

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

Connecticut Arts Council Meeting

April 4, 2022

1:00 pm

Via Zoom Video Conference Call

MINUTES

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

Guest: Stephanie Burr, Executive Director, Northwest CT Arts Council

Absent: None

Staff: Elizabeth Shapiro, Tamara Dimitri, Kolton Harris, Jane Schneider

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of March 7th, 2022 were tabled for approval at the next Arts Council meeting.

3. Northwest CT Arts Council

The Connecticut Arts Council welcomed Stephanie Burr, Executive Director of the Northwest CT Arts Council (NWCT). NWCT is one of our Designated Regional Service Organizations. Ms. Burr shared with the Council some of the initiatives and projects NWCT is doing in their region and how it interfaces with the CT Office of the Arts (COA).

4. Action Item

No action items for approval.

5. Committee Report of Governor Arts Awards

The Committee reported that the Governor's Arts Awards scheduled for June be postponed being thoughtful in how it is approached; especially making sure that those being honored and can be present. Ms. Calida Jones will be emailing the Council a timeline for carrying out this event.

Ms. Sophia Lewitt stated that settling on a date where the awardees would all be present has been the challenge; either the event is postponed to the fall or next spring or restart the process with a new set of awardees.

The consensus of the Council is considering the stated challenges the event should be postponed.

In addition, the Council agrees that moving forward a new selection process should be created. A process that is thoughtful and intentional and that embraces and celebrates people.

Ms. Jones shared on the importance of digging in a little deeper in the community of artists that live in our state and see the work which is deeply rooted in their communities versus the artists that come across the screen, websites, or that everyone knows; an opportunity to honor and celebrate artists that have transformed their neighborhoods.

Ms. Adriane Jefferson expressed that the nomination process opens to hear from the community on what those success stories are. This will make the process more equitable and inclusive and that the Council is not the only decision maker.

Ms. Jefferson also expressed that if we have told people that they were going to receive an award, we should present them with an award and not go back on our word.

Ms. Lewitt suggested that rather than waiting to present current awardees with their award until June of 2023; a council/staff field trip be scheduled to the location of the awardee and present them the award. A little more intimate, but still honor the awardees in a meaningful way. Ms. Elizabeth Shapiro stated that if we are going to go to their location to present the award and dates are in place, it might be easier to have a government dignitary present.

6. Chairman's Report

Mr. Jack Rosenberg reported that the doodle poll regarding the name of the auxiliary council indicated that 6 to 1 voted on the name "Friends of the Arts Council". For next steps he will put together a draft on how to choose people, what are they going to do, etc. and will circulate to discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Rosenberg brought up the idea shared at the last arts council meeting of creating a Youth Council and inquired if anyone had any thoughts on that

Ms. Jones stated that although she agreed it was a great idea, she felt that the Council is not ready since as a Council they are still solidifying their role and how it will function to then invite our youth to be part of the process and be able to give them a true experience of what their role is as an advisory council.

Mr. Kolton Harris suggested that council members do research on what programs are currently going on with youth and arts education; the goal is to create greater connectivity and understanding what their needs are.

Ms. Jones expressed that it is very important to establish trust with our youth. We have an opportunity to create a model to accomplish this perhaps by a community forum where they can hear from us what we do and we can hear where they see how they can be part of this council. We don't want to overburdened them but create space where they can express themselves and their ideas.

Ms. Mary Ellen Eckels expressed that perhaps the local regional councils would have a better idea of the youth in their region and what programs are being provided so that rather than reinventing the wheel we can get them from them the different demographics, population, etc. and then knowing who and how many are we talking about and begin the process of building trust and relationships.

Ms. Tamara Dimitri that one of the systems that is overlooked frequently is our community colleges; they all have robust programs and are in the front lines of helping save many students. It would be great to tap into this community and give opportunities to these youth to have this experience on their resumes.

Ms. Jefferson expressed that to move forward in this conversation, the council needs training in perhaps implicit bias, anti-racism training, etc. in order to frame the work that we want to do as a council. Come together to talk about what we've heard, and work on what healing means and reconciliation and then based on that move forward in creating new initiatives and programs or amplifying current ones that will align to the things we are learning to how we want to show up as a council. Ms. Jefferson shared that there are some free session being offered in New Haven this summer on these subjects and perhaps the Council can attend one of these sessions together. She will share that information via email.

Mr. Rosenberg led a discussion on a proposal to advise COA regarding Artists' Fees and Costs in the Not-for-profit sector which also speaks to equity and inequity for visual artists. Generally, in order to participate in shows and events even in the non-for-profit world they have to pay an application, review and or hanging fee to get in. For new emerging artists who are building a resume on exhibition schedules this part will be very costly because they want to get into juried shows, want to be exhibited and want their work to be seen but a lot of artists can't afford it, which in turns leaves out a lot of the artists.

Mr. Rosenberg stated, that in discussing an approach with COA, the approach seemed to be both a carrot and a stick. The carrot being, we can help you perhaps if you don't charge a fee and you lose that income, we can perhaps give you a bump in the support COA offers you. On the other hand, if you're going to take money from the state and support your nonprofit, you would have to certify that you are not going to charge Connecticut artists for their participation.

Ms. McElhone stated that telling institutions that if they charge for something we wouldn't fund them is something that we have to think about very hard. Rather, how do we give opportunities to artists to exhibit their work and still keep afloat as institutions? Let's think outside the box and find ways to support our artists.

7. Director's Report

Ms. Elizabeth Shapiro reported that Ms. Jane Schneider has retired but will return next week for 16 hours a week. Ms. Shapiro is currently working on getting Ms. Bonnie Koba's former position approved.

Ms. Shapiro reported that Ms. Dimitri is interviewing UCONN MPP candidates and will bring someone in to take over some of the data work and the AEP6 study our current intern has been working on.

Ms. Shapiro shared that COA has now data pictures on our website on the grants we have funded going back to 2017 almost completed to 2022. We are going to add overlays to this to show where we award in opportunity zones and where we award to distressed municipalities. We are trying to show information in different ways, one way how to present to legislature and they can consume it.

Ms. Shapiro informed that in the next two weeks along with Ms. Lu Rivera, she will be working on a federal report to account for the ARPA funds COA has awarded.

Ms. Shapiro also informed that the Poet Laureate nominations process is moving forward and closes out tomorrow. Reviewers are currently being sought out.

Ms. Shapiro reported that the Legislature will be coming out this week with their response to the Governor's budget. We will communicate with you if there's any impact on the arts community and how you can help.

Ms. Shapiro also reported that the federal government has transitioned from a DUNS # identifier (9 digit) to a UEI# identifier (12 digit) and COA has been assisting our grantees in this transition since it is required for any organization that applies and or receives federal funding.

Ms. Shapiro informed that she will be attending the walk through of the Torrington Cultural District and next week on deck is New London and following we expect Bristol to come in with an application.

Ms. Shapiro shared that she attended a Community Theaters in Connecticut Conference. They are the first in Connecticut to come together as a group and have a day long conference where they talked together about their needs and how they can work together more effectively.

Ms. Shapiro also shared that Mr. Harris will be hosting his first live and in person Talking Artists series at the state house in New Haven this Wednesday at 6:30 pm.

8. Other Business

No other business.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ted Yudain, seconded by Judy McElhone, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lu Rivera
Grants Administrator