

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via hybrid format with Zoom video and in person at Mesa Arts Center on Thursday January 27, 2022.

Members Present:

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden
Jocelyn Condon
Colleen Byron
Theresa Schlechty
Nick Willis
Melvin Van Vorst
Katelyn Armbruster
Annalisa Alvrus
Ivan Martinez
Angela Buer
Brad Peterson

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

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

Ivan Martinez moved to start the meeting and Jocelyn Condon seconded. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden called the meeting to order at 4:04pm.

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

Approval of Minutes from the November 18 Meeting:

Colleen Byron moved to approve the minutes and Katelyn Armbruster seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from November 18, and they will be posted on the city's website.

Introduction of New Board Member:

The Board welcomed Brad Peterson and introduced themselves.

Discuss: Public Art

Nick Willis gave a brief overview of the history of Mesa's public art resolution and program. Funding for this program was no longer appropriated beginning in 2007-2008. Nick reiterated that the Board wants to propose that Council consider reinstating a City Public Art Program, and gave an update on the most recent working group meeting and discussed next steps.

The Board discussed key messaging for communications with Council, and discussed art media, art retirement age, sustainable art, and maintenance costs. Next steps for the Board are to send a summary letter to Council to ensure there is interest for the Board to work with staff to create a conceptual framework for a possible, reinstated program. The Board is not bringing a specific plan, but hoping to get buy-in from Council first on the overall concept, interest and need. This communication should focus on data showing the economic impact and public perception of the arts and public art. Colleen Byron and Cindy Ornstein agreed to review research on the impact of public art, and Cindy shared that every few years there is an arts and economic prosperity study by Americans for the Arts in which Mesa Arts and Culture has participated.

New Topics Discussion

Brad Peterson asked about the development plans for Eastmark and East Mesa, public art or otherwise. Cindy said there are a couple of developers that have expressed an interest in incorporating public art into their developments. Also, Arts & Culture recently met with Bell Bank Park and are excited about the possibility of opportunities to collaborate on some arts experiences at that site that will help serve SE Mesa. The department had previously done some pilot programming on the ASU Polytechnic campus, with low participation, and at Eastmark, with excellent success, but there's been tremendous growth since then and it would be good to test additional means of serving this geographic area of Mesa. The department also now has MABEL (Mobile Art-Based Engagement Lab), which can go into the community for pop-up engagements.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

The department is working on Arts and Culture department level strategic planning and will soon have staff breakout group work sessions. Updates will be shared with MCAB.

The City has contracted a search firm for the AzMNH Director position, and they have held initial meetings with staff, City management and the Search Committee. Currently they are working on salary benchmarking and the position description.

Staff Reports

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

MCA has an opening reception on Friday Feb. 11 and the Board is invited to join Members and the public. Randy Vogel reported that the Omicron variant has had some impact on the season's revenues, but staff has worked hard to get as many shows as possible to reschedule. International travel restrictions have also caused some cancellations and postponements. MAC has been able to bring in rapid testing for backstage staff (when required) for some productions and are sometimes able to extend that opportunity to staff. The Fundraiser event scheduled with Kristin Chenoweth has moved to March 4 due to artist illness. MAC is planning a series of summer concerts focused on Arizona talent and will be offered at a moderate cost.

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

AzMNH continues to see school trip cancellations in response to the Omicron variant. Despite this, the museum continues to see strong attendance and has resumed events. AzMNH is rolling out new virtual experiences for schools, including virtual tours. This is currently in a soft launch phase so the team can collect feedback. Alison Stoltman shared photos and updates of the conceptual plans for a renovated gallery (see **Exhibit A**).

i.d.e.a. Museum – Jarrad Bittner

Following the Board meeting, there will be a tour of i.d.e.a. Museum for Board members. Atrium renovations are underway with updates to landscaping, better accessibility, and a multisensory mural that will expand to the museum's external walls. The artist working on the Atrium mural will be available to speak with the group briefly during that tour. The capital campaign has strong support from board and key donors, and plans are progressing well.

i.d.e.a. Museum continues to see lower attendance than normal, but its average attendance is still higher than many children's museums across the country. Omicron is affecting visitors and membership. The museum is also going into schools to provide programming as some schools cancel or reschedule field trips. i.d.e.a. is working on creating new unique nighttime experiences.

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

Theresa Schlechty shared that she visited Mesa Historical Museum a few months ago and they have some interesting exhibits. She specifically mentioned the "Mothers of Mesa" exhibit highlighting women from the pioneer days.

Colleen Byron recommended everyone attend the All State Jazz concert later in the evening if Board members are able to attend. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden shared that she is looking forward to Black Violin, Xavier Foley, and attended Jazz at Lincoln Center this past fall.

The next scheduled meeting date is March 24, 2022 and is currently planned as a hybrid meeting.

There being no further business, Colleen Byron moved to end the meeting and Jocelyn Condon seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department