

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via Zoom video conference on Thursday September 23, 2021.

Members Present:

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden
Jocelyn Condon
Colleen Byron
Theresa Schlechty
Nick Willis
Melvin Van Vorst
Katelyn Armbruster
Annalisa Alvrus

Members Absent:

Ivan Martinez
Angela Buer

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein
Sarah Goedicke
Randy Vogel
Alison Stoltman
Jarrad Bittner
Illya Riske

Theresa Schlechty moved to start the meeting and Jocelyn Condon seconded. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden called the meeting to order at 4:01pm.

Public Comments: There were no members of the public present.

Approval of Minutes from the July 22 Meeting:

Nick Willis moved to approve the minutes and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from July 22, and they will be posted on the city's website.

Discuss: Public Art

The Board will reinstate the Public Art working group and thinks this is a good time to make the case for the profound economic benefit of having a regular public art program. The working group will commit to two one-hour meetings before the next Board meeting in November. Those who stated they were interested in being part of the working group were Katelyn Armbruster, Nick Willis, Colleen Byron, and Annalisa Alvrus. Sarah Goedicke will send an email out to those not present at this meeting to see if they want join the working group, and Nick Willis will lead the group.

New Topics Discussion

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden expressed disappointment that the Board was not invited to the Mesa Historical Museum's Diversity in Mesa Exhibition, which recently opened. Sarah Goedicke & Cindy Ornstein will speak to the new Executive Director to make sure the Board is on their mailing list. Cindy shared that some City Council members had their invites go to spam. Alycia and Colleen discussed their impressions of the exhibit and Jocelyn Condon recommended inviting the new Executive Director to speak to the Board. Sarah Goedicke will set that up.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein introduced new i.d.e.a. Museum Administrator Jarrad Bittner to the Board and the Board introduced themselves. We have still not found a new Museum Administrator for Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH), and the city will hire a search firm to help. Many thanks to Alison for her continued service in the interim role. The Department is facing challenges with hiring, as is the city and many organizations and companies nationwide, and many factors are involved with that challenge. Cindy stated that the department continues to be so lucky with the quality of existing staff.

Arts & Culture program managers toured the new ASU building across the street and are planning many future collaborations. I Love Mesa Day on September 25 will feature free admission to both i.d.e.a. Museum and AzMNH, and two free concerts that were booked by Randy Vogel, Michael Franti and Young the Giant, will be featured at Mesa Amp.

Staff Reports

Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Update on Programs and Operations – Cindy Ornstein, Illya Riske, & Randy Vogel

Cindy Ornstein shared that Season Kickoff was phenomenal – thank you to all staff for a fantastic event that was engaging and beautiful! The crowning jewel was the opening of the exhibitions at the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum (MCAM). MAC saw about 7500 visitors over four hours, the museum was busy up until closing, and The Store did more sales than the prior three Season Kickoff festivals, including a festival that had more visitors on campus. The Día de los Muertos festival is coming up soon and is always a large and well-attended event.

Randy Vogel reported that the concert industry is constantly changing, with artists changing their protocols on almost a weekly basis. Many artists are starting to require vaccine mandates or test mandates for patrons and MAC is having issues with a few shows due to Mesa's policy that follows state mandates. This has resulted in a couple of reschedules or cancellations. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden asked about the difference between MAC and what other arts organizations are doing in the valley and Cindy explained that some organizations are requiring a negative COVID test with proof of vaccine accepted in lieu of that negative test. MAC leadership is regularly monitoring what other arts organizations are doing and sharing that with City Management and continue to have ongoing conversations about our situation and protocols.

Illya Riske shared that Mesa Amphitheatre and MAC had previously received Shuttered Venue Operator Grants (SVOG), with MAC receiving \$2.8 Million in July. MAC is now eligible for an additional \$1.4 Million in a second round of SVOG awards. These funds provide stability through operational challenges due to COVID.

Cindy Ornstein stated that in general, MAC is doing well financially and continues to have record sales rates. Shows are at 49% of capacity sold and Randy Vogel said that currently only three shows are underperforming in ticket sales. This speaks to the community's excitement about having activities and shows again. Studio enrollment continues to do well and MCAM attendance numbers continue to be above average.

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

The museum had record-setting attendance in July despite still having limited capacity as part of COVID protocols. July saw 18,000 visitors and August attendance was up 11% from the previous year. The store has seen record sales and membership is bouncing back. This can be attributed to the two new exhibits and the marketing work done over the summer.

More and more schools are suspending field trips and education staff expect the focus to shift to virtual field trip experiences. The museum is planning to have streamed-in educators and teacher hands-on activity boxes that can be checked out. AzMNH is currently refreshing Dino mountain, which is the main attraction at the museum. Plants and dinosaurs are looking worn and being refreshed, and some eventually replaced. The exhibit will also better highlight the change of flora and fauna through time as depicted on the mountain. The museum will participate in I Love Mesa Day with free admission and timed ticketing. The next big event will be the Mesa Grande opening. Mesa Grande is a seasonal outdoor site that is open on weekends for guided tours.

i.d.e.a. Museum – Jarrad Bittner

Jarrad Bittner shared a PowerPoint presentation with the Board (see **Exhibit A**). The Robo Art exhibit has been very successful and Jarrad offered to set up tours for Board members. This exhibit will close at the end of the calendar year. The Atrium project has been delayed to January and will open with the new exhibit. The scope of the project will be adjusted to maximize its impact. i.d.e.a. Museum is nearly sold out for I Love Mesa Day but will be offering opportunities for families to return if the museum is at capacity when they show up. Attendance has been down for the museum, but most of the museum's young attendees are not currently eligible for vaccines. Despite this, the museum is within 10% of membership levels of the prior two years.

Discuss any Projects, Initiatives, or Presenters of Interest & Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only

The Board discussed setting up tours at each institution and setting up passes for the Board to experience and give feedback as a regular patron at each institution. The Board decided to set a poll for how the Board wants to meet moving forward (in person, online, or hybrid) and Sarah Goedicke will send that out.

Theresa Schlechty said she was interviewed along with Bruce Nelson by ASU's State Press about the new ASU film school and that will be published soon. The Board discussed upcoming valley events including the National Coming Out Day celebration at Heard Museum on October 11, the Mesa Powwow, and a volunteer opportunity with the Day of Service and Sleep in Heavenly Peace, building beds for kids on October 23. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden shared that she is taking on the role of Associate Director of Project Humanities.

The next scheduled meeting date is September 23, 2021, via Zoom video conference.

There being no further business, Colleen Byron moved to end the meeting and Nick Willis seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Ornstein". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department