there were about 10 people in attendance, the City of Savannah was recognized on publicity materials, and she received an invitation to the event. She noted that the lecture was very informative and was about heritage so the speaker talked about his personal experiences and history. Youth participation was low, there were no minors and about 2 college students were seen.

Chair Papy asked for clarification on what day of the week the lecture was and Commissioner Taharka-Myers responded that it was on a Wednesday. Ms. Papy also asked if Ms. Taharka-Myers received an invitation and she confirmed she did receive an email invitation.

One of the commissioners added that she received an invitation two days prior to the event and that she already had something planned so could not attend. She noted that she also didn't receive an email about the upcoming events. Commissioner Evans noted that if there was a way to put the logo on a section of the email to clarify what events are funded by the City that would be helpful. Chair Papy said this feedback was good and should be shared with them during their review so they can improve.

Savannah Music Festival

Commissioner Evans Attended the Musical Explorers Family Jam on March 9 at the Yamacraw Center for Performing Arts. She reported that this was the first year this event was held and the purpose was to explore and music with family and friends. Commissioner Essig noted that this event had already been reviewed in the March meeting and Commissioner Evans agreed to move on to the next event report.

Commissioner Edenfield asked whether there was a second musical explorers program between April 29 and May 3. Chair Papy responded that there was not a Family Jam but there were Musical Explorers classes.

One of the commissioners asked how other commissioners were actively keeping up with what the organization is doing. Commissioner Kelsey responded that the organizations have the commissioners' names and Commissioner Essig added that she has gotten some of their emails. Commissioner Bagley-Heath noted that the Savannah Music Festival also sends out invites via mail.

Chair Papy added that commissioners can let her know if they are ever not receiving emails and they will follow up with the organizations to send a reminder.

Commissioner Evans reported that she attended numerous other Music Festival events and that the City was always recognized during the events that are sponsored by the City. She also added that the events were world-class and great.

Savannah Philharmonic

A member of the commission attended Orchestra Lab on the Friday morning at the Johnny Mercer Theatre and reported that there were about 50 attendees and they were able to have a direct conversation about the symphony. The event was well organized and met the City's priorities. The commissioner also added that the City was recognized and there was an app that students could download to make the event more interactive.

Commissioner Essig said she emailed the Philharmonic to let them know that she had a conflict and couldn't attend.

Telfair Museum of Art

Commissioner Evans attended the Art in our Neighborhoods program on March 18 at the Liberty City Golden Age Center. She reported that she received an invitation from Harry DeLorme and that the venue was filled to capacity. The attendees were all seniors and they were working on planting plants in clay pots they had painted the week before. Ms. Evans noted that the groups meet once a

week and that there was a joyous, energetic club atmosphere. She also added that Telfair representative Autumn took time to mention that Ms. Evans was in attendance and acknowledged the City's support of these activities.

IV. Weave-A-Dream Committee Report

Commissioner Evans reported that the WAD balance is \$43,000 and that there have been two successful applicants whose proposals have been reviewed and approved by the committee. One of the applicants was Loop It Up for their RepWorks program which works with court involved youth to do artmaking activities. They applied for and were awarded \$3,000 for their project.

The second project was The Daughters of Mary Magdalene and their project is the Juneteenth celebration taking place on June 16 in Wells Park and they were awarded \$3,000 as well. Ms. Evans spoke with the program director and she is looking forward to working with the committee to guide her through the process.

Commissioner Ruby asked whether Ms. Evans helped the Daughters of Mary Magdalene through the grant process. Ms. Evans replied that she did not and that the former Cultural Services Contract Coordinator probably worked with them. Commissioner Ruby responded that larger organizations like Telfair and the Philharmonic have the staff to help with grants however, the smaller organizations need help so it's great that they are able to get it.

Commissioner Evans noted that there is always an opportunity for technical assistance however, the problem arises when the applicants assume that they will be awarded the grant because they received technical assistance. Ms. Evans added that as long as organizations understand that the City and Commissioners cannot tell them what to write when getting technical assistance and that the assistance doesn't mean they will receive the grants that is fine.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath noted that one of the things with technical assistance is that it asks them the questions to help with the narrative and applications. Chair Papy said that commissioners should actively encourage people to apply for the Weave-A-Dream program even if they feel that the process is tedious.

Commissioner Evans added that potential applicants also meet with City staff prior to submitting applications so that they can be reviewed.

Commissioner Essig reported that she directed someone to the website and the page wasn't working but the marketing coordinator sent her the guidelines and that worked. She requested that someone check the website to make sure all the pages are operating properly and can be downloaded.

A commissioner added that people aren't necessarily beating down the door for the grant program right now so as the number of applicants grow so should the standards of the applications submitted. Mr. Bagley-Heath added that last year the grant program was able to get to broadcast media and into the newspaper so that helped.

V. Subcommittee Updates

Commissioner Bagley-Heath reported that the Youth Advisory subcommittee is going to arrange a meeting with Lissette after the commission meeting.

Commissioner Kelsey did not have any updates for the City Priorities subcommittee.

Chair Papy reported that she received an email from Taffanye Young saying that there is currently a public arts ordinance being drawn up and it should be out soon-ish however, because the City Manager is leaving they are trying to prioritize that task. Once the ordinance is released, the subcommittee will be able to look at it and there will probably be two public meetings to get feedback.

Commissioner Monroe asked to clarify whether there needs to be a vote by City Council as it was previously mentioned that there would not need to be one. Chair Papy confirmed that the ordinance would need to be voted on by City Council. Commissioner Monroe added that he would love to mobilize people to support the ordinance as it's an election year. Chair Papy noted that the Commission needs to be mindful of how it can best advocate for the ordinance.

VI. Chair Report

Chair Papy reported that Cultural Investment proposal application process is public now and that everything goes through Neighborly software which is easy to use and any questions should be directed to Lissette. The Commission needs to review when they would like to review the proposals once the deadline has passed. She announced that the working dates they received from Rebecca were August 3 or August 24. The panel is all day, until about 3pm and a survey could be sent out to everyone to choose a date.

Commissioner Kelsey said he hopes that this year there will be more participants to review the applications as less than half of all commissioners reviewed them last year.

Chair Papy announced that Philharmonic in the Streets is coming up, Deep Speaks is on Monday, and King Tisdell has a lecture on May 22.

A member of the Commission asked whether there has been any news about the library programs yet. Chair Papy said she had not heard anything but believes they were aiming for the fall. Commissioner Essig asked what time Deep Speaks was on Monday. Commissioner Evans responded that doors opened at 6pm.

Commissioner Evans announced that the review process previously took place over 4 evenings and if commissioners weren't able to attend all four sessions, their votes wouldn't be counted. The review panel was changed to doing a one-day session on a Saturday for convenience and the scores are submitted to Mayor, Council and the City Manager for a final decision. The panel is one of the most important processes you can do as a commissioner as it really sheds light on the work done throughout the year.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath moved to make August 24, 2019 the review panel day for 2020 Cultural Investment program applications. A commissioner seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

VII. Cultural Resources Director Report

Ms. Arrogante reported that Monday was her two month anniversary and thanked Ms. Essig for her help with the Ben Tucker dedication ceremony and thanked Linda and Coco for assisting with Rebecca leaving. She added that she looks forward to working with the commissioners.

Commissioner Evans asked where the department was in the hiring process. Ms. Arrogante responded that prior to Rebecca leaving there were other positions that needed to be filled so the department is in the process of filling those and updating Rebecca's position prior to posting it.

VIII. General Discussion

Chair Papy opened up general discussion and Commissioner Kelsey asked about rental and use of the Cultural Arts Center space. He stated that he knows the Center is available to all students, college or not, but wants to confirm whether the other spaces (black box and exhibition space) is open to all members of the community or whether it is going to be separated between what college students and the public can use.

Ms. Arrogante responded that the gallery space is available on a rental basis and that the Ben Tucker Theater and Studio Theater are available for rental. She stated the prices and said that the pricing is flexible depending on the organizations. She said pricing for students depends and that their program would need to be reviewed. She added that she has never heard of students being singled out for using the spaces. Mr. Kelsey stated that it has been ongoing for a few years and Ms. Arrogante said the building is public so they encourage everyone to apply. Mr. Kelsey said a lot of his graduate students were always turned away from using public spaces because they were for

curriculum-based activities. Chair Papy said that Mr. Kelsey's question is good to bring to Taffanye.

Commissioner Ruby asked what the issue would be and why would college students need to use the facility. She asked why students wouldn't be able to use SCAD's facilities. Commissioner Kelsey responded that SCAD doesn't have the facilities they are thought to have in terms of performance and exhibition space. He added that the projects are exhibitions, shows and performances, and not classroom based programs. Mr. Kelsey stated that the building was funded with SPLOST funds so the SCAD students have just as much access to them as other residents. Ms. Ruby said she didn't understand why they would want to use the Cultural Arts Center so was just asking. Mr. Kelsey stated that there is limited exhibition space in Savannah in general so that is why access at the Cultural Arts Center would be beneficial.

Commissioner Taharka-Myers said that in regard to students and renting spaces, if minors and non-minors are both occupying a space there are certain requirements that need to be met at the venue. She added that the City would need to appropriately vet and conduct background searches to make sure these types of events can be held while the Center is running programs of their own.

Chair Papy reiterated that this would be a good question for Taffanye as they are working to restructure pricing and other items.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54pm.

The next scheduled meeting of the Commission will be held on July 10, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference room at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center.