

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

Cultural Arts Commission Minutes

Wednesday, June 12, 2023

Members Present: Karen Askin, Liz Ortuzar, Francis Bevington, Patricia Dubroof, Brian Rogers, Spencer Knoll, Therese Capal, Howie Jung

Members Absent: Melissa Sera, Rosemary Storey, Cristin Cash

Councilmember: Mark Pierzchala

Staff Present: Andy Lett, Betty Wisda, Karyn Miller, Barrack Mattie

Guests Present:

Call to Order

June 12, 2023, 7:04 pm

Approval of Minutes

Karen Askin proposed the approval of the meeting minutes from May 10^t. Therese Capal motioned for approval, which was passed with a majority agreement. No changes or amendments were suggested to the minutes.

Chairpersons Report

Karen welcomed Karyn Miller, a new member of the city, and highlighted the City's effort to bring her on board.

She also acknowledged Andy's exceptional work on the Bloomberg Asphalt Art Grant application, emphasizing the progress in convincing public works to consider asphalt art. Karen noted the grant's competitiveness but expressed optimism about their application due to the effort they put in and the experience it gave them. Andy provided an overview of the grant, discussing their proposal for a road diet project on Avenue between North Washington Street and Maryland Avenue. The goal is to reduce traffic lanes and slow down traffic, with provisions for bike lanes and artwork installations. Despite the grant only covering a small fraction of the project cost, Karen appreciates it as a chance to delve into asphalt art.

The VisArts received a \$10,000 planning grant from the Maryland State Arts Council to collaborate with Andy and the recreation department to create a mural on Lincoln Park's playground. This collaboration is seen as a significant step towards sustaining the public art program with funds from sources other than the city of Rockville. Maryland State Arts Council is also coordinating an \$850,000 grant for next summer. This project and grant could be seen as a roadmap into the future for forming partnerships to enhance Art in Public Places further.

Andrew Lin from the Human Rights Commission and Tyree Davis have reached out to VisArts for an art project at the City's Pride Celebration on June 24th. Assistance on that day would be greatly appreciated.

Councilmember Report

Councilmember Mark Pierzchala welcomed new member Karyn, emphasizing the importance of the Cultural Arts Commission. He discussed the upcoming solidification of the commission's redefinition within the ordinance on July 31st, following a years-long process. He also mentioned the upcoming new fiscal year on July 1st, acknowledging budget challenges and a backlog of capital improvement projects. He advised the commission to prepare for the next budget process after the new mayor and council are elected in the fall. Pierzchala also emphasized the significant changes to the council, with at least four new members joining, and the need for the commission to be organized and proactive. He expressed excitement about the city's initiatives focus on culture and arts, including economic development.

Staff Report

Karyn Miller is the new Arts, Culture, and History Manager. Virtual meetings discussed mural concepts for Rockville City Hall and Senior Center. A successful "Meet the Artists" event showcased the Rockville Art League Members' Juried Spring Show, with three artworks sold. The Rockville Chorus received a standing ovation at their concert. A grant of \$48,2907 was awarded for improvements to Rockcrest Ballet Center. Restoration work began on several public art pieces. Upcoming events include the "Summer of Essence" Show and the Rockville Concert Band concert. A Bloomberg Asphalt Art Grant application was submitted. Asphalt Art Grant was submitted on June 12, 2023. Grants will be awarded in the Fall of 2023.

Karyn Miller introduced herself as the new Arts, Culture, and History Manager for the city of Rockville. She brings over 20 years of experience in the arts and culture sector, having worked in the DC area, private galleries, and arts nonprofits, most notably as the director of exhibitions at the Arlington Art Center. Karen Askin commended Miller's ability to handle bureaucracy, as she previously dealt with the District of Columbia government and the National Parks Department in her past roles. Askin also praised Karyn's understanding of the economic drive needed for the arts and her commitment to broadening partnerships to ensure a sustainable future for the arts in Rockville.

Karen had questions about support for Karyn during the budget process. Andy assured his continued support for Karyn, as she becomes familiar with her role. He mentioned that discussions on budget preparations usually start in September, with Karyn's involvement beginning in October. The team has identified several projects for consideration. These projects, including others that are brought up will need to be discussed and finalized in the coming months for the next the next fiscal year.

The Deputy City Manager, Barack Mattie, confirmed that the new Arts, Culture, and History Manager, Karyn Miller, will be in the city manager's office. As she's only on her third day, she still has administrative tasks to complete. Barrack emphasized the importance of Karyn's understanding of the organization and identifying key community stakeholders. It was suggested that while Miller's enthusiastic to start, giving her time to acclimatize is crucial. Barrack stressed the importance of strategic planning once Karyn has conducted an assessment. The aim is to gradually build the division while considering the council, community, and existing capacities.

Karen Askin expressed unanimous support for Karyn Miller's success in her new role. She reiterated an offer from their executive director to host a reception for Karyn and city employees, inviting arts groups from their listening session. The goal is to connect Karyn with the broader arts community. Karen emphasized the importance of celebrating the inclusion of Karyn's position in the budget, seeing it as a significant step. She offered to plan the event, asked Barrack to choose a suitable time and date, and assured him they wouldn't expect additional work or expenses. She views Karyn as a valuable partner for their organization and the city.

Andy attended a meeting with the East Rockville civic association, where he presented information about the cultural arts commission. Both Patricia and Spencer were present, and the meeting was seen as informative for those who were unfamiliar with the commission. The attendees asked questions about the commission's goals and suggested a new splash pad. They also conveyed interest in having another artwork located at the splash pad. The meeting reinforced the necessity of having a process for people to submit their ideas for art locations. Andy emphasized the importance of periodically engaging with such groups to generate grassroots support and to inform more people about the city's direction with the arts.

Betty shared several events in July that she encouraged the commission to attend. The first is the Essence of Summer Show, opening on July 2nd, which features many good entries selected by a prestigious judge. The event expects up to 225 attendees. Another event is the Summer Evening Pops Concert in Rockville Town Center, known for its standing-room-only crowd and great music. The Rockville Civic Ballet will stage an innovative performance incorporating puppetry at the theater on July 22nd and 23rd.

Lastly, Betty praised the Rockville Concert Band for their standing ovation-worthy performance during their May performance and mentioned they'll take a summer break starting May 21st.

Art in Public Places Subcommittees

The Art in Public Places Subcommittees meeting discussed ongoing and upcoming art projects. Betty Wisda highlighted the progress of four concurrent restoration projects headed by Deborah Rodrigues. These include the mosaic at Elwood Smith Community Center, a project at the senior center, a fountain on Bell Avenue, and work at Gia's Corner on the wall at the Nature Center. Betty also mentioned a grant of \$45,000 from the Maryland and State Arts Council.

There was a discussion about assessing the Lincoln Park Mural and other future projects. Wisda also brought up the Memory Walk project and potential safety issues, with further information to be shared at the next meeting. There are two primary issues: potential damage to the Memory Walk due to lamination underneath the concrete, and the proposal to create a car entrance into the senior center via Goody's Arbor. The Memory Walk, located at Lincoln Avenue and Douglas Avenue, is at risk of crumbling due to a hollowing of aggregate under concrete detected by a contractor. The committee will be exploring options before deciding on a course of action.

The Department of Public Works has contacted City staff in their feasibility study for developing an entrance to the Senior Center via Gude Drive. Any construction would require the relocation of Gude's Arbor.

Patricia raised the issue of mapping available spaces for art projects, which Betty and Andy had been asked to do. She mentioned more clarity about available land and walls that could host artwork. Andy responded that they had identified 25 locations. Although sharing this information has been challenging due to IT and security concerns, we could drop those into a Google map.

Patricia also brought up a past initiative—mural-making 101 for teens—that she believes could be revisited. This initiative allowed teens to create temporary murals in identified public and private spaces, fostering art in Rockville.

Karen expressed concern over the quality of public art on private buildings, specifically referencing a self-storage building on Stone Street. Andy Lett explained that the art is following the art in private development requirements.

Betty discussed plans to remove three columns and the decayed tree carving in the city, which would be replaced with new artwork next year.

Betty and Andy clarified some budget changes for the swim center, indicating additional revenue, but expenditures remained the same. The actual construction of the swim center outdoor pool project would start in FY2024 and be completed by Memorial Day 2025.

Betty discussed the two upcoming mural projects at City Hall and the Senior Center. The committee emphasized the importance of preparing sites for public art and mentioned two artists expected to excel in their projects. The first artist, Sean, is about to start projecting his images on the wall, while Katie's work will begin on June 26 at the senior center. The committee also discussed future projects for fiscal years 24 and 25, including the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center Annex and College Gardens Shelter. Karen Askin emphasized the importance of community involvement in the mural projects. Betty Wisda confirmed that they are working on the approved projects for FY2024.

Frances added that the temporary art subcommittee discussed addressing the calls for artists for future events, focusing on soliciting community feedback.

Frances suggested setting up public meetings like the COVID listening sessions to engage civic associations, homeowners, community groups, etc. The idea is to invite these groups to public meetings to share their thoughts and ideas. The discussion also involved an online form for suggestions and a yearly call for ideas. The meeting also reminded everyone about the implementation plan, which is yet to be approved, focusing on community-driven projects and a small grants program to support art production in the community. The challenges of grassroots-created art were also discussed, particularly around insurance and liabilities. Frances ended by opening the floor for thoughts on organizing another listening session.

The members discussed the need for setting project deadlines to streamline the workflow and ensure efficient use of resources. They acknowledged that public art projects take significant time to complete and suggested an improved communication strategy to manage expectations. The members also proposed creating an informative guide for new council members and the mayor to understand public art's processes, goals, and benefits. They further discussed accepting community input year-round but setting a cut-off deadline for project consideration within the current fiscal year. They also emphasized the need for explanatory materials detailing the project process for commission members and the community.

Patricia proposed involving Spencer in drafting a one-page document to encourage civic participation in art commissions and educate the new council and mayor on the value of art. Karen Askin suggested Spencer work with Frances, who is knowledgeable about the legal aspects of public art. Andy emphasized the need for a strategic plan before proceeding with any new initiatives. Karen agreed, viewing the plan to insulate the council from unexpected community pressure. Andy stressed the need to refine the submission process for artwork proposals.

Patricia Dubroof stressed the need to support Karyn in her new role, without hindering the city's ongoing work. She suggested that newer members like Spencer and Liz could take on roles to assist the city. Frances Bevington proposed using listening sessions to gather community ideas, which could inform the creation of a community grants program.

Karen asks about the potential challenges in collaborations with Lincoln Park regarding two new projects they are proposing, upcoming restoration projects, and a possible mural. Andy affirmed the importance of communicating clear expectations to community groups about the length of the Art in Public Places process, emphasizing the need for a long-term plan.

Frances emphasized that discussions on certain ideas, like listening sessions, could be an avenue to underline the need for early planning, especially for launching new projects. Karen proposed further discussions with Andy and Betty to understand existing programs and identify areas for change. All agreed that despite 2025 seeming distant, it's approaching rapidly, necessitating prompt action.

Liz expressed interest in understanding Karyn's vision for her role as a mediator between the CAC and the Mayor and Council. She also wanted to understand how the CAC use their roles in supporting Karyn.

Frances Bevington acknowledged the complexity of understanding the art in public places, architecture, and private development programs. She appreciated Andy and Karen's patience in clarifying these programs. She also briefly discussed the usefulness of hometown holidays as an outreach and education opportunity for soliciting ideas from Rockville community members.

Old Business

None

New Business

Spencer Knoll raised a procedural question about the commission's ability to continuously authorize members for public engagements. Andy Lett suggested that members could be designated as liaisons for different groups, like how Brian is the liaison to the Human Rights Commission. However, any representation would require a vote. Patricia Dubroof and Karen volunteered to be a liaison. The discussion clarified the difference between attending a meeting and representing the commission, providing Spencer with clarity.

Human Rights Commission

Brian Rogers reported that the Human Rights Commission could not host a formal meeting due to lacking members. However, the Commission discussed their ongoing initiatives and reminded the group

about the Pride subcommittee, which is finalizing sponsors and payments for performers. They need volunteers for an event on the 24th.

Karen Askin reminded everyone that summer vacation for children begins on Juneteenth. The city is planning a parade in Lincoln Park, and county activities are happening. She expressed regret that the city and the Human Rights Task Force were not collaborating on a Juneteenth event. She requested volunteers for a rainbow tie-dying event on the 24th.

Andy Lett clarified that Lincoln Park's event on Saturday is an anniversary parade, not a Juneteenth event.

Barack Matite provided further details about the Lincoln Park community celebration marking its 132nd anniversary and a separate Juneteenth event. He mentioned that the city was involved in planning an event at the Black Rock Center. The Mayor and Council have been invited to speak at several events leading up to Juneteenth.

Karen Askin expresses concerns about the lack of advance planning and community involvement by Morguard. She believes this leads to missed opportunities for collaboration and efficient use of resources. Patricia Dubroof reminds Karen that this is their first year, indicating they need time to catch up. Karen continues to desire better synergy, noting duplication and overlap in their work. Howie Jung agrees with Karen's difficulty in dealing with Morguard. Barack Matite offers to connect them with Morguard's Grace and Victoria, who he says are good to work with, while acknowledging the challenge of collaboration when everyone wants to do their own thing.

Announcements

Patricia Dubroof announced that the winner of the F. Scott Fitzgerald literary conference art poster competition has been selected. The committee is seeking additional members, particularly a treasurer. She mentioned minor issues with the website update and introduced Pamela, a videographer who will edit past conference footage. The conference will be held at Montgomery College in hopes of greater student and faculty participation. More sponsors and members are sought for support. The keynote speaker will be Jonathan Franzen, an author of books dealing with mental illness.

Meeting Adjourned

The motion to adjourn was made and unanimously approved. 8:54 pm