



**CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING**  
**September 9, 2020**  
**6:00pm**  
**Savannah Cultural Arts Center**  
**201 Montgomery Street**

**Present:** *Commissioners:*

- Linda J. Evans, Chair
- Darren Bagley-Heath, Vice Chair
- Curt Bryant
- Michael Chaney
- Eddie Edenfield
- Barbara Essig
- Lu Fang
- Andrea Hall-Houston
- Antonio Hunter
- Kareem McMichael
- Kristopher Monroe

*Virtual:*

- Raymond Gaddy
- Patrick Kelsey
- Robin Sherman
- Anne Allen Westbrook

*City Staff:*

- Stuart Miller, Director, Cultural Resources
- CJ Bogle, Contract Coordinator, Cultural Resources
- Jacqué Fountain, Senior Administrative Assistant, Cultural Resources

**Absent:**

- Sharon Wanda Aikens
- Jan Kramer
- Taqwaa F. Saleem

**Public Attending:** None

**I. Call to Order/Determination of Quorum**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM by Commission Chair Linda J. Evans and a quorum was determined.

**II. Review and Approval of March Minutes**

Commissioner Evans addressed a correction to the July 8<sup>th</sup> Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) minutes, in which Kareem McMichael's name should replace former Commissioner Lisa Clark's name. Commissioner Evans called for a vote to approve the July Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) minutes. Minutes were approved with no objections.

**III. Announcements**

None

**IV. Chair's Report**

Commissioner Evans stated the Commissioner's materials include a list of subcommittees. For the Commissioners attending remotely, Commissioner Evans stated she would ensure they receive a copy of the subcommittee list. The list includes the four subcommittees, the current membership of each committee, and an indication of the committee chair. Commissioner Evans stated that the chair of each subcommittee would be the contact person for Commissioners to connect with in terms of their subcommittee work. Commissioner Evans stated that the chairs will be responsible for setting meeting dates and times along with the priorities and timelines for the subcommittee. Commissioner Evans stated the subcommittee list would have to be revisited in January and suggested that chairs arrange a virtual meeting with the members of their subcommittee to get to know each other and discuss ideas of what can be started for 2021. Commissioner Evans asked that this be completed by the end of this year.

Commissioner Evans reviewed the chairs of each committee as follows: Youth Advisory Subcommittee chair is Raymond Gaddy; Public Arts Subcommittee chair is Kristopher Monroe; City Priorities Subcommittee chair is Patrick Kelsey; Weave a Dream Subcommittee chair is Darren Bagley-Heath.

Commissioner Kristopher Monroe asked why the subcommittee list would have to be revisited in January. Commissioner Evans stated that the composition of the commission may be changing.

Commissioner Evans announced there are ten people on the commission whose terms end December 31, 2020. Commissioner Evans stated the

Commissioners are not automatically renewed for the next three-year term and must actively reapply for a position on the commission. Commissioners should state on their application that they are currently serving as a commissioner and applying for a renewal, this will help ensure that their application is not mixed in with those of first-time applicants. To apply go to [www.savannahga.gov](http://www.savannahga.gov), click on government > clerk of council > boards commissions and authorities. Once there, scroll down for more information and either apply online or download and print the application then turn it in to the Clerk of Council.

Commissioner Evans stated her own term ends this year, and this will also be the end of her second term so she will not be returning next year. Commissioner Evans read the names of Commissioners whose terms also end this year as follows: Barbara Essig, Darren Bagley-Heath, Andrea Hall-Houston, Patrick Kelsey, Kareem McMichael, Kristopher Monroe, Michael Chaney, Antonio Hunter, and Taqwaa Saleem.

Commissioner Antonio Hunter asked if there is a deadline to turn in applications. Commissioner Evans stated she does not believe there is a deadline as the Clerk of Council informed her that the application process is always open and accepting applications. Commissioner Evans stated she does believe that the applications are arranged in the order that they are received and that earlier applications may be considered first.

Commissioner Antonio Hunter asked if there is a timeline for the appointment of applicants. Commissioner Evans stated the process is supposed to take place in the fall. The Mayor and Council vote on the commission slate and commissioners begin on January 1 of the next year.

## V. 2020 Cultural and Arts Investment Program Discussion

***Telfair Museum*** (Assigned Commissioners: Edenfield, Fang, Hunter, Kelsey, Monroe)

### *Free Family Days*

Commissioner Evans stated the Telfair Museum “Free Family Days” took place July 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Evans opened the floor for feedback to the assigned Commissioners who attended the event.

Commissioner Antonio Hunter stated he attended on Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup> and the event was set up nicely with proper social distancing, there were activities laid out for the children, the displays were set up with artwork that included a lot of African American art in honor of Juneteenth, and there were several interactive displays. Commissioner Antonio Hunter stated overall he would give the event a 100% for proper social

distancing, number of things to do and see, and diversity of the attendees from families with very young children up to teenage youth enjoying the event. Commissioner Evans asked Commissioner Hunter what his observations were on how the Telfair controlled the number of people who were able to enter and if there was a crowd waiting outside due to the CDC recommended social distancing. Commissioner Hunter stated he did not see large crowds waiting, but most people came in small groups and the groups that were entering were limited to ten people.

Commissioner Lu Fang stated he also attended on Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup> and noticed that the groups of people there were small and self-regulated, there was no line to wait to go in, and the Telfair did limit groups to sizes of no more than ten people. Commissioner Fang stated he enjoyed the Impressionist collection and the technology displays, he also stated that there was a pandemic exhibit that was astounding.

Commissioner Kareem McMichael stated he attended Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>. In the technology room he noticed that there was an individual at the door keeping the crowd within the room limited to ten people or less.

Commissioner Kristopher Monroe stated he attended on Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup> and the crowds were very limited, there were not that many people at the event, but the Telfair was doing a great job of keeping people distanced.

Commissioner Darren Bagley-Health stated the Telfair announced they will be holding another Free Family Day the weekend of September 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, the theme is Cut and Paste. Commissioner Evans suggested attending for those who can, to see if the Commissioners notice any differences.

## **VI. Director's Report – Stuart Miller**

Stuart Miller, Cultural Resources Director, introduced the Cultural Resources newest staff member, Jacqué Fountain, who has filled the Senior Administrative Assistant role.

Mr. Miller stated that we are still in a holding pattern for reopening. The City's reopening plan is a phased plan, in which we are still in Phase I. Mr. Miller stated that we need to be in Phase III in order to reopen. Mr. Miller stated the Cultural Arts Center is working on some virtual programming and is gearing up for the day that the center will reopen to the public. Mr. Miller stated the City of Savannah's proposed strategic plan is available online for public comment through the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. There are two

initiatives that relate directly to Cultural Arts, the first is Art in Neighborhoods and the second is a new Cultural Arts Assessment and Plan.

Commissioner Patrick Kelsey added that the workshop agenda for September 10<sup>th</sup> has the city's proposed strategic plan on the schedule for those who want to listen in.

## **VII. 2021 ACE Program Funding Deliberation Meeting**

Commissioner Evans stated the 2021 ACE Program Funding Deliberation Meeting will be held on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am at the Cultural Arts Center. The purpose of the meeting is to review all proposals, complete final evaluations, and make a funding recommendation based on those evaluations. Commissioner Evans stated CJ Bogle would provide an agenda for the day and breakfast and lunch would be provided. Commissioner Evans stated that each organization has a lead reader assigned to provide a summary of the proposal and its salient points before discussions begin. Commissioner Evans stated she has prepared a template with basic questions to assist the lead reader in creating a summary narrative of the proposal.

Commissioner Evans stated the organizations have responded with answers to the questions the Commission had, and those answers have been emailed to each Commissioner. Commissioner Evans stated that if the answers make an impact on evaluations, it can be discussed at the deliberation meeting.

Commissioner Eddie Edenfield asked if the framework for evaluating to make room for new proposals has been formally put into work as discussed in the last meeting. Commissioner Evans stated that adding a factor for innovation and longevity with a small volunteer organization as opposed to a large professionally staffed organization was discussed but not finalized. Commissioner Evans stated the Commissioner's roles are to know as much about the organizations and programs as possible, and to adjust what the funding level should be.

Commissioner Andrea Hall-Houston asked if access to view the proposals in Neighborly is still available. CJ Bogle stated access to Neighborly should still be available, but scores cannot be changed.

### **VIII. Contract Coordinator's Report**

Mr. Bogle stated that the ACE Deliberation meeting would be Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am and breakfast would be provided. Mr. Bogle stated that he had parking passes available for attendees for Turner Street and the WW Law parking lot.

Mr. Bogle stated that the Art in Our Neighborhoods, the Telfair museum handed out art kits at thirteen neighborhood centers, five parks, and senior and rehabilitative centers. 200 kits have gone out to seniors and over 1000 kits to students.

Mr. Bogle stated Telfair will have another virtual lecture, "Julie Armstrong, Mary Turner and the Memory of Lynching," on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. Mr. Bogle gave a rundown of future Save the Dates for the Telfair Museums, the Free Family Days "Cut and Paste" paper exhibit will take place September 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> and the "Impressionism Photography" exhibit November 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>. The Savannah Jazz Festival is slated for September 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. The Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra's "Picnic in the Park" with the theme of "Halloween Masquerade" will take place on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Barbara Essig asked how evaluations of events will be completed when attendance to events is limited. Mr. Bogle stated that evaluations are suspended until the end of the year.

### **IX. General Discussion**

Commissioner Evans stated the Commission represents the residents of the City of Savannah and makes recommendations to the Mayor and Council on how taxpayer dollars should be invested in arts and culture programming in the City. Commissioner Evans stated there are requirements that go along with those dollars such as keeping track of demographics, budget, and outcomes. Commissioner Evans stated there are many expectations, including that organizations provide access to the events that are taking place to the Commissioners so they may observe, critique, and report back to the Commission on the investment the City has made.

Commissioner Evans stated that an email went out last week from the Executive Director of Savannah Jazz informing the Commissioners that they had changed their programming model in order to proceed with their festival by reducing seating to 20 -25 attendees and that 20% of seats were reserved for the Commissioners assigned to the event. Commissioner Evans stated that due to having to downsize seating and trying to accommodate the evaluating Commissioners, four seats were now taken from the public. Commissioner Evans stated that in circumstances such as these, a

representative from the Commission should contact the organization to let them know that only one Commissioner need attend the event. Commissioner Evans stated that the email should not have been interpreted as dangling tickets in order provide access to the Commissioners nor was it intended to influence the Commission in any way. Commissioner Evans stated discussions like that need to take place with the full commission and be based upon information and facts. Commissioner Evans stated that any type of complaint concerning a conflict of interest is a serious matter that is to be discussed transparently among all Commission members.

Commissioner Hunter stated that his understanding is that the events are supposed to be free and he asked why tickets are being offered up for events that are funded. Commissioner Evans stated that if there is a free event and seats are limited, tickets are the measure that is utilized for crowd control. Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that typically 4000 - 6000 people would attend the Savannah Jazz Festival between Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at Forsyth Park, but now the seating is limited to 25. Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that there is no charge for the tickets, rather the Savannah Jazz organization was attempting to make tickets available to the Commission to fulfill their contractual agreement.

Commissioner Robin Sherman stated that regarding conflict of interest, his concern in a paid event scenario, Commissioners who are not evaluating an event should not attend the event unless they pay for entry. Commissioner Evans stated there is currently not a single project that the City is investing in that is not free and opened to the public. Mr. Bogle stated that City funded projects were required to be free for the year 2021.

Commissioner Andrea Hall-Houston stated that if there is a question regarding ethics among any of the Commissioners perhaps the Commission could create a framework of policy and procedure for those concerned.

Commissioner Kristopher Monroe stated that new Commissioners should familiarize themselves with the Commission's process, dynamics, and what their role as a Commissioner is.

Commissioner Evans stated that the CAC badge does not entitle Commissioners to attend every event in the city. The badge is meant to communicate to the public that the City of Savannah has the CAC advocating on behalf of the residents of the City to support arts programs and to provide access to individuals who may not have the funds to attend some of the programs.

**X. Adjournment**

Commissioner Evans adjourned the meeting at 7:20 PM.

**Next Cultural Affairs Commission Meeting  
November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
6 PM**