

Members

Robin Echte, *Chair*
Sarah Idstrom, *Vice Chair*
Julie Anderson, *City Council Liaison*
Lauren Walker, *City Council Liaison Alternate*
Jan Brazzell
Rachel Cardwell
Phillip Hill, *LPC Liaison*
Janice Karroll
Traci Kelly
Donald Lacky
Bill La Vergne
Janet Matzke
Kristi Nebel
Margaret Payne
Jacqueline Peterson
Michael Reynolds
Mike Sweney

Minutes

Tacoma Arts Commission

Community & Economic Development

Staff

Amy McBride, Tacoma Arts Administrator
Naomi Strom-Avila, Cultural Arts Specialist

Date: March 9, 2009

Location: City of Tacoma Municipal Building, Room 16

Time: 5:00 pm

Commission Members in Attendance:

Robin Echte, Chair
Sarah Idstrom, Vice-Chair
Jan Brazzell
Rachel Cardwell
Janice Karroll
Don Lacky
Kristi Nebel
Margaret Payne
Jacqueline Peterson
Michael Reynolds
Mike Sweney

Staff Present

Amy McBride, Tacoma Arts Administrator
Naomi Strom-Avila, Cultural Arts Specialist

Guests Present:

Connie Walle
Carl Palmer
Judy Durkin

City Council Member Absent:

Julie Anderson
Lauren Walker

Commission Members Absent:

Phillip Hill
Traci Kelly
Bill La Vergne
Janet Matzke

1. Call to Order

5:03 pm

Chair Echte

2. Excusal of Absences

5:03 pm

Vice Chair Idstrom

Commissioners Hill Kelly, La Vergne and Matzke were absent.

3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes**5:03 pm****Vice Chair Idstrom**

Motion: Jan Karroll

Second: Jackie Peterson

Motion: Carried

4. Chair's Report:**5:04 pm****Chair Echtle**

There was no Chair's report.

5. Staff Check-In**5:04 pm**

The National Endowment for the Arts will be redistributing \$50 million of art stimulus package money. Funding is for salary support and fees for previously engaged artists or contractual personnel that may have been lost due to the economy. The funds will go to organizations and programs which have been directly funded by the NEA in the last four years. The Tacoma Arts Commission could apply to the Washington State Arts Commission for the regranting of some of this funding.

May is Arts Education month in Washington. ArtsEd Washington is a statewide advocacy group and is requesting the Commission to request City Council to proclaim May as Arts Education month in Tacoma. Another opportunity is to write a letter of support to the school board.

Amy McBride asked, "Do you want to submit a proclamation request to the City Council for them to declare it Arts Education month in May?"

There was a motion:

"I would move that we do so."

Motion: Rachel Cardwell

Second: Margaret Payne

Motion: Carried

Commissioner Sweney asked what the Commission could be doing to support arts education beyond a proclamation. Some suggestions were: find out from ArtsEd Washington and the Washington State Arts Commission what other cities do; create a snapshot of what is currently happening in Tacoma and turn it into a press release tied to the proclamation; consider gaps in what is currently being offered in arts education when looking at future funding applications; write a letter of support for arts education and send to the school board, community colleges, universities and non-profit organizations.

Una McAlinden, Executive Director of ArtsEd Washington, and Lynn Eisenhauer, board member of ArtsEd Washington and art facilitator for Tacoma Public Schools, would like to talk to the Commission in April about what they are doing and what the state of arts education is in Washington and Tacoma.

There was a motion:

"I think we could write a letter to the school board and research other entities we should be reaching out to as well but certainly move forward with a letter to the school board."

Motion: Rachel Cardwell

Second: Jackie Peterson

Motion: Carried

The missing acrylic tubes for the Water Forest were found. Photos submitted by the contractor show that fabrication of the connectors is underway. The next stage is to put all of the tubes back together and inject special glue into the connecting pieces. Installation details still need to be worked out.

Representatives of the Creative Cluster will present to the Economic Development committee on April 14 at 3 pm.

Commissioners volunteered to meet with Tacoma Artists Initiative Program funded artists for their mid-project meetings as follows:

TAIP Funded Artist	Commission Volunteer
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C. Rosalind Bell	Kristi Nebel
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William Kupinse	Rachel Cardwell
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The Stranger newspaper recently printed an article titled “The 25 Greatest Works of Art Ever Made in Seattle.” The article mentions two Tacoma pieces: Alex Schweder’s Lovesick Walls and Dale Chihuly’s 100,000 Pounds of Ice and Neon.

Invitations for Tacoma School of the Art’s Artrageous event were passed out to Commissioners.

6. Presentation

Puget Sound Poetry Connection

5:22 pm

Connie Walle of the Puget Sound Poetry Connection performed a short poem and gave a brief history of the organization including her first involvement in the 1980’s, production of Moonthorn Tapestry, the Distinguished Writers series, the integration of poetry into a concrete walkway at Point Defiance, and Our Own Words – a teen poetry and short story contest.

PSPC is currently booked till 2010.

Connie said, “Thank you for supporting us for over 17 years. And I didn’t think you really knew that because the grant says 13, we’ve been getting the grant for 13, but 17 years of support in one form or another. Referrals have been as important as any money that we have received.”

PSPC readings are on the second Friday of every month at 7 pm at King’s Books. This month’s featured poet is Casey Fuller.

Carl Palmer read his poem “A Dog Named Sex.”

7. Action Items

A. Anchor Fund Recommendations

5:31 pm

Chair Echtle presented the recommendations of the Anchor Fund panel. The Anchor Fund panel met on March 2 to review 14 applications. They chose to recommend funding of 12 organizations; total available funding was \$265,000 for the 2009 – 2010 biennium.

The panel recommended funding as follows:

Organization	Recommendation
The Tacoma Youth Symphony Association, Inc	\$ 30,000.00
Tacoma Opera	\$ 30,000.00
Tacoma Art Museum	\$ 30,000.00
Tacoma Musical Playhouse	\$ 28,000.00
Hilltop Artists in Residence	\$ 28,000.00
Northwest Sinfonietta	\$ 26,000.00
Acoustic Sound dba Wintergrass	\$ 25,000.00
Museum of Glass	\$ 20,000.00
The Grand Cinema	\$ 20,000.00
Tacoma Symphony Orchestra	\$ 16,000.00
Children's Museum of Tacoma	\$ 12,000.00
Tacoma Philharmonic	\$ -
Tacoma Little Theatre	\$ -
Total	\$ 265,000.00

Tacoma Little Theatre

The panel recommended not funding Tacoma Little Theatre. Their application was lacking an appropriate work sample from which to judge artistic quality and the application could not demonstrate that they are currently stable enough to be considered an anchor organization.

Commissioner Cardwell asked if there is something that the Commission can do to still support TLT.

Chair Echtle encouraged TLT to apply for the annual Arts Projects funding at the end of 2009.

Commissioner Cardwell suggested that a letter of explanation be send to TLT to explain the panel's decision, outline other funding options, and underscore the Commission's interested in helping TLT get back to a more stable point.

Vice Chair Idstrom stressed the importance of TLT to Tacoma and to their part of the community.

Commissioner Lacky pointed out TLT's 90 year history in Tacoma and expressed concern about doing whatever is possible in supporting TLT to keep the organization alive.

Vice Chair Idstrom noted that beyond funding, the Commission can help TLT in other ways including lining them up with people who can help them straighten out their finances.

Commissioner Nebel questioned why TLT eliminated their biggest fundraiser of the year.

Chair Echtle noted that Arts Projects funding would be appropriate for their programming and that Commission staff and the community can offer them technical assistance upon request by TLT.

Commissioner Brazzell cautioned the Commission not to read too much into the elimination of a fundraiser as there are more effective ways of getting funds.

Chair Echtle noted that while this was a tough funding decision, the panel unanimously felt that it was the correct decision based on the information provided.

Tacoma Philharmonic

Commissioner Lacky noted that he feels the Tacoma Philharmonic offers programming which is unique to Tacoma and is not being offered by the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts. TP provides a way to bring classical performers to Tacoma that would not be seen otherwise.

Chair Echtle noted that it was hard to see why the TP was the organization providing the service of bringing in outside classical performances to Tacoma. There is no reason why this service could not be done by the Tacoma Symphony or Broadway Center.

Commissioner Karroll noted that the very fact that the TP has been bringing in these performances when no one else has is a strong statement.

Chair Echtle noted that it is very expensive to have multiple organizations providing the same service. She also noted that their application was not as strong as the other applications and that it is unreasonable to think that endowment earnings, as stated in their application, would be able to help them out much this year.

Vice Chair Idstrom noted that the model for the TP as a presenting organization presenting at a presenting organization is not cost effective.

Commissioner Lacky asked “if the Philharmonic disappeared, is there any guarantee that the Symphony or the Pantages would pick up what the Philharmonic is doing?”

Jan Brazzell responded, “only if they picked up the endowment, it goes with it. The issue is that neither the Symphony nor the Sinfonietta has the endowment or excess operating funds necessary to bring in the real high ticket soloists.”

Children’s Museum of Tacoma

Chair Echtle notes that the panel recommended funding of the Children’s Museum of Tacoma at the minimum amount of \$12,000 for the biennium. The panel felt that the CMT’s model and mission was not arts-related. The panel recommends the Commission notify the CMT that, unless the museum plans on changing their mission, they don’t fit the model of the Anchor Fund program. They have good arts education programming but their mission is not arts related when the Anchor Fund guidelines stipulate that an applicant organization must have an arts and culture driven mission.

Commissioner Reynolds asked why, if the panel anticipates that the CMT is unlikely to be funded in the coming years, the Commission doesn’t send them that message this year.

Chair Echtle noted that the panel recommended funding them this year based on the strength of their application. The panel wanted a firmer decision of Anchor Fund policy for next year.

Hilltop Artists In Residence

Commissioner Cardwell asked if Hilltop Artists’ contract with the City’s Human Services department precludes them from receiving Anchor Fund monies.

Amy said that Anchor Fund monies would be applied to the arts component of the Hilltop Artists programming and not the social services aspect of their program.

Grand Cinema

Commissioner Lacky asked if the Grand Cinema is only at a 30% capacity.

Chair Echtle noted that it was important to take into consideration that they have shows multiple times a week and run regardless of capacity. This percentage is not atypical of this type of organization.

General Comments

Commissioner Lucky asked if any organization expressed that they were in any financial stress.

Chair Echtle noted that several organizations noted a reduction in staff expenses which indicated layoffs or not filling positions which had been vacated. Some organizations did not really address the economic downturn but most had looked at the economy and were concerned with their model to see if it would still be viable today.

Commissioner Cardwell noted that the next biennial Anchor Fund cycle will need to take into consideration these current financial times when questions come up about an organization's stability and financial records.

Amy suggested that the Commission may want to adjust the Anchor Fund guidelines in the 2011-12 biennium to account for this.

Commissioner Brazzell noted that it would be helpful to know what the deciding factors were for those who received funding and those who did not.

Chair Echtle and Vice Chair Idstrom said that, among other things, decisions were based on artistic excellence as exhibited in their work sample, demonstrated stability and the organization's impact on the community.

There was a motion:

"I'll go ahead and put forth a motion that we approve the funding recommendations that the committee has brought forth tonight at the levels they have noted."

Motion: Rachel Cardwell

Second: Mike Sweney

Motion: Carried with 10 Ayes and 1 Nay

B. Anchor Fund Policy Discussion

6:11 pm

The Anchor Fund program does not have a process for probation; there is no mechanism to tell an organization that the Commission will fund them conditionally other than the standard deliverables which are outlined in their contract.

Commissioner Cardwell noted that this type of mechanism could be helpful in the next funding cycle when addressing organizations that may not be able to meet all of the benchmarks required of applicant organizations.

Commissioner Reynolds noted that by extending a probational process, the Commission is implying future funding which can put the panel and Commissioners in a difficult position.

Chair Echtle suggests that a probational policy would set benchmarks that have to be met in order for an organization to receive a portion of the funding. Organizations who do not meet these benchmarks would forfeit their funding and monies would be returned to the funding pool.

Commissioner Reynolds noted that it might be simpler to just send explanatory letters to applicant organizations as is currently done.

Amy suggested a probational policy that would allow an organization on probation to be still considered an Anchor Fund organization. Specific benchmarks would be set for the organization to receive their funding.

She questioned whether this is setting up certain organizations to be anchor organizations and whether this should be an entitlement program. If the Anchor Fund is not an entitlement program, does a probational policy make sense?

Chair Echtle noted that the Commission needs to continue thinking about policies for the Anchor Fund and needs to come up with firm language about what organizations the Anchor Fund supports. Clear language will make it easier for the panel and save the applicant organizations time.

Currently there is no interview process for the Anchor Fund panel. Chair Echtle suggested the Commission considering adding an interview process for the next biennium.

Commissioner Sweney asked if there was a mechanism for appeal. There is.

8. Report Back

A. Center for Urban Waters

6:27 pm

Commissioner Sweney sat on the panel for the Center for Urban Waters. The Center is public/private partnership between the Puget Sound Partnership, University of Washington Tacoma, and City of Tacoma. The building should be LEED Platinum. Because the building will be across the water from downtown, they are looking for artwork that can act as a beacon.

The panel narrowed the applicant pool from 60 to 4 finalists: Robert Horner, Adam Kuby, Dan Corson, and Laura Haddad & Thomas Drugan. The budget for the project is \$150,000.

B. Retreat

6:32 pm

The Commission retreat is scheduled for March 21, 10 am – 4:30 pm at the Tacoma Art Museum.

An agenda will be sent to the Commission.

9. Public Comment

6:33 pm

Judy Durkin introduced herself to the Commission and expressed her interest in the Commission. She was a graphic designer and is currently a high school art teacher.

10. Good of the Order

6:48 pm

The Commission will not have a specific table at Artrageous although Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm