

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via Zoom video conference on Thursday November 19, 2020.

Members Present:

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden
Theresa Schlechty
Melvin Van Vorst
Nick Willis
Michelle Streeter
Angela Buer
Jocelyn Condon

Members Absent:

Dilworth Brinton, Jr.
Ronna Green
Ivan Martinez
Tara Phelps

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein
Sarah Goedicke
Randy Vogel
Sunnee O'Rork
Alison Stoltman
Illya Riske

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden 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 comments from the public.

Approval of Minutes from the September 24 Meeting:

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden noted that she was listed as K. Angela Perry in the Discussion section. Sarah will correct that to K. Alycia Perry before posting to the City. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to approve the minutes with the correction and Angela Buer seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes with the correction of K. Angela Perry to K. Alycia Perry.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein shared that Arts & Culture (Cindy, Sarah Goedicke, Tiffany Fairall) is working with the City of Mesa Diversity Office on activities that can replace in-person gatherings for MLK Day and the Unity Walk. This is with a consortium of five cities: Tempe, Mesa, Scottsdale, Chandler, Gilbert, and Phoenix. We are in conversations with AZ PBS and ASU's Cronkite school to create programming content for MLK Day. Because Mesa is providing the majority of the underwriting, we will be the presenting partner for this. Because the next Board meeting occurs after these activities, Sarah will inform the Board via email once details are nailed down. Alycia asked about the content with the PBS/Cronkite content. Cindy explained that we don't yet know what the content is, but anticipate a mixture of music, spoken word, and a panel discussion – mostly arts-related content. Alycia said she is a member of the East Valley NAACP and offered to make a connection.

For the Unity Walk this year, we are doing a Unity Art Walk. This will be a virtual map showing art offerings around the theme "Unity Art Walk: A Visual Journey of Diversity, Culture, and Equity." There will be differing media and options for people to either see online or see in person. Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum (MCAM) will be doing a pop-up exhibit curated by Clottee Hammons in the SRP Gallery. Clottee will also jury an online art competition.

Strange Encounters was a very successful collaboration with the Downtown Mesa Association. Councilmember Jen Duff was instrumental in us getting enough sponsors for us to make this exhibition happen. Crowds were very good on weekends, but even during the week there were many people enjoying it. We estimate about 20,000 participants and merchants were very happy, and we had to reprint maps due to high demand.

With both museums reopening, we have been able to rehire Visitor Services and Gallery Educator staff. We have also been able to bring back Custodial staff who were assisting other departments or with Mesa CARES. Theater staff at MAC will likely not be rehired until next fiscal year.

Arts & Culture also collaborated with the Phoenix Zoo on some marketing for reopening. Thanks to Randy Vogel for the fantastic idea. The promotion uses animals in our spaces and fun copy to invite people to come back. Filming was done at i.d.e.a., AzMNH, MCAM, and the MCA Theater and lobby. Sunnee shared a link to the final edit and Sarah played the video for the Board. The promotion should be running soon.

Mesa Arts Non-Profits Funding Request Updates – Alycia de Mesa-Weeden and Cindy Ornstein

Alycia stated the letter discussed in the last meeting went to Council and the Mayor and there was some press coverage, including TV news coverage. That reported also asked for updates along this process. Cindy explained that City Management decided to proceed by using the same guidelines as for the Small Business Reemergence Program and with the first round of aid to Founding Resident Companies (FRCs). The City offered six months of rent, storage, and utilities to

non-FRC arts nonprofits and an additional three months of aid to the FRCs. Quite a few of the arts nonprofits don't have rent expenses and were not eligible for aid. However, those that do were very grateful. **Exhibit A** shows the aid given to each organization during this round and the total amount given. Cindy stated the organizations were thrilled and thankful for the aid and Cindy thanked the Board for their advocacy efforts.

Alycia asked how these organizations were chosen. Cindy said she went through Guidestar, asked staff, and reached out to nonprofit orgs we knew of to inform them of this opportunity. Many of the Mesa organizations did not have eligible expenses. Alycia asked if this information is public and if we could share with the media. Cindy said she needs to check with the City to see if we should release a press release. She said she should have an answer by Monday.

Staff Reports

Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Update on Programs and Operations – Cindy Ornstein

MAC received emergency funding from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust in the amount of \$25,000 and a recovery grant from the Flinn Foundation in the amount of \$20,000. We will be eligible to apply for a follow up grant from the Flinn Foundation in three months to cover the transition from recovery to normalcy. MAC also received a \$15,000 grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

In-person Studios workshops will begin in December, in-person classes beginning in January, MCAM opening to members on December 18 and to the public on Dec. 22 with a capacity of only 20 per time slot with timed ticketing. We will continue to offer online classes and will start some in-person Arts in Service classes. Sarah, who is the new staff liaison to The Store, shared that The Store will have a soft reopening on December 1 with limited weekday-only hours and expand to weekend hours starting December 18. They will reevaluate their hours in January based on how business is going. They wanted to be open as much as possible in December to grab as much Christmas traffic as possible.

We continue to plan to use the amphitheater for programming, planning for 15 shows between January and April, and Randy is working on booking those. Starting with capacity of 750 in a venue holding 5000 and will likely keep to that capacity considering the recent COVID surge. There will be incredibly detailed safety protocols and other additional work/safety measures before presenting shows. Randy shared that we are getting ready to announce a virtual series of National Geographic Live with five virtual shows offered as a series. We are able to offer this at no cost to members of a certain level and for a nominal fee for others. These will be live virtual presentations.

Día de los Muertos was a virtual festival and tremendously successful and incredibly well done. If you haven't seen it, you can still see all the segments on our YouTube channel. We estimate that over 30,000 individuals have enjoyed the festival content.

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

AzMNH reopening to members on Halloween and the public the following week. Alison is very proud of the staff for completed the seemingly impossible task of reopening within a month while concurrently handling other projects that have been ongoing. We gathered feedback with a reopening survey, developed with the i.d.e.a. Museum, carefully crafted to get honest results. Results have been very good – most people were very happy and felt the museum exceeded expectations – and we have some fantastic testimonials. We have a new touchless thermometer that also recognizes if someone is wearing a mask. We have had some sessions sell out and it's been hard to have to turn people away, but usually have been able to get them a reservation for later and have mostly been able to accommodate people. We have even had some group booking requests, which was surprising, but they were for 100 people and we don't currently have the capacity for that. It's encouraging that there is a desire to come back, but we're not quite there yet.

We were worried about the lack of interactives. We now have volunteers stationed throughout the galleries to give more information as we have volunteers available. The education department is rolling out their teacher/educator resources as part of the Learning ReimaginED collaboration in Arts & Culture. That's launching by Monday September 28. This collaboration is also in partnership with Mesa Historical Museum and Southwest Shakespeare Company.

No new grants in since the last Board meeting, but we just completed over \$300,000 worth of grant applications. We are also working on a sponsorship plan for the 75 Million BC gallery exhibit.

i.d.e.a. Museum – Sunnee O'Rork

The Museum reopened on Halloween and had staff dressed in costumes to make it festive. We've had great feedback on protocols in place and updated interactive activities. Sunnee offered tours to anyone on the Board who is interested. They

are finding that attendance is hit or miss – seem to be very full in the mornings but not very full in the afternoons. Don't currently have anyone reserved for Thanksgiving weekend on Saturday/Sunday. We still have walkups and no-shows. The people who are coming are very excited to be back in the museum.

The Atrium is going through a refresh right now and we added yarn bombing/tree cozies from the Mesa Arts Center both in the Atrium and out in front of the building. The give off a Dr. Suess vibe. We will also receive a Pentaceratops from AzMNH to place in the Atrium.

The Museum has received a few grants: \$50,000 from SRPMIC for Museums for All, \$15,000 for COVID relief, \$20,000 from the Whiteman foundation, \$37,500 from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

Finally, Sunnee shared that she has reached her 15-year anniversary with the City of Mesa and has decided to retire. Sunnee's last day will be January 21, 2021. Sunnee will remain in the area and will be around. Cindy stated that when we start the hiring process, we will reach out to Board members to participate in the interviews. Alison thanked Sunnee for her advice and leadership.

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

In the interest of time, Alycia combined the last two Agenda items and asked if any Board members had anything to discuss. Alycia was on a webinar from ASU about environmental justice within Tribal Communities. It had brilliant tribal activists and leaders speaking from the San Carlos and Navajo reservations. In indigenous culture everything is interrelated, and Alycia proposed finding opportunities to tell stories that are unique that relate art to the environment, climate, music, and storytelling. Cindy said we are happy to discuss and hear recommendations of people you think we should be talking to.

Alycia also saw Strange Encounters and enjoyed it. She thought it was really cool and was recommending it to others because it was so good. Michelle Streeter said she also saw Strange Encounters.

Michelle said Visit Mesa, using their CARES funding, is filming a social media series with each episode themed. They did some recording at AzMNH, i.d.e.a., MCAM, and the Studios at MAC.

The next scheduled meeting date is January 24, 2020 via Zoom video conference.

There being no further business, Alycia de Mesa moved to end the meeting and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department

Additional aid to Founding Resident Companies

- ▶ FRCs will receive an additional three months of support for rent, utilities, and storage.
 - ▶ East Valley Children's Theatre - requesting \$14,718.99
 - ▶ Mesa Encore Theatre - requesting \$11,866.72
 - ▶ Metropolitan Youth Symphony - requesting \$3,640.43
 - ▶ Southwest Shakespeare Company - requesting \$3,856.26
 - ▶ Symphony of the Southwest - requesting \$1,399.56
 - ▶ Subtotal: \$64,123.27

New aid to Mesa-based nonprofit arts organizations

- ▶ The City of Mesa offered six months of support for rent, utilities, and storage space to Mesa-based nonprofit arts organizations. Three organizations had eligible expenses.
 - ▶ Arizona Youth Ballet - requesting \$3,049.10
 - ▶ Desert Sounds Academy - requesting \$19,091.28
 - ▶ Millett House - requesting \$6,500.93
 - ▶ Subtotal: \$28,641.31

Total
requested/
potential aid
during this
round

▶ **\$65,371.27**