



**MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**  
**January 11, 2023**  
**6:00 PM**  
**Savannah Cultural Arts Center**  
**201 Montgomery Street**

**Commissioners:**

*Present:*

- Deborah Glenn, Chair,
- Andrea Hall-Houston, Co-Vice Chair
- Patrick Kelsey, Co-Vice Chair
- Alexis Alexander
- Sharon Wanda Aikens
- Danielle Barboza
- Michael Chaney
- Lynda DeLoach
- Barbara Essig
- Tana Fileccia-Flagg
- Kareem McMichael
- DJ Murphy

*Virtual:*

- Lu Fang
- KeyShawn Housey

*Absent:*

- Joanna Angell
- Rob Hessler
- Robin Sherman
- Spencer White, III

**City Staff:**

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

**Public Attending:**

- Savannah Book Festival – Tara Setter, Executive Director
- Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah – Leslie Carey, Executive Director

**I. Call to Order/Determination of Quorum – D. Glenn**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Commission Chair Deborah Glenn and a quorum was determined.

**II. ACE Recipient Presentations**

- **Savannah Book Festival – Tara Setter, Executive Director**

The Savannah Book Festival was founded in 2006. The festival was created to celebrate the written word, and its role in improving the human experience. The Savannah Book Festival's mission is to promote reading, writing, and civil conversation. This year the Savannah Book Festival will be celebrating 16 years of hosting authors from a myriad of genres in Savannah. The Savannah Book Festival is unique to Savannah and surrounding areas. Studies have shown that visitors bring 2.8 million dollars to the local economy. Studies have also shown that 30% of attendees travel here specifically to attend the Savannah Book Festival.

This year, the Savannah Book Festival will be from February 16-19. The opening address will be by Jack Carr, the keynote address will be from Preston & Child and the closing address will be from David Maraniss. The Savannah Book Festival's biggest event is called "Festival Saturday." On Festival Saturday, over 40 nationally recognized authors make appearances at 7 different venues around downtown Savannah. During these sessions, authors speak on several different topics including their journey to becoming a writer, their subject of passion, and their book development. They also provide time for Q&A's with the audience. Festival Saturday is free and open to the public. In addition to Festival Saturday, there are 3 headliner, ticketed events that occur during the same week/weekend. The ticketed events help raise funds for Festival Saturday to be free and open to the public. Around 7,000 to 8,000 people attend Festival Saturday and 1,000 attend the ticketed events.

SBF@Schools is offered in conjunction with the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools System (SCCPSS). Authors that agree to spend time in a classroom will fly in a day early. A list is provided to schools of available authors for them to select from. The selected authors and the schools are then brought together for a discussion which would include how they became an author, how they researched their book, how they came up with the idea to write the book, and the book publishing process. During the 2022 Savannah Book Festival, there were 24 authors sent to visit middle and high school students in 5 of the 6 districts. Approximately, 1,294 students attended the sessions. The budget for the

program was \$40,000. There were 32 volunteers. The goal of SBF@Schools is to promote personal enrichment and development among students. Surveyed teacher results show that SBF@Schools is motivational and inspiring to students. Results also showed that it 100% captured students' attention and provided insights that were beneficial to the class. The Arts and Cultural Enrichment (ACE) program is used specifically to purchase books for students of the authors that are attending SBF@Schools. In the past, when the books were provided to the schools, schools have taken the time to work it into their curriculum prior to the author's arrival. The book donation allows for deeper engagement, as well as an opportunity for students to have a one-on-one interaction with the author through a book signing. With the ACE grant there have been over 5,000 books delivered to classrooms across Chatham County.

For more information on the Savannah Book Festival visit <https://www.savannahbookfestival.org>.

- **Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah** – Leslie Carey, Executive Director

Mountainfilm is a documentary film festival that began in Telluride, Colorado in 1979. It started off as a bunch of rock climbers filming themselves climbing and has morphed into a worldwide festival that now features films mainly on conservation, environmental protection, and social justice issues. Mountainfilm's mission is to use the power of film to educate and inspire audiences to create a better world. The founder of Mountainfilm, Zelda Tenebaum, brought Mountainfilm to Savannah fourteen years ago. From there Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah was established. Mountainfilm's program in Savannah has since grown into a multi-day event and features the largest education program in the Mountainfilm family.

Events for Mountainfilm on Tour Savannah will begin on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. The first event will be a screening at the Yamacraw Performing Arts Center at 9:30 AM. The screening will last 90 minutes and will include a live Q&A session. Around 600 school students are expected to attend. Later that afternoon, the same screening will be held at Beach High School. Starting January 19, students from local schools will be bused to the Trustees Theater for the opportunity to see a film screening. One film piece students will get to view is titled, "*Malik*." The film focuses on a heartfelt bond created at a rock-climbing gym between Malik Martin, a man from the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee and famous mountaineer, Conrad Anker despite their atypical commonalities. The other short film being shown is "*Caliefah*." *Caliefah* is about Caliefah Edmonds, a single mom from Compton, California who loses her job

during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to support her family, she took her soapmaking skills (which were passed down from her grandmother) and became a street vendor in her community. Her community supports her in unfathomable ways which allowed her to complete her college education and enroll her children in private school. Students who attend the screenings will have the chance to complete a survey (provided by QR code) on the bus ride back to school.

There will be a family matinee held on January 21<sup>st</sup> which will include a playlist of family friendly films. Families from the Savannah Housing Authority, Deep Center, Loop-It-Up and Park Place Outreach are invited to attend. Free activities and ice cream will be provided through a partnership with Tybee Marine Science Center and Leopold's Ice Cream. After the film festival, the next film screening will take place during the summer at Ships of the Sea Museum.

In partnership with the Savannah Film Academy, there is a mentoring program that will pair 5 SCCPSS students with current students at the Savannah Film Academy. Selected students will have the opportunity to meet their mentors during a scheduled lunch at the film festival. Mountainfilm also provides scholarships to students who are interested in pursuing a degree in filmmaking. Applications will be available in Spring 2023.

For more information on Mountainfilm Tour Savannah, you can visit <https://www.mountainfilmsav.org/>.

### **III. Announcements – D. Glenn**

Commissioner KeyShawn Housey announced that there would be a National Day of Racial Healing held on January 17 by the Mediation Center of the Coastal Empire at the Tompkins Regional Center.

### **IV. Review and Approval of Minutes – D. Glenn**

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

### **V. Introductions & Welcome of New Commissioners – D. Glenn/All**

Commissioner Glenn asked for new commissioners to introduce themselves. First was Commissioner Danielle Barboza who is a marketing manager for a local architecture and engineering firm. She has a background in arts and higher education and has a passion for arts and youth education. Next, Commissioner

Barbara Essig who is returning after a year away from the commission and is a retired educator who thrives on engaging and developing youth through cultural enrichment in the arts. Next, Commissioner DJ Murphy who is an author, screenwriter, art gallery owner, and artist. He is looking forward to his upcoming time on the commission. New Commissioner Spencer White was absent.

Current commissioners then had the opportunity to introduce themselves.

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

Due to COVID-19, last year was the Savannah Cultural Arts Center (SCAC) first calendar year fully opened. During the 2022 year, there were more than 240 instructional programs offered. The SCAC also saw more than 13,000 attendants with around 5,000 of those attendants coming for the SCAC's own programming. Besides providing art programming for the public, the SCAC's responsibilities include cultural contributions. Cultural contributions are provided via investment grants. The number of organizations that applied for 2023 funding has been the highest number thus far, totaling 19 applicants.

This year, the SCAC has three major goals. The first goal is the public art ordinance. The public art ordinance will be moving forward. This ordinance will establish a public art program in Savannah. Currently, we are one of the few cities that does not have a public art ordinance.

Secondly, the SCAC received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to provide a program called Arts in the Park. This program will be held in underserved communities on the West and South sides of Savannah. The idea is to provide a small public art installation, as well as have performances and visual art activities in the park. This will help to fill cultural voids in our city due to the lack of art facilities outside of the second district.

Lastly, the SCAC is conducting the Arts & Economic Prosperity (AEP) study with the Americans for the Arts. It is a national study that has been previously conducted twice in Savannah. The concept of the study is to document the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and cultural community. The study has two components; surveying audiences on expenses related to attending the event and surveying art organizations on their expenses. Once all that information has been accumulated, Americans for the Arts will issue a final report. This final report will provide insight that can be used to show the city council what can be done to invigorate and support the arts community and its impact on the economy. Director Miller will continue to need help from commissioners with surveying audiences at upcoming events. An email providing more information will be sent.

**VII. Contract Coordinator’s Report – C. Bogle**

Commissioners requiring a new nametag need to let Mr. Bogle know by the end of the night. Conflict of Interest forms need to be submitted to either Mr. Bogle or Commissioner Glenn as soon as possible so that commissioners will receive their assigned organizations.

Spotlight and Weave-A-Dream programs are to open to applications on Monday, January 16. Those who are awarded Spotlight grants will have a chance to choose from dates in August through November. Applications for the Spotlight program will close on June 1<sup>st</sup> and organizations will be notified of their dates by June 14<sup>th</sup>. The Weave-A-Dream program is scheduled to close to applications on October 1<sup>st</sup> or until all funding is allocated, whichever comes first.

Upcoming ACE recipient events include Mountainfilm on January 17 and in person programming will begin on January 18. The majority of the Mountainfilm’s events will be held at the Trustees Theater. The Black Heritage Festival will start their programming the first weekend in February and the Savannah Book Festival will begin on February 17. Upcoming Spotlight grant events include 100 Black Men’s project titled, *Young Warriors* on February 4 and Lauren Ohmer’s project titled, *Have I Told You About the Time* on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

Upcoming contract meetings include Mountainfilm, The Black Heritage Festival, and the Philharmonic. Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

**VIII. Chair Report – D. Glenn**

Chair Glenn did not have a formal report but did welcome and encourage all commissioners to attend upcoming events.

**IX. Vice-Chair Report – A. Hall-Houston/P. Kelsey**

No report was presented.

**X. Sub-Committee Reports:**

- **Youth Advisory Sub-Committee Report – T. Flagg**

No report was presented.

- **Public Art Sub-Committee Report – R. Hessler**

Sub-committee chair, Robert Hessler was absent. Commissioner Kelsey provided background on the Public Arts ordinance that has been in the

making for the last 10 years. Currently, the public arts ordinance is waiting to be reviewed by the city manager. A short letter of support will be provided from commissioners to the city manager stating that they are recommending the passage of the ordinance.

- **City Priorities Sub-Committee Report** – P. Kelsey

No report was presented.

- **Weave-A-Dream Subcommittee Report** – A. Hall-Houston/ P. Kelsey

No report was presented. Commission Chair Glenn reminded commissioners of the upcoming application opening date of January 16<sup>th</sup>.

- **Spotlight Subcommittee Report** – Kareem McMichael

Subcommittee Chair Kareem McMichael encouraged the other commissioners to get the word out on the Spotlight program. Applications will open on January 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### **XI. ACE Recipients Evaluations**

There were no additional discussions.

#### **XII. General Discussion**

There were no additional discussions.

#### **XIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 PM.

**The next scheduled meeting of the Commission will be held on  
Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 6:00 PM**