

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

Cultural Arts Commission Minutes

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

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

Members Absent:

Councilmember: Mark Pierzchala

Staff Present: Andy Lett, Betty Wisda, Karyn Miller

Call to Order

Chairperson Karen Askin called the virtual online meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Therese made a motion to approve June 14, 2023 minutes and Patricia seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Report

- Karen attended the City's pride event and found it much better than last year. They appreciated the efforts of Tyree and the human rights group, despite the challenging hot and humid weather.

Councilmember Report

- In the meeting, Mark Pierzchala mentioned his participation in the pride event and confirmed that the revision of the commission's ordinance is scheduled for the July 31st Mayor and Council meeting. When Karen Askin asked if any commission members needed to attend the revision, Mark suggested it wasn't necessary but could be appreciated. He highlighted that the revision represents six or seven years of work. Andy Lett confirmed that the last time the ordinance was changed was in 1975.

Staff Report

- Karyn Miller has been busy acclimating to her new position. She has divided her work into three main areas: reviewing key city studies and department documents, conducting numerous meetings and outreach efforts, and site visits. She has spent a significant amount of time reading and understanding important reports and studies, such as the 2019 Arts and Culture Study and the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan. In

addition, she has been meeting with various internal and external groups, including REDI, VisArts, and several resident companies to better understand the community's key players. She has also been doing site visits and exploring the local neighborhoods by foot to get a better feel for the area. Throughout this process, she has greatly appreciated the support from Betty and Andy.

- Mark Pierzchala asked Karyn Miller if she had connected with Peerless Rockville. Karyn confirmed she had tried to reach out to Nancy and is waiting on a return call. She plans to contact Nancy. Mark then suggested that Karyn should focus on King Farm Farmstead as part of the City's cultural scene and recommended connecting with the Friends of the Rockville Civic Ballet, a long-standing group in the City.
- Karen Askin praised Karyn Miller for taking the initiative to incorporate public art, culture, and history into city projects. Karyn shared her plans to meet with a consultant named Todd Bressi, who is working on strategic and cultural planning for the county, including the role of art in private development. Betty Wisda mentioned that Todd has information on their private art and development ordinance and is working to understand their unique status as an incorporated city. Karen suggested that while they shouldn't blindly copy the county's plans, they can learn from and share their experiences.
- Karyn Miller is planning to build on her current work by catching and implementing projects mid-stream to help with development. She wants to focus on strategy, vision, and making their work effective, which may involve making tough decisions and prioritizing tasks. Karen Askin is supporting Karyn's work and suggests that as outside advocates, they can push harder and voice opinions that may be difficult for internal staff. There will likely be a new group of elected officials who will need education about the arts scene. Karyn and Karen are planning to discuss their priorities and ways to support Karyn's work in September. Karen Askin urges everyone to think about how they can support Karyn's work and will be reaching out for help in the future.

Arts in Public Places Subcommittees

- An individual from West Virginia has placed a bid to remove the three columns at Woodley gardens. The procedure of removal specified the considering the regular camp activities that take place there from 9 am to 3 pm, Monday to Friday during the removal and must ensure the removal without damaging the landscape. After verifying that expectation individual has not yet responded to the request for information on removal procedures.
- The next step involves the eagle and bears at Horizon Hill. The plan is to present a memo of understanding to the council, which will lead to the removal of these pieces. This will conclude a nearly five-year period of artwork that was originally believed to be temporary.

- Debra Rodriguez has finished conservation on *Mosnaic* at Elwood Smith, *Gaea's Corner* at Croydon Creek Nature Center and *Every Person Has A Song To Sing* at the Rockville Senior Center and will continue with more in September. There's a need for information about a fountain's foundation that was previously handled by personnel at Morguard. Victoria no longer works there. A new facilities manager from Fenestra is now managing the Square. The goal is to retrieve the fountain's original details to guide the conservation work correctly. Communication regarding this matter is ongoing, with information expected to be passed on to Debra Rodriguez for appropriate action.
- Betty Wisda is collaborating with Sean James of Mural Masters Inc for a generator screen project at the City Hall. They are discussing a few possible adjustments to the artwork, including applying an anti-graffiti coating. Regarding Katie Gigante's work, The Senior Center also wants to use the imagery for promoting their center. The two artists involved have been professional and flexible, dealing with numerous revisions and weather challenges. The artwork is expected to be completed by September. Betty appreciates the artists' dedication and professionalism, and the feedback has been positive so far.
- Karen Askin has noticed the City Hall mural has caught the attention of passersby. Karen and is thrilled with the public engagement.
- The positive response from the Senior Center, indicating that their artwork resonates with the users. Betty mentioned that the artists, including Katie, have received a lot of interaction from the public. Karen also revealed that Katie has experience in corporate art and praised the local talent involved in both projects.
- Karen Askin and Cristin Cash had a conversation about a blue color that Cristin masterfully used in her description of the artwork. Cristin is proud of it and feels honored every time she sees the blue in the artwork.
- Betty Wisda mentioned a possible title for the City Hall mural as 'Cool Blue Rockville' by Sean James. Karen suggested that Katie might use the title 'Connections' for a piece related to the Senior Center.
- Betty Wisda then discussed the finishing touches needed for the Senior Center artwork, including an essential anti-graffiti coating, and filling in the circle with the dog. She noted that their artwork had not been vandalized before, but the coating would add an extra layer of protection.
- Betty also mentioned the need to confirm the best date and time for committee meetings, and the requirement for additional members on each committee. Karen Askin discussed the need for more people to join the committee, particularly to represent their neighborhoods. She also noted the upcoming outdoor pool project, among other potential city capital projects. She suggested that until the committee is at full strength, the existing members could help each other out.
- Frances Bevington brought up an update on the Lincoln Park Community Association meeting, where due to a mix-up, they weren't on the agenda. However, they were

offered a spot at a future meeting, which both Frances and Karen plan to attend. Frances clarified that previous motions from the last meeting still stand.

Human Right Commission Liaison Report

- Brian Rogers and Karen Askin attended Pride Festival where they felt that Human Rights had done a good job. However, Brian voiced concerns that the event clashed with the Islamic holiday, Eid, and suggested that organizers should have been more mindful of this.
- Karen Askin was impressed by the numerous faith organizations present at the Pride Festival and felt proud to live in a city where faith leaders openly discuss important issues. She also mentioned Cheryl Kagan's speech about a bond bill for retrofitting single-stall bathrooms to be gender-neutral. Karen considered this good news for the city, given the high expense of renovating bathrooms. Karen also observed the presence of various organizations, including Hopkins physicians and a dispensary that informed attendees about the upcoming legalization of recreational marijuana in Maryland. She commended the event for being better organized than previous years and expressed her desire for increased involvement in the future, particularly in promoting cultural awareness. Karen Askin found intriguing due to the predominance of young teenagers.
- Brian Rogers brought up the ongoing Human Rights Commission discussion about revising the City ordinance, drawing parallels to CAC reformatting process. Karen Askin emphasized the slow pace of such progress and patience.
- Karen Askin also discussed the confusion surrounding a Maryland state-funded planning grant for a different project. She mentioned meeting with the community's center manager prior to leaving for a trip. The manager seemed to be well-connected to the community and noted confusion over two proposed park projects. Karen expressed her intention to keep the City's project and VisArts projects separate until there have a better understanding of VisArts path forward.

F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Festival

- Patricia Dubroof spoke about a talented winner of an arts contest, Fernando Santiago. Santiago is not only a skilled digital artist but also an experienced academician of many years, originally from Puerto Rico. Patricia expressed her excitement about having someone with such an extensive academic background involved, especially as he represents the Latino community.
- Patricia also mentioned the committee's need for more members, particularly a treasurer. She expressed concerns over their website, which is undergoing updates but is plagued with issues. Patricia found it difficult to register online due to the system's

glitches, calling it the 'wonkiest' she's ever encountered. The committee is working on improving the site, but she described the process as tedious.

- Patricia suggests that they could use some assistance to review the website and offer improvement suggestions. She expressed frustration with their current consultant, doubting his knowledge of best practices. She ended by considering the idea of reaching out to REDI for potential assistance, as they have not yet collaborated with them for the festival.

New Business

- Karen inquired about the issue of the Theatre's Resident Companies and whether this matter would remain under Recreation and Parks or in City Manager's office. Andy affirmed that the agreement related to the use of the F. Scott Fitzgerald facility and the storage units there won't be transferred from Recreation and Parks. Karen confirmed that CAC would continue to advocate for the Resident Companies.

Old Business

- Karen Askin highlighted the two existing vacancies in their commission. She indicated her uncertainty about whether Mayor Newton would continue to make appointments to fill these positions. Karen emphasized the importance of diversifying the commission and appealed to everyone to consider individuals they know who might be interested in areas such as performing arts, visual arts, and history. She is urging everyone to think creatively and consider unconventional candidates. She stressed the urgency of this, given the importance of the year ahead for the commission.
- Andy Lett confirmed Karen's point, mentioning an individual who had shown interest, but had not yet applied. He speculated that the person might not have realized the requirement to reside within the city's incorporated boundaries. Karen reiterated that potential appointees must live within the city's incorporated boundaries, even if they have a city address, and offered her assistance for anyone uncomfortable approaching potential candidates. She emphasized the need to fill the vacancies in the commission.
- Patricia Dubroof proposed hosting a welcome party for Karyn, expressing her hope that it could take place in September. She envisions this as a celebration of the commission's recent achievements, including creating a new position and appointing Karyn to it. Patricia spoke highly of Karyn's capabilities and suggested the party would be an opportunity to formally acknowledge her appointment. Karen Askin welcomed the idea of a welcome party but suggested including a wider group of people who would be interested in meeting Karyn. Patricia clarified that her intention was to host a small cocktail party specifically for the commission and a few others, not a larger public event. She assured Karen that she would move forward with her plans and choose a date for the event.

- She advises everyone to prepare for a longer meeting in September, as they will start discussing the budget. She hopes to present a draft of an implementation program along with Frances and Karen during the next meeting.

Announcements:

- Patricia announced that she received a state grant for her project, "Who Cares Series", which involves conducting interviews of caregivers. She has created fifty portraits of caregivers over the past forty years and has been invited to display her work at a venue called Locals River Works in Poolesville. This venue is a multi-purpose space that includes a gallery, restaurant, cafe, bakery, farm stand, and gathering place. Patricia plans to host talks about the art of caregiving, self-care, and how it relates to homecare and arts and healing.
- Karen suggested that senior communities might find Patricia's project interesting and offered to think about potential attendees. Patricia welcomed any suggestions for people who might want to visit the venue and experience her project.

Next Meeting:

CAC will meet via Webex on August 9, 2023, at 7:00 pm

Meeting Adjourned

Meeting adjourned 8:07 pm.