



MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
January 12, 2022
6:00pm
Savannah Cultural Arts Center
201 Montgomery Street

Present: Commissioners:

- Patrick A. Kelsey, Chair
- Michael Chaney, Vice-Chair
- Alexis Alexander
- Joanna Angell
- Lynda DeLoach
- Lu Fang
- Tana Fileccia-Flagg
- Rob Hessler
- Keyshawn Housey
- Antonio Hunter
- Kareem McMichael
- Robin Sherman

Virtual:

- Sharon Wanda Aikens
- Tarcia Bush
- Deborah Glenn
- Andrea Hall-Houston

Absent:

- Doris Liggins
- Taqwaa Saleem

City Staff:

- Stuart Miller, Director, Cultural Resources
- CJ Bogle, Contract Coordinator, Cultural Resources
- Ebony Middleton, Sr. Administrative Assistant, Cultural Resources

Public Attending:

Mountainfilm on Tour – Leslie Carey

Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra – Amy Williams

Savannah Black Heritage Festival – Teresa-Michele Walker Jackson

I. Call to Order/Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM by Commission Chair Patrick Kelsey and a quorum was determined.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Kelsey called for a motion to approve the December CAC minutes. The minutes were approved with no objections.

III. Announcements

Commissioner Kelsey started with welcoming the new commissioners that were appointed by the Mayor and City Council as well as the commissioners that were returning. Then each commissioner was called upon to introduce themselves.

IV. ACE Investment Recipient Presentations

- **Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah**

First ACE recipient speaker on the list was Ms. Leslie Carey with Mountainfilm. Ms. Carey began by providing a background on Mountainfilm. Mountainfilm is one of the longest running documentary film festivals having been founded in Colorado in 1979. They show licensed films that range from conservation, social justice, cultural diversity, and adventure around the world. Their mission is to use the power of film to inspire audiences to create a better world. Mountainfilm's education program is one of the largest city programs that allows for thousands of students to come and view their films. This year, due to COVID, their program will be virtual and available to all middle and high school students in Chatham County. The playlist will consist of eleven short documentary films and programming is approximately 90 minutes long. Ms. Carey finished with providing descriptions of the films that they are showing this year and opened the floor to questions.

Commissioner Michael Chaney stated that they attended the Mountainfilm program at Ships of the Sea last August and enjoyed it. Ms. Carey stated that they would be doing the event again this year.

Commissioner KeyShawn Housey stated that as someone who has participated in the Mountainfilm program before while in high school he was happy to know that they were still doing great work.

- **Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra**

Dr. Amy Williams the Executive Director with the Savannah Philharmonic began by saying thank you for the support. The Savannah Philharmonic’s mission is to be an innovative and influential arts organization that will entertain, inspire, and build community throughout the region. The Philharmonic’s goal is to embrace being the soundtrack of Savannah by breaking barriers between the musicians and audience by creating a space in which friends, family and neighbors can come together. Areas where the Savannah Philharmonic will be performing this year include the Historic District, Pooler, Tybee, Richmond Hill, and Skidaway Island. They will also be continuing their online Savannah video series.

Dr. Williams felt that it was necessary to share the Savannah Philharmonic’s 3-year strategic plan. This plan includes financial stability, education and community initiatives and artistic integrity. Currently, they are working to bring their education and community initiative to all private and public schools throughout Savannah. Programs sponsored by this initiative are Phil the Schools with Music, Music Safari and Musical Horizons which is a collaboration with Horizons Savannah. Other instrumental music programming already offered is The Ben Tucker Instrument Library, small group instruction, district band and orchestra recordings, and the All-Star Ensemble. Dr. Williams ended with opening the floor to questions.

Commissioner Housey asked what about adult education programming. Dr. Williams stated as Savannah Philharmonic is building our 2023 season, the organization is looking into developing an amateur musician all-star ensemble with more to come.

Commissioner Robin Sherman asked when do the students have the time to do the sessions. Dr. Williams stated the programs are either after school or during the school with the assistance of the principals.

Commissioner Tarcia Bush asked how students can approach the organization to get involved with the programming. Dr. Williams stated that they need to go through either their music or band director. If the students do not have access to either a music teacher or band director then anyone at the school can reach out to the Philharmonic.

Commissioner Lynda DeLoach asked which were locations for your performances and hoped that the Enmarket Arena is on your list for probable sites. Dr. Williams stated that unfortunately, the arena is too big for the Savannah Philharmonic to use as performance space.

- **Savannah Black Heritage Festival**

Ms. Teresa-Michele Walker Jackson started by introducing herself as the new director for the Savannah Black Heritage Festival replacing Shirley James who has retired. This year the festival will take on a hybrid approach. Major goals for the festival are to ensure that there are cultural experiences and learning opportunities for everyone. Additionally, the goal is to ensure the targeting of youth and citizens of underserved populations.

The first Savannah Black Heritage Festival was held in 1988 under the leadership of W.W. Law and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, with the support and funding from the City of Savannah. When Mayor Floyd Adams was in office, his team and City Council approached Savannah State University about hosting the festival to ensure that it would stay in rotation. Now, the Savannah Heritage festival is always during the month of February (Black History month) and will run from 2 to 4 weeks which is an expansion from when the festival first began. The festival is also committee run. This is to guarantee that they have input from a diverse group of people on what kind of programming should be offered.

This year, the festival will host Community Acts and Partnerships, The W.W. Law Lecture Series, a Gospel Concert, MK XYZ, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Orchestra Noir, and Bright Star Children's Theatre. The virtual performances will be available via Facebook, WSAV and YouTube. All of this will be advertised using different mediums such as billboards,

posters, brochures, newspapers, as well as tv and radio commercials. Ms. Walker Jackson ended her segment by welcoming all and opening the floor to the commissioners for questions.

Commissioner Joanna Angell asked if there are visual arts components to the festival. Ms. Walker Jackson stated that this year there are more than usual. There is an art exhibition at Savannah State which is partnered with Friends of African American Artists with the Telfair which will be presented in person and virtual. There is also a virtual exhibition of guest artist, Ricky Calloway, who will be presenting with the program Artist Talks. There is also a partnership with the Savannah African Art Museum which will be presenting an exhibition and a corresponding workshop. The theater group at Savannah State, called Players at the Sea, will also be presenting an outdoor theatrical performance.

Commissioner Deborah Glenn stated she would love to see a black history walking tour of monuments and locations in the city. That could also extend outside of the festival itself and be used in the classroom and the Visitor's Center. Commissioner Housey added that there are multiple tour guides throughout Savannah that could be partnered with. Ms. Walker Jackson stated that the annual Laying of the Wreaths which has the youth reading the monuments and their stories and there is a Freedom Trail tour that is done but is temporarily on hold due to COVID.

V. Director's Report

Stuart Miller, the Director, opened with welcoming the new commissioners to the team. He thanked them for the work they do with the art organizations because it is crucial to the Cultural Arts Center. He then moved on to introducing the Cultural Arts Center team members that were present; Harold Taylor, Audio-Visual Specialist; CJ Bogle, Contract Coordinator; and Ebony Middleton, Sr. Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Miller continued with mentioning that classes at the Cultural Arts Center started the week of January 10th. So far, this has been the largest class enrollment at the Cultural Arts Center. This term there are thirty classes offered to both youth and adults in performing and visual arts. The City's mission is to make sure that the Cultural Arts Center is

affordable, therefore, youth who are considered low-income can apply for a scholarship to take classes.

Event rentals are done on a regular basis. The Ben Tucker Theater seats 338 but due to COVID restrictions, only approximately 200 are allowed (60%) to be seated. A couple of rentals coming up are Cinema Savannah on January 28th and the Savannah Musical Festival's MacIntosh Shouters happening in April. The opening of the Cultural Arts Center's next exhibition which is a student-instructor showcase will occur on Friday 14th. Mr. Miller closed with encouraging all to like our Facebook page and share any liked events with their community.

VI. Contract Coordinator's Report

Contract Coordinator CJ Bogle began with welcoming all the new commissioners. He then followed by asking the commissioners to turn in conflict-of-interest forms and verify that their information was correct on the contact sheet. The Weave-A-Dream program will open to submissions on January 15th. The application will be open from January 15th until October 1st. There will be workshops scheduled to review the Weave-A-Dream program and application process with interested applicants. The Cultural Arts Center is also hosting a professional workshop series with the first one occurring on January 27th. The upcoming one will cover nonprofit marketing offered in-person and virtual. Lastly, Mr. Bogle reiterated that even though Mountainfilm delayed their actual festival, they would still be hosting events with the school systems starting on January 31st at 10AM. The Black Heritage Festival is slated to start at the beginning of February and The Savannah Book Festival will start on February 18th. Invites for all these events will be sent out.

VII. Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Nothing to report from either chair.

VIII. Subcommittee Reports

Commissioner Kelsey reports that he sent out descriptions of the sub-committees to the new commissioners. He continues to say that ideally everyone will serve on the ACE investment fund review panel while the other sub-committees will be composed of smaller groups.

a. Youth Advisory Sub-Committee Report

Commissioner Tana Fileccia-Flagg reports that the Youth sub-committee has been inactive, but she is looking to “rev it up.” The importance of the youth committee is to give the youth a voice. The goal is to engage them in active participation and hone leadership and management skills. Some ideas that Commissioner Fileccia-Flagg had were to possibly include a role for youth in the next round of ACE and Weave-A-Dream guidelines and possibly exploring current funded programs to see if youth can play an active role. Another suggestion was to look at outside youth groups that do not have any connection to the Cultural Arts department and reach out to them to educate them on what the Cultural Arts Center has to offer. Commissioner Fileccia-Flagg ended with mentioning that the Youth committee would be meeting before the next commissioner meeting takes place and extended an invite to the other commissioners to join the sub-committee. Commissioners Bush and Glenn expressed interest in joining.

b. Public Art Sub-Committee Report

Commissioner Rob Hessler reports that the Public Art sub-committee met the previous week to discuss the public arts ordinance. This public arts ordinance would be a new funding mechanism that would fund public art projects brought forth by artists in the community. Currently, there is no funding mechanism for local artists that are not affiliated with a non-profit. The proposal for the public arts ordinance has been in the works for over a decade and is being supported with research from other cities that offer a similar ordinance. In September of 2019, several organizations that were in support of the art ordinance put together a questionnaire for members who were running for City Council. Those that took the questionnaire who were in favor of supporting the art ordinance are now City Council members. Therefore, there is an urgency to move forward with the proposal. During the last sub-committee meeting, Director Miller was asked to move forward with a final draft. Commissioner Michael Chaney stated that he would like to make a motion to call a vote so that the draft of the ordinance would go to the next stage in the process, which is to be reviewed by Taffanye Young, Chief of Community Services. Commissioner Glenn seconded calling a vote.

Commissioner Robin Sherman stated that he had reservations about the procedure moving forward and voted ‘no’ on proceeding with

submitting the public art ordinance at this time. Commissioner Sherman stated that the Public Art sub-committee had not had the opportunity to review the final drafted version and felt that the sub-committee had not done enough due diligence to move forward. Commissioner Sherman stated he did not want the public art ordinance to be submitted along with the Recreation Reimagined initiative because he felt that there was nothing in the Recreation Reimagined survey that asked about public art and the public art ordinance needs more scrutiny. Commissioner Sherman stated that he felt the public art ordinance could be included in the community benefits ordinance along with impact fees that are currently being discussed by City Council. Commissioner Sherman was concerned that the public art ordinance may have the support of City Council, but not City Council's direction on how to implement or have a funding mechanism to support the public art ordinance.

Commissioner Kelsey stated there was a timing need by Chief Young review and edit the public art ordinance to present it to the City Manager for the ordinance for further direction and to be prepared for presentation to City Council. Commissioner Chaney pushed to move forward with a vote. Commissioner Fileccia-Flagg stated she was concerned that due to so many new commissioners joining for the first time tonight, that the vote should be postponed. Commissioner Hessler emphasized that the public art ordinance has been worked on for nearly a decade, members of the community have given their input over the years, and due diligence has been done. Commissioner Housey expressed some concern over potential gentrification of neighborhoods caused by implementing the public art ordinance. Mr. Miller reiterated that the public art ordinance will set up the funding mechanisms for the larger public art masterplan, which is a comprehensive plan on how the community will be affected by public art. Mr. Miller added that, before going before City Council, the ordinance would be thoroughly reviewed by the City Manager who would also make his recommendations regarding how to fund the initiative.

Commissioner Kelsey called for a vote. Commissioners Chaney, Fileccia-Flagg, Kelsey, Bush, Glenn, Fang, Hessler, Housey, Alexander, Hall-Houston, and McMichael voted 'yay' to proceed with the draft of the ordinance. Commissioners Aikens and Sherman voted 'nay' for moving forward. Commissioners Angell and DeLoach abstained from voting and Commissioners Doris Liggins, Antonio Hunter, and Taqwaa Saleem were absent from the meeting and did not vote.

The vote to move forward with the public art ordinance passed with 11 of 18 commissioners voting to move forward.

c. City Priorities Sub-Committee Report

Tabled until next meeting.

IX. Tabled Items

- **By-Laws Changes**
- **Code of Ethics/Conflict of Interest**

Both are tabled until the next meeting.

X. ACE Investment Recipient Evaluation

Commissioner Kelsey wants to know if there are any objections to reinstating the event evaluation process. One of the responsibilities of a commissioner is to attend the events that the City of Savannah puts on for the community. Commissioners are to then report their evaluations to Contract Coordinator, Mr. Bogle. These evaluations will be of use when there is time to have discussions in the Fall as the 2023 ACE applications are being reviewed. Due to COVID, commissioners have not submitted evaluations since March of 2020.

Commissioner Sherman asked if doing the evaluations for virtual events be an option. Commissioner Kelsey stated that should not be an issue as demonstrated by our presenters earlier this evening.

Commissioner Hall-Houston requested for the new commissioners that there be a brief discussion on how to navigate the evaluations.

Commissioner Kelsey stated there will be a communication sent out soon providing a step-by-step process on how to submit an evaluation.

Commissioner Fileccia-Flagg asked what the process is on receiving the invitations from the certain groups which commissioners are assigned.

Commissioner Kelsey stated that once all conflict-of-interest forms are turned in the commissioners will be assigned to as many organizations as needed. Those assigned organizations are contracted and expected to personally send out the invites to the commissioners.

Commissioner Kelsey concluded that with hearing no objections, they are reinstating the event evaluations effective immediately.

XI. General Discussion

There will be no meeting in February to allow for the sub-committees to meet.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Kelsey adjourned the meeting at 8:29 PM.

Next Cultural Affairs Commission Meeting: March 9th, 2022