

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF THE ARTS**

**Connecticut Arts Council Meeting**

**December 7, 2021**

**1:00 pm**

**Via Zoom Conference Call**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Jack Rosenberg, Mary Ellen Eckels, Ted Yudain, Adriane Jefferson, Calida Jones, Judith McElhone, Sofia Lewitt, Fritz Jellinghaus

**Staff:** Elizabeth Shapiro, Tamara Dimitri, Bonnie Koba, Rhonda Olisky, Kolton Harris, Jane Schneider

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm.

**2. Welcome & introduction of new Council Members**

Mr. Rosenberg introduced the new members of the Arts Council

- Judy McElhone
- Sofia Lewitt
- Calida Jones

Current council members gave brief introductory/welcome remarks to the new members. Ms. Shapiro provided a welcome to the new council members and described her role as the Director of Arts, Preservation and Museums. Office of the Arts staff provided a brief overview of their roles and responsibilities.

**3. Approval of Minutes from September 13, 2021 meeting**

The Minutes were not available for approval.

**4. Chairman's Report – Jack Rosenberg**

**New Legislation: Arts Advisory Panel to DECD**

A new committee being put together in the state to consider bequests and estates of people who want to donate art to the state. The volume and quantity are unknown currently. Per state statute Mr. Rosenberg as chairman of the Arts Council is a member of the panel, two additional appointments will be recommended by Mr. Rosenberg with approval by Council members. Timeframe is currently pending.

## **Discussion of Mission and Function of the Arts Council**

The board package discusses the purpose of the Arts Council none of this is in state statute. The statute states simply that we will foster and support the Arts. Structure needs to be set up – what it is that we are doing and how are we doing it and then how are we going to know we did it. The Council Mission needs to be stated and in writing. The Council and the Office of the Arts staff needs to decide what we want the Council to do and what are our opportunities. Mr. Rosenberg has started putting together the direction and mission.

Advocacy was a major focus in conversations with the Office of the Arts and also in meetings with the executive directors of all the DRSO's, also in discussion with some of our dean's, foundations, presidents of boards, not for profits, in just getting a sense of what is needed, besides money, uniformly the answer was some form of Advocacy.

Primary purpose – Advocacy supporting the Office of the Arts and the DRSO's and acting as ambassador's and acting as a frontline in terms of our advocacy to the legislature both state and federal. Building relationships, educating them, letting them know how important the Arts are in the state and working with the Connecticut Arts Alliance because that is their primary purpose lobbying.

The Office of the Arts cannot lobby because they are state employees – council members can lobby because they are volunteer members. Council members can reach out to the legislature and engage in conversation.

There are also all the arts education initiatives whatever happens in the schools and postgraduate, situations and places like the Five Points Gallery where people coming out of art school can have a launch pad system to give them an opportunity to learn what the real world is like in the arts world - in terms of running a gallery, applying to shows, building a portfolio, all the things that's not taught in art school. The Arts Council has a really wonderful opportunity here and a role and responsibility to advocate.

Visibility – need to show up and be seen; work with other state agencies when the opportunity arises, specific activities to the Council - Governor's Arts Awards, Governor's Patrons of the Arts, can be an advisor to the Office of the Arts which does a Strategic Plan every two years as required by the NEA. This is a work in progress not fixed, not finished – send ideas/thoughts to Mr. Rosenberg to incorporate and discuss and put to motion at next meeting for approval as the basis of our mission.

Mr. Rosenberg opened the meeting for discussion, suggestions and comment.

- Identifying potential policy issues, direction, assessing the needs of the arts community.
- Identify and align policy actions with authentic needs assessment of the arts community.

- Initiatives such as a more diverse cultural landscape, support arts education, advocate for more funding, what policies can be pushed with the legislature.
- What will be effective for the Arts eco-system.
- More awareness of the work of the COA and the Arts Council, the economic impact that the arts provide to the state.
- Relationship building for successful advocacy.
- Put together a game plan and timeline, a collaborative lift to include the entire council, get people listening.

### **Discussion of Council Members Roles & Responsibilities**

Ongoing discussion of what are we doing individually as council members; being a responsible ambassador for the arts in our capacity. Please review and make notes and forward to Mr. Rosenberg to incorporate into the mission and statement of what the council will be doing.

### **Discussion of new entity: Friends of the Arts Council**

Comprised of not officially council members but people who can be helpful to us, people who have expertise or people who may not be able to commit to being a council member but be willing to offer advice or participation in a more limited manner. It can be an honorarium for them and could be helpful to us; we can put them onto committees, we can have committees of the council that are not just exclusively council members, and we can draw on their expertise and experience. Some other organizations have a young people's council to start bringing in the next generation. The Friends of the Arts Council is a good starting place. It's a pretty broad and non-specific description of who they are - people who want to support the arts, people who belong to arts organizations, artists, well connected politically, financially, community wise. Council members can nominate them and decide how we want to do this, if we want to do this, how do we nominate them; how long do they get to stay, how do we end their term, the basic outline of a new organization.

Council members discussed many different ideas on how/what this group could bring to the Arts Council. Council members discussed the word "friends" as being a challenge. What the entity will be called is important. More items deserve attention - further conversation is needed. Thoughtful consideration before putting the group together. Mr. Rosenberg will include on January's agenda for a motion.

### **5. Action Items**

None.

### **6. Director's Report – Liz Shapiro**

Ms. Shapiro provided a review of the COA budget - in normal years the Office of the Arts is responsible to administer around \$6M with \$1.4M+ of that is money that we have discretion over how it is used– this year we are responsible for \$65M. The office went from \$6M to \$65M with no additional staff. This does not include funding that is being regranted

from the State's American Rescue Plan dollars those are being disseminated to a variety of both non-profits and municipal organizations that the office does not usually fund. This has resulted in the creation of three new grant programs since September – one being strictly for the American Rescue plan dollars allocations - those were specific items designated and named to organizations individually in this year's budget; one for organizations receiving two-year carry-forward funding awards; we normally have a series of organizations that receive Direct Line Funding that the office administers for the legislators. This year many of them are getting carry-forward funding so they're getting additional awards; and a new general operating support grant for theaters and performing arts.

In our regular work the Office of the Arts has awarded the first round of the Artist Respond grants and opened and closed the second round of applications for that program. Ms. Dimitri and her team are reviewing those applications now. We've awarded the Supporting Arts Program grants and opened the Arts Endowment application; in addition, the office built and opened final reporting for the Summer at the Museum grants as well as last year's Cares Act grants; developed, launched and are now reviewing General Operating Support grants for theaters and performing groups. That closed last week and there are 157 applicants to that pool of \$3M which was legislatively designated. In addition to that - three staff including Ms. Shapiro are working to review the pool of arts organizations that applied to the CT Cultural Fund which is the name of the \$16M of operating support grants for arts, culture and humanities organizations that is being administered by CT Humanities. There were 701 applicants. COA staff are meeting with CT Humanities to review any eligibility questions that still remain. CT Humanities will create a spreadsheet that has some data points included for each eligible applicant and then staff at DECD in the Compliance Office will assist in creating some funding scenarios. CT Humanities plans to advise organizations of their awards prior to Christmas.

Ms. Shapiro referred back to the previous discussion regarding what's the messaging, what's the policy – one of the things integral to those organizations that receive funding. In discussion with Jason Mancini of CT Humanities in terms to the ecosystem of the number of arts organizations, humanities and museums that would be in this pool of funds it was estimated to be 700 so receiving 701 applicants was pretty exciting. Before each eligible applicant receives their funds, they are going to have to complete a datasheet that asks for basic data about the organization. Some organizations will be better prepared than others to actually complete all of the questions, but it is expected that everyone will have some data to share. Such as basic operating support, how many people do you employ, there will be some very basic questions.

In February CT Humanities will run some virtual webinars about implementing data collection and tracking. The goal is to have better data available from organizations by the time they complete their final reports. All of this data will provide one part of the advocacy message. Advocacy includes three parts, the relationship between the legislator and the advocate, the story that the advocate tells, and the way the statistics support the stories. This grant program will provide us with a combined dataset, something that we've never had before. The results will be pivotal in helping the office co-create with the Council and

CAA what the legislative agenda looks like. Because of issues surrounding federal compliance and the recent misuse of funds in Connecticut there have been a lot of legislative questions as well as reporting, we do weekly reporting to the Office of Policy and Management on the granting process.

NEA application - every year an application is submitted to the NEA for funding. Every 3 years we submit what is called a full application and in the between years we submit a short application. That application was due on September 30<sup>th</sup> it was a short application next year a full application will have to be completed.

When we submit the application next year on September 30<sup>th</sup>, we will have to have our completed Strategic Plan or nearly completed plan at that time. Mr. Rosenberg mentioned council members assistance with the strategic plan. The COA held a staff retreat in earlier November to review the last strategic plan, the components and the content and also the Strategic Plan planning process. A course has been charted forward with regular staff meetings to stay on track and Ms. Shapiro has had in-depth conversations with Kelly Barsdate at NASAA. She has been working with Ms. Shapiro to help format the process so that it works for COA and worry less about what other Strategic Plans look like that other state Offices of the Arts do, but that we create something that will be acceptable to NEA and meets all of their guidelines and will also work for us and our needs. Council members will be included in the process. More specifics will be provided before the time of the next council meeting.

AEP6 – Arts and Economic Prosperity Study Index – is a study that Americans for the Arts does every five years the last one was from 2015. It has been postponed a year due to COVID it was scheduled to begin January 2022 and it's been delayed another 2 months. We have an intern, Brandon Whitburn, a Master of Public Policy, from UConn, who has been working closely with Ms. Dimitri to prepare for that process. There is a cost to participating in the national study we've paid for our costs, and we've also funded all of our eight Designated Regional Service Organizations to participate in the study. We expect to have some really strong data collection. As we've been reviewing all of these grants Ms. Dimitri has been matching the lists of grant applicants to the lists of arts organizations that were included in the 2015 AEP5 study. Between that AEP5 list, the CT Humanities Cultural fund grants and the improvements to the New England Foundation for the Arts database, Creative Ground, we are going to have a really strong list of cultural organizations and arts organizations in Connecticut. Note that because how the study is structured and the rules we have with our funding from the NEA the study only looks at non-profit organizations. But it looks at the same data from every state and all the territories.

DECD held a State of the State Economic Summit Dec. 2nd at the Bushnell - the Office of the Arts was included in planning for that process although the panels were corporate partners. COA did have some artists there and that was exciting to have them included.

Staff was starting to get back on the road – Mr. Rosenberg, Ms. Koba and Ms. Shapiro visited the American Mural Project in October, Ms. Shapiro visited the Cinestudio, the film

theater on campus at Trinity College and has had multiple in person meetings in New Haven and Hartford mostly with legislators. Things may slow down in regard to in person for now due to the new Covid statistics.

An update regarding the agency DECD – we have Commissioner David Lehman and we had two Deputy Commissioners – Deputy Commissioner Alexander Daum and Deputy Commissioner Glendowlyn Thames. Deputy Commissioner Thames who was Ms. Shapiro’s immediate supervisor, left in early November to work for Amazon. The agency is again down one senior level administrator which makes for more work for everyone else. Everyone is dividing up Ms. Thames’ jobs it’s a busy time for everyone.

## **7. Other Business**

### **Change to State Statute regarding Board Members**

Mr. Rosenberg moved this item to the Council Agenda originally on the Foundation Agenda. He discussed the new legislation that was passed in October. Up until then the Arts Council Members were dual members - council members and also board members of the foundation that has now been split. The foundation will have its own board of directors made up of 16 people currently there are none. When the legislation was passed in October that effectively ended council members position as board members of the foundation which now has no board members. The legislative authority that granted the foundation to the arts council states that the Connecticut Arts Council shall manage the Connecticut Arts Council Foundation, it doesn’t say who or how, so council members will continue managing it until such time a new board of directors is in place. The council members are no longer the foundation board but as a whole will still manage the foundation for the time being until such time there is a new board.

## **8. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Mary Ellen Eckels, seconded by Ted Yudain, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jane Schneider  
Administrative Assistant