

Maryland Public Art Commission Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2020

By Conference Call 9:00-10:30 AM

Attendees:

Tom Rifford, Ken Skrzysz, Liesel Fenner, Rosa Chang, Ryan Patterson, Rand Griffin, Elizabeth Hughes, Molline Jackson, Leslie Kahn, Anne Klase, Kathy O'Dell Ph.D., Rodney Tissue, Elaine Bachman

The meeting was held virtually through Google Meetings and phone. Members introduced themselves as they joined.

Chair, Rand Griffin called the meeting to order at 9:05.

Griffin thanked Catherine Leggett, the outgoing chair, for her long service and leadership and patience she has brought to the Commission since the beginning of MPAC. He went on to thank Liling Tien, who will be leaving the Commission, for her participation, especially serving on two public art artist selection committees for UMB and USG.

Griffin noted that the Commission's work began prior to the dedication of the Maryland 9/11 Memorial. "Tomorrow marks the 19th anniversary of the events of 9/11 and the 9th anniversary of the memorial which this group was formed around. I always believed the memorial was very well done and symbolized something very important that we could do for the state. Now THIS feels like the most important time we could be working together, and one we will look back on."

June 18, 2020, meeting minutes were approved with the addition of Ann Klase to the list of attendees.

MSAC Updates:

MSAC Executive Director Ken Skrzysz acknowledged the staff, and their commitment to constantly evolving around process and procedure. Noting that in the last twelve months the Public Art Program has changed a lot especially on the ways it strives to incorporate the values of equity and justice into the work.

Skrzysz described that MSAC had completed a second round of Emergency Grants. Over \$1 Million was awarded in Emergency Grants in the first round in May and the Council was just approved another \$3 Million in funding that was quickly and efficiently distributed in a second round in August. As a follow up to the very successful Maryland Arts Summit which was held virtually this year, MSAC is preparing to hold virtual Regional Summits this fall to speak to constituents across the state.

Rand asked how attendance at virtual events is tracked. Skrzysz noted that attendance was at capacity for the virtual sessions that have been scheduled and held so far.

Assistant Secretary Tom Rifford joined the meeting and gave an introduction. He noted that the Emergency Grant effort was phenomenal, quick, timely, and went very smoothly. There were arts councils from around the country that contacted MSAC for guidance on Emergency Granting. The distribution was inclusive and diverse across the state.

Griffin thanked Rifford for joining and welcomed his leadership and participation.

Public Art Across Maryland Update:

Staff noted that the first quarter Public Art Across Maryland grant deadline of FY21 received 32 applications representing approximately \$277,495 in requests. The grant panel meetings are scheduled in the next two weeks. There is currently only \$100,000 to distribute for the fiscal year, so it is likely all of those funds will be awarded in this one round. Staff will continue to be available to constituents and provide technical support. \$100,000 is available for Public Art Across Maryland Conservation Grants.

Maryland Public Art Initiative Program Updates:

Liesel Fenner offered an update on “Individual Artwork Purchase”. Two public (virtual) listening sessions were held and staff is now working through the procurement process of purchasing artworks. To ensure individual artwork acquisition is incorporated in upcoming MPAI project locations, \$50,000 respectively will be allocated for the Catonsville District Courthouse project and Coppin State University College of Business projects.

Griffin asked how the \$50,000 figure was arrived at and if it was based on a specific percentage. Fenner answered that the figure was informed by the architecture of the spaces and details of each project and discussion with the Artist Selection Committee determining commissions v. direct artwork purchase.

O’Dell asked if the \$50K allocation included the framing and hanging of the work, or will the artist be responsible for paying for that? Liesel answered that the hanging and framing costs would come from the \$50,000 budget, but contractors would be hired for the framing or hanging work for a single building or project.

Griffin asked what role the Commission could play in the artwork purchase process, and what role they should have beyond having a single representative on each Artist Selection Committee. Maybe having the Commission review the budget allocations and give their approval would be a way to utilize the commission as a back-board to protect those decisions. Liesel replied that she would draft a review/approval process for the Executive Committee to respond to at their next meeting. Griffin asked how soon the program will roll out. Ryan responded that there was a stated goal from the Commission to try to begin the individual artwork acquisition program within the calendar year.

Liesel noted that a goal of developing the Individual Artwork Acquisition program will be to open more art opportunities to more artists, especially those who may not think of themselves as “public artists”, and segued adding that changing the title of the MPAI program may also help attract a wider body of artists. O’Dell seconded, noting that the term “Initiative” sounds somewhat temporary. Now that we are 7-8 years into the establishment of the program and legislation, we may want a title that is longer lived. Liesel has done some research to create a list of other program names from around the country. Kathy suggests the creation of a small committee to review all of the options and establish a short-list of names for the full Commission to review. Elaine Bachman, Rand Griffin, Kathy O’Dell, all agreed to join the subcommittee and Liesel suggested including the new commissioner expected to be appointed soon.

Public Art and Equity & Justice Update:

Ryan Patterson presented points on the topic of incorporating Equity, Justice, Diversity and Inclusion in how we plan and think about public art. He shared the in-formal crowdsourced list for all BLM related street murals, and discussed the importance of documenting temporary politically-responsive public art

installations and happenings as they occur. Both the Creativity Grant and the Special Request grant are existing funding sources available to constituents to fund documentation projects.

O'Dell asked if there was any update on what is happening at the removed monument sites in Baltimore. Ryan replied that while MSAC had offered both funding and technical support to bring groups together around these locations multiple times, the City of Baltimore could not find the right way to support the program with leadership or funding. The partners who were brought together were unsure who should take the lead or what the right move was. Now we see grassroots organizations applying for funding through our PAAM grant program and this might be the support needed for something to take hold. Some of the most successful temporary projects at the sites were artist-initiated grassroots responses. In addition Ryan also shared the weekly BLM and EJI newsletter that AFTA is distributing and offered to circulate it to the Commission as per requests.

Griffin opened the floor for discussion and reflection.

Molline Jackson thanked the group and the staff and said she was excited about the last portion of the meeting. She noted that it is sometimes hard to keep up because so much is happening so quickly. Jackson appreciated hearing the backstory and candor of what has worked and what has not and willingness to allow flexibility in the process, and this is a good example for the program to be a recognizable resource but also be flexible to the needs of the constituents.

Jackson, O'Dell and Tissue all commented that the changes in the operations of the program are very positive and should be acknowledged. Griffin noted that the program name may not be finalized by the December meeting but this overall review/revision process can be an indicator to set the goals for the group moving forward.

Ken noted that MSAC has been going through a lot of revisions to processes and these help to make meetings more efficient. Sometimes when the work gets easier one must acknowledge that is a reward for a lot of hard, intentional work that came before it.

Griffin noted that the benefit of having an Executive Committee is that they can be a working group to meet more often between Commission meetings to move work forward. He solicited more participation on the Executive Committee to join him and Kathy.

Molline and Elaine volunteered to be added to the Executive Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25.

Commissioners introduced themselves over the phone and gave personal updates on life and work during Covid-19.

Catherine called the meeting to order at 9:21 am and requested approval of the minutes from 2-24-2020. Rodney Tissue motioned to approve the minutes and Elizabeth Hughes seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Ken updated the Commission on MSAC's work and response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Day to day business has continued, with staff working from home and holding meetings three times a week. The organization committed to moving all of its files online three years prior and that choice has served well to make the transition to working remotely very smooth.

MSAC has held three public listening sessions attended by more than 250 people to recommend priorities and actions to be taken by MSAC and our partners. Consistent encouragement has been provided to direct artists to think of themselves as entrepreneurs and arts organizations to consider themselves small businesses.

Anticipate distributing \$1M across the state from MSAC and NEA funds. All applicants are asked to demonstrate anticipated funding from federal and state loans. For almost all grant programs matching requirements have been removed to allow organizations to carry out their work without having to worry about providing the cash match.

Three recurring virtual communities were established 1) Tuesday morning Coffee with Ken virtual meetings 2) We have held 14 "Creative Conversations", discipline related listening/update spaces that allowed for peer to peer sharing and recommendations 3) a new Professional Development series focused on responsive topics including post-Covid-19 season planning, applying for emergency relief funds, and self care. In all, these sessions have seen participation from over 1,000 constituents thus far.

Common thread that runs through all sessions includes encouragement to look ahead and re-vision the future of the arts in Maryland. The Maryland Arts Summit moving online, and being reframed as responsive to the situation we are in now.

A Statewide Arts Task Force is being formed and asked to focus on actionable items including encouraging collaboration, new funding, virtual as well as in-person engagement, and reopening arts campaign to strengthen the arts resurgence. The proposed deadline for the Task Force to advance its action items is May 20.

Catherine thanked Ken for the update and complimented MSAC's ability to move quickly and engage the public in the organization's response to the crisis.

Catherine reported on the work of the Executive Committee, noting that the committee has met a number of times. It has become clear that the Commission needs a vice-chair and recommends Rand for this position. Molline Jackson, offered support of the recommendation. Catherine motioned to nominate Rand as Vice Chair, Kathy approved motion. Rodney Tissue seconded the motion. Rand Griffin was elected Vice Chair of Maryland Public Art Commission

Liesel noted that Commissioner Liling Tien will be stepping down in the new fiscal year. The Executive Committee asked for recommendations to fill the position and Liesel offers two candidates:

- Mide Akinsade, an architect in private practice from Baltimore City
- Judy Kwon, a former public art administrator, and consultant currently working for the Smithsonian Museums, and resident of Anne Arundel County

Liesel noted that there will likely be an additional opening within the next 12 months if Rodney Tissue steps down when he retires.

Catherine asked Liesel for direction on how to fill the opening. Liesel stated that it is important to have designers on the Commission. Mide's expertise and contribution as a designer was very helpful on our UMB project, and he is very knowledgeable about public art. Judy is very knowledgeable as well and she has provided very cogent questions and observations to the Public Art Across Maryland grant review program. Liesel also noted that the Commission does not currently include a representative from Baltimore City.

Rand noted that if there is another opening anticipated we should definitely keep Judy in mind and perhaps invite her to an upcoming meeting. Catherine made a recommendation to move forward with Mide, unless there is further discussion. Hearing none, Catherine confirmed that staff should proceed with recommending Mide Akinsade is appointed to replace Liling Tien on the Commission.

Elizabeth Hughes described the recent work of the group of editors who worked on revisions to the Public Art Program Guidelines and establishing guidelines for a forthcoming Public Art Conservation Grant. The review and consideration of the addition of a Conservation Grant included practical thinking about how the program will work and be responsive to needs. The Conservation Grant will provide much needed funding for conservation that does not currently exist and fills a need for public art programs across the state.

Liesel Fenner pointed out the grant will make available up to \$50,000 for communities to conserve damaged and orphaned artworks. Modeled on the PAAM grant program it will also offer funding for conservators to make an assessment of works in need of conservation.

Tom Riford, Deputy Secretary of Commerce joined the call.

Tom provided a general update from the State level. Tom noted that the Department of Commerce is taking a hard look at what recovery looks like across the state's businesses including the sectors of Tourism and the Arts.

Liesel introduced a new list of CIP projects eligible for public art. A priority is to identify who will serve as an MPAC representative on the Artist Selection Committee for each project.

Commissioners volunteered to serve on the following projects:

- Rand Griffen for “MPT Studio A”
- Catherine Leggett for “Morgan State University New Student Service Center”
- Elizabeth Hughes for “Dept. of Agriculture Salisbury Animal Hospital”

Ken suggested that MPAC may look to MSAC Councilors to represent them on MPAI projects in jurisdictions without MPAC representation. The Commission appreciated this suggestion and requested an MSAC Councilor for the UMES School of Pharmacy and Allied Health project.

Liesel and Ryan are continuing to request and gather updates on each MPAI project, including design status and timeline. It is reasonable to anticipate that there may be spending restrictions for some projects in future fiscal years given the economic shortfall associated with Covid-19.

In closing, Catherine thanked Liesel and staff for staying focused and moving things forward, “We appreciate that now and in the past. You keep us focused on moving forward and making progress”.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 am.