

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via Zoom on Thursday March 24, 2022.

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Ivan Martinez

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein
Sarah Goedicke
Jarrad Bittner
Alison Stoltman

Theresa Schlechty moved to start the meeting and Melvin Van Vorst 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 January 27 Meeting:

Melvin Van Vorst indicated there was an error in the physical location of the hybrid meeting. It should be corrected to i.d.e.a. Museum. Melvin also moved to approve the minutes with corrections and Colleen Byron seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes with corrections from January 27, and they will be posted on the city's website after Sarah Goedicke has made the corrections.

Presentation from Cultural Coalition – Carmen Guerrero:

The Board welcomed Carmen Guerrero from the Cultural Coalition to give a short presentation on who they are and what they do. The Cultural Coalition is located in Downtown Mesa and works with children in an afterschool program, which also provides a free meal from St. Mary's Food Bank and provides an art experience. They collaborate with other local organizations to provide gardening classes, cooking classes, and homework help. The Cultural Coalition also takes these children on field trips to local arts institutions.

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden asked if the Cultural Coalition has any major events or volunteer opportunities coming up and Carmen mentioned that they have lost many volunteers due to the pandemic. They need volunteers to read to kids and serve the food at the afterschool program. They are also restarting an Art at Night series and working with Youth Rising, among others, to develop a youth center and create evening teen programs.

Carmen talked about the events the Cultural Coalition puts on, including March 6's Mask Alive festival. Cindy Ornstein attended and stated it was wonderful. On April 6, they will hold the El Puente Festival at Tempe Center for the Arts. Every October, they present the Portal to the Past Festival at Pueblo Grande Museum in Phoenix and their Mikiztli: Día de los Muertos Festival takes place the first weekend in November at Steele Indian School Park.

Cultural Walk Information and Discussion – Andrea Alicoate:

Andrea Alicoate is the City of Mesa's Diversity and Special Projects Manager and is working on the city's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Andrea introduced the board to Mesa's Community Learning Series, which will launch with a campaign called "Together Mesa" sometime in May. This will showcase the different cultures and perspectives in Mesa through many different channels. Andrea said that an element that she wants to see as part of this project is cultural walks that would be in a few parks across the city, especially where there aren't as many cultural opportunities nearby. Right now, the idea is that these would be community-engaged temporary public art pieces with kickoff events. While still in the concept phase, the Human Relations Advisory Board would like to collaborate on this project, and Andrea is bringing this to the Museum & Cultural Advisory Board to see if anyone is interested in partnering on it.

Cindy Ornstein observed that this aligns with the Board's focus on public art, as well as being community-focused. Four Board members expressed interest in being involved and Sarah Goedicke will send that list to Andrea after confirming via email with the Board. Colleen Byron was excited that this project focuses on spaces outside of Downtown.

Discuss: Public Art

The Board discussed the language of the summary letter they plan to send to Council. Nick Willis, who drafted the letter, asked for any questions or comments. No Board members had comments on the letter. Staff recommended that a couple Board members meet with the City Manager prior to sending this letter to gain insight from him in making the case to Council.

Nick Willis made a motion to approve the plan to have a couple Board members, along with Cindy Ornstein, meet with the City Manager regarding the letter and public art and then transmit the letter to Council with any recommended edits from the City Manager. Melvin Van Vorst seconded the motion and the Board unanimously voted to approve the plan to meet with the City Manager and transmit the letter to Council afterward.

Cindy Ornstein shared that there is an exciting and robust public art program going on in the Asian District that she sat on the panel for where they created a roster of artists to then match with businesses to create murals to celebrate the cultural diversity and richness of the district. The majority of the artists on the roster are BIPOC.

New Topics Discussion

No new topics were discussed.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein shared that MAC's 2021 Día de los Muertos festival won the Cultural Diversity Award for large cities from the National League of Cities. Also exciting is that Chandler won the Cultural Diversity Award in their city's category.

The department presented their budget to the City Manager and should be hearing soon what the recommendations to Council are. The department asked for a number of positions, including a department-wide Sponsorship Coordinator and reinstating the Special Events Coordinator position. Also presented to the city was Arts & Culture's Capital Improvement Project (CIP) request that included a request for funds to assist at both i.d.e.a. and AzMNH.

Things continue to move forward on the search for the AzMNH Director and the job was recently posted through the search firm. There are already a number of applicants. The department hopes to onboard the new Director by the end of the fiscal year or the very beginning of the next fiscal year. Cindy Ornstein stated she continued to be forever grateful to Alison Stoltman for her leadership as Interim Museum Administrator.

The department has been working on proposals for expanded education programming next year and those have advanced. The department presented the proposal for use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support educational programs for low income families and youth to City Council and they were very receptive. Mesa Public Schools requested proposals for fee for contract programming next year as well. The department will be significantly expanding educational activities to area schools for the next two years.

Staff Reports

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

Randy Vogel asked Cindy Ornstein to share that next season is going to be truly amazing and a blockbuster season and can't wait to share it with the Board once announced. Additionally, despite the very large number of cancellations and postponements this year, he projects to still bring in \$2.5 million in revenue of the projected \$4 million that was forecasted at the beginning of the fiscal year and expenses will be correspondingly lower. Cindy Ornstein stated that is very encouraging.

Cindy Ornstein highly recommended the Board check out the Contemporary Craft exhibition at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum (MCA), as it has a focus on glasswork and is stunning. She also reported that MABEL is going out into the community more and more and school programming has been expanded this year.

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

Alison Stoltman talked about a pottery workshop that took place at Mesa Grande in February and described the artist's process. This weeklong camp ends with participants firing their pots at Mesa Grande. The museum also held "I Love Science Day" in partnership with Arizona SciTech. This fun event featured everything from the Department of Air Quality to the science of sword fighting. There were over 600 attendees and the event received good press. Alison stated she will give an update on a couple other major projects at the next Board meeting. The museum is also in process of hiring a Marketing Coordinator.

Cindy Ornstein said the museum's participation, revenues, and store sales are doing fantastic. The store is having a record-breaking sales year.

i.d.e.a. Museum – Jarrad Bittner

Jarrad Bittner shared that lots of changes are still going on at the museum. The exhibition team (with staff from MAC and AzMNH) went down to Tucson to visit a local exhibit design and fabrication shop to see if it would be a good fit for future needs. The mural in the Atrium is coming along beautifully and Jarrad encouraged the Board to stop by and check it out. Interactive elements should be added in the coming weeks. i.d.e.a. has a staffing challenge and is making changes to their programming model to keep staff more engaged.

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

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden shared that at ASU, the American Indian Graduate Student Association is bringing the film "Apache Leap" to campus on Monday and Tuesday April 4-5. This is one of the only films produced from a decolonized movie production perspective through a film academy created for San Carlos Apache community members. This is free to attend and will feature a "Decolonizing the Set" discussion with the filmmakers on the first night, with the film screening on the second night of the event.

Jocelyn Condon attended the Out to Lunch concert on March 17 that featured the Irish music act Stilicho and stated it was wonderful and that everyone should attend one of the concerts. Sarah Goedicke shared that the Out to Lunch concerts are back up to pre-COVID attendance levels.

Theresa Schlechty traveled to Ajo for a retreat recently and said it's a truly amazing art community now.

Brad Peterson went to Tucson for Spring Break and took his daughter to the Mini Time Museum of Miniatures, which features miniatures of everything and included an interactive section for kids. He also saw Jersey Boys and the show was completely full and it's clear that demand is high for these experiences.

The next scheduled meeting date is May 27, 2022 and is currently planned as a hybrid meeting.

There being no further business, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to end the meeting and Theresa Schlechty seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department