



Arlington Commission for Arts & Culture

Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023

Time: 7:00-8:30p

Location: Virtual via Zoom - <https://town-arlington-ma-us.zoom.us/j/87697353488>

Passcode: 093322

Attendees: Stewart Ikeda, Christine Noah, Brian McMurray, Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, Lidia Kenig-Scher, Beth Locke, Sarah Morgan-Wu

Absent: Nicole Cuff, Tom Formicola

Guests: Katie Luczai, Cecily Miller

Meeting called to order at 7:04pm

Agenda

1. Approval of [November minutes](#) was deferred until next meeting.
2. Stewart will keep **Minutes**
3. **DPCD & Chair Updates**
 - Laura Grey withdrew her application to be a voting commissioner for now, but would like to volunteer to help with Marketing, content creation and events coverage.
 - Greta Mastro remains interested in being considered a voting commissioner but is traveling this month and unable to attend, so a vote will be deferred until the new year,
 - **Annual Report due Jan. 15:** All commissioners and committees are encouraged to submit their stats and accomplishments for the last CALENDAR year according to the guidelines provided on the shared stats and brags sheet. Please do this before the holidays so work can begin right after the new year. DPCD has asked that descriptions be shorter this year. Annual Report is a useful tool in fundraising and in preparing the annual Finance Committee review.
 - **Fundraising Committee** updates
 - Christine sent out appeal letters, with photosheets. She'll follow up in early January. We commend her on a wonderful job. Stewart suggested we confirm the sponsor acknowledgements on the website as the appeal goes out and

prominently thank them in year-end communications on social media and in the newsletter. Perhaps we can distribute those sheets at this weekend's *Inspired* event.

- Sarah: Do we acknowledge in-kind gifts like donated time or Brian's wife's tent? Christine: Send those items to me and I will send thank yous.
- Lidia: Roasted Granola contributes a lot to us. Lidia will draft a statement of thanks.
- Brian: Grants Committee received far more requests than it could fund. Could we fundraise for additional artist grants in the future? Christine, Cristin and Stewart had discussed that idea in a budget meeting, and could build that into the pitch language for next year.

- **DPCD Updates:**

- Katie is working with Cecily on the process for getting art on the MBTA bus depot. Will need to ask for a waiver for an application fee.
- Katie is pursuing quotes from a local signmaker on fabricating Cultural District Audio Tour Markers.
- Lidia: Any there any updates on artist live/work space standards? Katie: No, it's on hold. There will be a new incoming DPCD assistant director that may help propose new zoning in the future.
- Reminder to All: Check your State Ethics training expiration.

4. **Discussion and Vote:** [ACAC FY24 Budget](#)

- Cristin presented the adjusted FY24 Budget and explained that while we were on track for our projections, there was missing information that had delayed us from formally voting on it until now. Our finances appear healthy and we expect some surplus to roll over into the next year. Many commissioners voiced appreciation for the clear budget format, which Cristin and former Treasurer and Co-Chair Steve Poltorzycki had developed and refined over years. Roll Call vote was taken and the budget was unanimously accepted including Nicole's proxy vote.

5. **Discussion: Public Art for the Vacant Storefronts Program.**

- Katie has sent a round of warning letters to businesses for the [Town Bylaw V Article 17](#) from 2016 for storefronts vacant for more than 90 days. As a reminder of this long dormant program, the Town can charge \$400 fee annually. Or landlords can apply for public art. Katie's goal with the discussion was to determine the extent to which ACAC would like to be directly involved with the program.
- Discussion: Because the program has been dormant, Stewart recounted some points of past discussions of fees, process, and frustrations. How involved should ACAC be in curating art in the storefronts who choose to go the public art route. What support needed? What criteria, duration, funding, formats (painting vs. exhibition spaces)? What are implications for other public art installations not instigated by ACAC, such as Bike Path Storage structure mural. We were reminded it would not require a permit, just a direct connection with owner. It does not allow us to guarantee the artwork would be on view for a particular duration.

- Sarah: As a committee, we should not do anything until there's clarity on process, liability, etc. Should be some kind of document of understanding.
- Lidia: For other events, such as Plein Aire, we do a release of liability. Artists have to carry own insurance. Would this be the case for storefronts?
- Beth: Chamber paid for Adria Arch's window painting. Businesses have abused this opportunity. Have they continued to receive the benefits of no fees after 6 years? The business wouldn't have done it unless someone else paid for it. Businesses are not well intentioned in using this program. I'd rather ACAC not get involved in this because it's not beautifying the areas and is open to abuse by landlords.
- Brian & Terry: Was Katie asking how to be connected with an artist? ACAC can help connect businesses and artists through our published calls for art.
- Cristin: Second Beth's comments on past experience with how it has worked. Businesses have received this as an opportunity to not pay the fee. Unless there's an understanding that they have to also HOST the art the work gets neglected and run-down. It's good to have the landlord maintain responsibility. It would be preferable to be a resource for earnest business owners seeking artists, but not take responsibility.
- Lidia: We shouldn't do it.
- Sarah: We could use our experience to compile a series of best practices guidelines. Landlords also get tax write off for vacancies so that incentivizes them to leave stores empty.
- Beth: Likes the idea of guidelines, but the bylaw itself would need to become more specific and would need to be policed and enforced. Fee isn't big enough, and benefit of public art isn't considered enough. The bylaw would have to be re-written.
- Cecily: I really agree with Beth that the bylaw was flawed from the beginning because it implied that showing art was a punishment. Also has quality implications – "public art" might not connote children's drawings, or art that doesn't consider the site and context. Other communities have developed more refined guidelines.
- Katie: Just asking how involved we want to be. I could just point them to Artlinks.
- Brian: [Read the bylaws](#). Fees set by the Select Board; wouldn't have to go back to Town Meeting to raise fees.
- Overall consensus was that ACAC did NOT want to take on direct responsibility for a storefronts program under the existing bylaw, beyond potentially developing best practice guidelines, and helping interested businesses be connected to artists available to work with them.

6. **Community Engagement Updates**

- Cristin: CE began a robust discussion of how ACAC projects can support the townwide Semiquincentennial commemorations. Won't meet in December, but will take up the discussion again in January.
- Cecily reported on the Black Joy Project, and the December 9 celebration of the *Inspired* exhibition in Town Hall, which will feature our three spotlight artists, live music, family crafts, food, and an additional exhibition of quilts by the Arlington-based African American quilters guild, Sisters in Stitches Joined by the Cloth. This will be the last Black Joy event funded by the NEFA Grant. Some Climate Futures interns will come

back; we expect town officials to attend. There will be live music and donated Food from Cookie Time and Za. Discussion of volunteer needs.

- Lidia reported the 3rd annual Artist Market at The Roasted Granola had 33 applicants. It has been successful and growing. They exhibited the winners from the Plein Aire Fest last week.
- Beth: Thanks to Nicole for getting the a capella group Perfect Pitch to perform at the Holiday Lights festival in Whittemore Park, which was very well attended. ACAC has fruitfully collaborated bringing Live Arts to a couple of Chamber events now.
- Cecily: Since we won't have Youth Banners, we'd like to partner with Teresa Marzilli to do a project about ongoing community conversations and story sharing/portraiture.

7. **New Business**

- Poet Laureate Jean Flanagan would like to propose a project related to Arlington 250. We recommend that she prepare an application for the Grants Committee's next cycle. We'd be willing to connect her to the Arlington 250 Committee as well.
- Lidia gave an update on the Poet Laureate Selection Committee, whose longstanding chair John Burt is retiring. ACAC and the Library can help promote a call for new members from the PL Selection Committee when the time comes. Len Diggins would be willing to serve if no other candidates come forth.

Adjourned at 8:39P

Next meeting will be Thursday, January 4, 2024 from 7:00-8:30p