

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF THE ARTS**

**Connecticut Arts Council
November 17, 2014
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT**

MINUTES

Present: Fritz Jellinghaus, Mary DeCroce (arrived at 3:44 pm), Philip Eliasoph, Lisa Scails, Amy Wynn, Ted Yudain

Absent: Mimsie Coleman, Jimmy Greene, Betty Hale, Ann Sheffer

Staff: Kip Bergstrom, Dan Forrest, John Cusano, Tamara Dimitri, Bonnie Koba, Rhonda Olisky

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion by Ted Yudain, seconded by Philip Eliasoph was made to approve the minutes of October 20, 2014.

(Y-5; N-0; Abstain: 0)

III. Chairman's Report

Fritz Jellinghaus recapped on the discussion held at the Arts Council meeting of October 20, 2014 regarding the incorporation of the Connecticut Arts Council Foundation.

Mr. Jellinghaus also reported on the meeting held this morning with the executive director and marketing staff of Connecticut's six Tony-award winning theaters who participated in the Play in Connecticut Festival last October. They have all agreed to continue this and to expand it.

IV. Director's Report

Dan Forrest reported on his attendance at the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) conference in New Orleans, LA. There were many great discussions on important issues throughout the week.

The new chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) Jane Chu was present to introduce herself to the field. Many of Dr. Chu's positions on the arts and the roles they play with American culture are very much in alignment in the direction of the CT Office of the Arts. In particular, she is interested in getting the arts out of playing the zero sum game on federal funding, where the arts dollars are always oppose to highway construction or educational investments and really pushing the arts as another entire dimension to all other activities that federal government funds. Dr. Chu is convening a number of folks from other federal agencies to talk about opportunities for incorporating the arts in their own programmatic activities. She is also setting up meetings in all 50 states and territories to meet with staff and other members in the field to hear directly from them about issues and opportunities.

The other major aspect of this visit was the farewell of Jonathan Katz as executive director of NASAA. Jonathan has been responsible for invigorating that organization and bringing it to national prominence and also bringing the agency to serving the state agencies directly rather than pursuing its own institutional needs and desires. He has offered his continued assistance for anyone that needs it. A national search has begun to fill this position.

NASAA's research unit responded very favorably about the recent questions Dan posted to the executive director's list serve. They are going to be posting a new survey on grants adjudication nationwide.

Dan also received input from colleagues about the extent to which arts funding in Connecticut comes through line items. A number of other states have turned away from line items, others the trend is towards additional oversight. Hopefully additional context information from NASAA will be developed and we will be able to bring to the discussion here in Connecticut.

There were also various sessions on alternate sources of funding. A number of states have been wildly successful with license plate programs. Governors and legislature members have been supportive of this program, mainly because it is voluntary for the states except for one. Minnesota has a constitutional amendment which requires public support for the arts. They are the only state that gets a percentage of every license plate issued in the state. Five years ago Michigan had a one person arts office. They now have a staff of 12. They receive \$14 of every license plate issued for the arts.

A number of states have gone down the Bed Tax path, however a number of them have pared back because they end up in direct competition with the hospitality industry and their tourism offices.

HUD has a number of smaller of program that are now supporting arts organizations particularly for large scale affordable and mixed income housing development. In some states HUD has specifically

made commercial space for local artist available as part of the overall development in direct response to community demands that HUD take a broader view.

Dan also reported that although it has not been formerly announced the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) has chosen their new executive director and the person is from Connecticut. The NEFA board and the staff recognizes that their profile in the New England region has been lower than it needs to be and that they have been focused in the Boston market area. They also want to expand beyond the Performing Arts, which has been 90% of their focus for years. We hope that the Visual Arts as well as the Traditional Folk Arts will now get more attention.

The next NASAA conference is in Salt Lake, Utah. This will be the Leadership Institute for state arts agencies executive directors and their board members. Dan encouraged the arts council members to attend.

V. Action Items for Recommendation

Motion by Ted Yudain, seconded by Philip Eliasoph.

It is recommended that the CT Arts Council approved a grant to Arte, Inc. in the amount of \$25,000.00.

(Y-6; N-0; Abstain: 0)

VI. Discussions of FY16 Arts Catalyze Placemaking Grant Program

For FY16, ACP-Arts Leadership has been refined and sub divided into a project category that is more prescriptive and more intentional in what types of projects we are funding. What was a single category as arts leadership has been sub divided into three categories: Community Development; Education and Public Art. For the small grant opportunities, as previously discussed, will be in partnership with the Designated Regional Service Organizations (DRSOs).

For the new three categories we will be doing medium and large grants under each of those. For the medium grants the request ranges between \$7,500-\$20,000; for the large grants the requests ranges between \$20,001-\$50,000. For the large grant range grants the narrative part of the application will have additional more in depth questions so that the panel and council have substantive information when making decisions for the larger amounts.

All applicants will be required to file on Intent to Apply. This will help us gage how many application are coming in to each category and will help us determine funding allocation.

Assuming COA will receive level funding from state appropriations, \$1.5 million of the grants money – a third will go out for the small grants program - \$450,000; \$500,000 will go to medium and large grant projects and remainder will go out to Supporting Arts in Place.

The small grants will be in the range of \$1,000-\$5,000. The DRISO's will receive \$50,000 with \$40,000 to distribute and \$10,000 for administrative fee. Each DRISO will do their own panel process. Each panel will include a staff member from another regional.

The Arts Catalyze Placemaking Grant program will have 5 categories:

1. ACP-Community
2. ACP-Education
3. ACP-Public Art
4. ACP-Historic Preservation
5. ACP-Supporting Arts in Place

Applicants will be able to apply to one of the 5 categories and to one small grant within their region.

All applications submissions will be done via COA's online electronic program fluid review.

COA's grant managers each gave a power point presentation overview on their respective category for FY16 ACP – highlighting changes and updates; Bonnie Koba – ACP-Education; John Cusano – Community Engagement and Tamara Dimitri – Public Art.

At the next Arts Council meeting schedule for December 15th, full guidelines, applications and final report form for each category will be made available for council review.

VII. Discussion of Grant Adjudication and Award Process

Dan made reference to the email responses he has received from executive directors and deputy directors of other state agencies regarding the adjudication process. He also shared that he received numerous phone calls on this process as well. Overall reaction of his peers was dismay and horror at the thought of eliminating peer panel review particularly for larger grants. The two main concerns expressed were:

1. The panel process is generally seen by the field as the one thing that arts has always had to fall back on in hard times as being the gold standard in transparency in public expenditure. Some states have switched to non-peer review particularly for formula based funding mostly for small grants. Grants up to \$2,500 are often reviewed by staff and/or combo of staff and council, although state agencies are 50/50 to whether small grants should also be reviewed by panel. Many of the executive directors also stated that whenever they had to go to the legislature, pointing to the peer review process is one thing that they would not take criticism for.

2. On the efficiency side, we had a number of suggestions of state arts agencies that have switched to Skype or Google Hangouts in essence video conferencing for panels themselves. Those states that use this method have gone a step beyond and they actually live stream the sessions so the panel in real time can be monitored and watched by every constituent who's applying.

In our own internal discussions the concern in going down this path is that the panel comments are going to be far less pointed and in some cases they pull from certain comments if they know those constituents are listening or observing while those comments are made. For COA wanting to have a 50/50 on in-state and out-state panelists, for the in-state panelists they have professional relationships with some of these people, so for them to make unbiased comments is a little difficult, however it does suggest the level of transparency that arts agencies are really intentionally are incorporating their grant review process. We made be able to do remote panels as a way to cut down on cost and time.

Dan expressed that personally he is really uncomfortable in eliminating grant peer review process. We are always under public scrutiny. In our programs we now have lots of partnerships with arts organizations outside the office such as Create Here Now, where our staff members are working very directly with potential applicants and we need an unbiased panel in place so that we avoid the potential conflict of interest where it looks like any of those partners have an inside track to getting projects awarded from our office.

VIII. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

IX: Adjournment

A motion was made Ted Yudain, seconded by Amy Wynn to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:19 pm.