

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

**Connecticut Arts Council Meeting
February 8, 2021
1:00 pm
Via Team Video Conference Call**

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Min Jung Kim, Pedro Bermudez, Helen During, Mary Ellen Eckels,
Adriane Jefferson, Jack Rosenberg, Ted Yudain

Absent: Jan Dilenschneider

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

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of November 9, 2020.

Motion: Ted Yudain

Second: Mary Ellen Eckels

(Y-7; N-0)

III. Chairman's Report

Ms. Min Jung Kim, began her first meeting as chairperson, expressing her honor and privilege to serve in this capacity. Ms. Kim stated that she is committed to Connecticut and the arts, to the council and to service and support the Connecticut Office of the Arts COA). Ms. Kim acknowledged that she has a lot to learn and therefore is very grateful for the institutional knowledge that exists within the council and hopes she can rely on those with that wealth of information.

Ms. Kim shared that she attended a COA staff meeting to get better acquainted with the staff and the work that the Office of the Arts is doing. Ms. Kim hopes that as she learns more about the duties and services of COA, together we can become more impactful in the ways we support COA and the arts of Connecticut.

Ms. Kim reported that Christopher Bruhl has resigned as member of the Connecticut Arts Council and thanks Mr. Bruhl for his years of dedication and service to the arts council.

Ms. Kim introduced and welcomed the arts council's newest board member, Adriane Jefferson. Ms. Jefferson currently serves as the Executive Director of the City of New Haven, Department of Cultural Affairs.

IV. Director's Report

Ms. Elizabeth Shapiro reported that the DECD Legislative Agenda that the arts council passed in November, 2020 is being included in DECD's omnibus bill agenda which includes separating the Arts Council and the Connecticut Arts Council Foundation as well as expanding the Arts Council from 13 to 15 members to allow for not only a more geographically diverse membership, but really to make sure that we can work to our full potential as a council.

Ms. Shapiro informed that the piece that did not go to legislation, is the piece about putting the Emeritus Chair and the Vice President into legislation. According to DECD's legal office, there is nothing in the current statute that precludes the Council from voting these two positions into place.

Ms. Shapiro reported that it is a very busy biennium year at the State Legislature. The Governor's budget is expected to be released this week. It is expected that this session will go thru June 30th.

Ms. Shapiro also reported on House Bill 61-19, an Act concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism funding. This was an Act that was discussed by the Coalition of Arts, Culture and Tourism, a coalition that was put together by the Governor's office. To review, the guests at hotels/Airbnbs/B&B pay hotel occupancy taxes which averages about \$110m a year. There was a desire to invest in the arts, culture and tourism industries, and so a special protective fund separate from the General Fund was created which is currently called the Tourism Fund and that is where COA's funding comes from. The state deposits annually 10% of that hotel occupancy tax into the Tourism Fund. It generates about \$13m a year; \$7.5m is allocated to Tourism and \$5.5m a year is split between COA, the CT Humanities and the arts and culture line items.

Connecticut has 43 arts organizations that receive direct local funding which makes us the state with the most line items; the next closest is Puerto Rico which has a total of seven (7) line items.

Ms. Shapiro reported that as expected, COVID has decimated the hotel occupancy tax because people are not traveling. The Office of Policy and Management believes that the Tourism Fund will be short about \$14m by the end of this fiscal year.

Representative John Michael Parker has introduced a bill which proposes to change the name of the fund to Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund to codify that 40% of this fund will go to the arts and culture and 60% to tourism, which is currently how it is divided but not legislated.

The hotel occupancy tax of which 10% goes to COA now would be up to 25%. In a normal year, this would generate an additional \$20 million for arts, culture and tourism; \$13m for arts and culture and \$20m for tourism. For this year, it will help to keep COA stable, but when the hotel occupancy tax rebounds, it will create a vibrant, long-term, sustainable way of funding arts and culture. A public hearing for this bill is scheduled for this week on Thursday. Ms. Shapiro will email the council members the information.

Ms. Shapiro reported on reopening guidelines. She stated that decisions for reopening are being made between now and mid- March. Commissioner Lehman is working hard to push this out earlier, understanding that arts organizations need the information as soon as possible for dollars to be dedicated and spent by March to prepare for summer season. For now, the framework from last summer will be staying in place.

Ms. Shapiro also reported that with the resignation of Christopher Bruhl, the arts council will have one Governor appointee position to fill. There are also two additional vacancies; one to be appointed by Senator Looney and one by Speaker Senator Matt Ritter.

Ms. Shapiro reported that COA awarded 154 grants with the \$9m COVID Relief Funds from the state. A grant of \$1.5m awarded to CT Humanities was facilitated and pass through COA. COA received 3-4 virtual press conference with Lieutenant Governor.

Ms. Shapiro informed that as reported to the council in November, CHEFA-CT Health and Educational Facilities Authority, awarded a grant of \$100,000 to COA and was able to be accepted through CT Humanities to regrant COVID Relief funds to 17 nonprofit arts and humanities organizations continuing to provide programming and services but facing financial hard hardship because of the pandemic. The organizations were also judged as advancing diversity, equity and inclusion work in their mission and operations and committed to supporting work with black, indigenous and people of color communities.

Ms. Shapiro stated that as reported in November that WindhamARTS would no longer be the Designated Regional Service Organization (DRSO) for the northeastern part of the state, however, she is happy to announce that the Southeastern Cultural Coalition, which is based in New London County, is going to partner with COA for this next year through October of 2022 to help strengthen the services to northeastern community, but also to identify a plan for DRSO service in the future. This is a bridge to the next step to make sure that the northeastern arts

community are really served by the Office of the Arts and by their own Regional Service Organization.

Ms. Shapiro also reported that staff member, Kolton Harris, has debuted a pilot program with three of our DRSOs called Bridge Builders: Southeastern Cultural Coalition with Wendy Bury; Cultural Alliance of Western CT with Lisa Scails; and Northwest Arts Council with Steph Burr. This is an initiative that seeks to strengthen the equity work that the DRSOs are working on by placing an Arts Community Impact Coordinator within each of these three organizations to serve as engagement leads. The focus is on cultural vibrancy and social and artistic justice. The goal is that they will be the bridge between marginalized communities of arts practitioners and the DRSOs that will help foster greater connectivity.

Ms. Shapiro reported that COA continues to refine their funding for FY22 and are really looking at COA's READI goals. COA is also going to be looking at centering artists as the heart of a healthy arts community. In order to maximize funding, and the ability to focus on the needs of artists with a very limited staff, COA has made the decision to alternate the grants that are offered to artists. In FY22, COA will continue to offer the Artist Fellowship grants and will move to an expanded version of the Artist Respond Project Grant program which is funding artists as they respond to current events and community needs. Equity and racial justice will continue to be centered in all our funding programs. COA will be working with Connecticut Humanities in the Connecticut Library Consortium to continue Equity and justice learning on a 101 and 201 level.

Ms. Shapiro reported that COA's partnership with Fox 61 is starting about now and will continue for about six months. The goal is to ensure that the arts are recognized and presented as a valuable and viable career option for young people.

Ms. Shapiro also reported that staff member Bonnie Koba, has been out on FMLA, since January and is hoping that she returns in March.

Ms. Shapiro informed that is she is on the Accessibility Committee for the New England Foundation for the Arts and also on the Board Equity group.

Ms. Shapiro also informed that COA continues to work on other initiatives that were discussed back in November which includes a program to bring back the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in Connecticut.

COA is also working with the Tremaine Foundation who has reserved \$10,000 for a project working with the Air Institute, a group that provides rural and underserved communities with programming that ignites the creative economy in municipalities.

V. Action Items

FY21 ARTE Accesible Grants

It is recommended that the Connecticut Arts Council approve twenty (20) ARTE Accesible Grants for a total of \$50,025.

Motion: Mary Ellen Eckels

Second: Ted Yudain

Recuse: Jack Rosenberg, After School Arts Program
(Y-6; N-0; Recuse-1)

FY21 Artist Fellowship Grants

It is recommended that the Connecticut Arts Council approve fifty-four (54) Artists Fellowship Grants for a total of \$150,000.

Motion: Ted Yudain

Second: Mary Ellen Eckels

(Y-7; N-0)

FY21 Art Workforce Initiative Grants

It is recommended that the Connecticut Arts Council approve up to fifteen (15) Arts Workforce Initiative grants in the amount of \$3,750.00 each, for a total of \$56,250.

Motion: Jack Rosenberg

Second: Ted Yudain

(Y-7; N-0)

FY21 Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund

It is recommended that the Connecticut Arts Council approve one hundred eighty-two (182) Connecticut Arts Endowment grants in the amount of \$803,131.

Motion: Mary Ellen Eckels

Second: Helen During

Recuse: Ted Yudain, Curtain Call

Min Jung Kim, New Britain Museum of American Art

Jack Rosenberg, After School Arts Program

Pedro Bermudez, TheaterWorks

(Y-3; N-0; Recuse-4)

VII. Other Business

Governor's Arts Awards and Patrons of the Arts

Ms. Kim began stating that the Governor's Arts Awards and Patrons of the Arts was scheduled for last year and due to COVID it was canceled. A discussion ensued to decide whether COA moves forward with the event this year.

The consensus of the arts council is that the event be postponed until it can occur as an in-person event when COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

Mr. Pedro Bermudez will continue to lead on the planning and logistics of this event.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ted Yudain, seconded by Mary Ellen Eckels, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lu Rivera
Administrative Assistant