



**Commission Board Meeting
Webex Webinar
December 10, 2020**

Commissioners in attendance: Abigail Gómez, Asa Jackson, Dena Jennings, Terry Buntrock, Matt Conrad, Robert Goudie, Mike Markley, Sushmita Mazumdar, Jan Monroe, Barbara Parker, Laurie Naismith David Trinkle, Amanda Pillion

Guests: Beverly Hess, President Virginians for the Arts and Cynthia Norwood, Special Counsel

Staff in Attendance: Janet Starke, Lucas Hall, Cathy Welborn, Casey Polczynski

The Commission meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM.

VCA Chair, Abigail Gómez welcomed the Commissioners and staff with a moment of silence for Land Acknowledgement.

David Trinkle made a motion to approve the Minutes from the October 1, 2020 Meeting. Matt Conrad seconded. Roll call. All approved. Motion passed.

Report on Executive Committee Meeting

Abigail Gómez reported on the Executive Committee Meeting of November 9, 2020

1. Virginia Opry Appeal—The appeal from this ensemble was denied based on background and recommendation from staff, and feedback. The Commissioner in attendance for the Panel was Terry Buntrock.
2. Final Round of CARES funding—additional funds were dispersed to 140 organizations with income less than \$1M in the amount of \$730. All receiving awards were sent a conditional survey (assurances) to verify they were still in business and determine any change of address.

Report from Virginia from the Arts (VFTA)

In her report from VFTA, President Beverly Hess invited Commissioners to join the organization if they have not done so already. She discussed a meeting with Arts Caucus Chair, Delegate Martha Mugler, to discuss advocacy plans for the upcoming legislative session. Information will be sent out to all legislators before the session and another push before the budget is determined.

Executive Director's Report

Janet gave an overview of the **CARES Act Award Updates**. She pointed to the updated chart of awards on Tab 3. 140 organizations with budgets under \$1M, received an additional \$730. The

groups shaded are those that have not submitted PART 1 GOS Final Report. Robert Goudie thanked the staff for working so hard on this program and for getting those much-needed funds out to arts organizations across the state in such a timely manner.

Janet Starke gave a **budget update**—the agency was not able to submit a request for additional funding for the next Session. Requests were limited to direct response to the COVID crisis.

Janet Starke gave an overview of the **2021-2024 Strategic Plan**. The Budget and Policy Committee will put forward the motion. Next Steps: A workplan will be developed to serve as a data dashboard with dates, assignments, and measurements, to become a working plan by Board and staff.

Board members discussed further, the wording within the new proposed Mission Statement. Following discussion, the group agreed to:

To invest in the arts in the Commonwealth by supporting, celebrating, and promoting artistic and cultural equity, in an innovative and creative environment to benefit all Virginians.

Asa Jackson asked whether the Goal 3 Action Item under underrepresented populations was legal. Cindy Norwood stated that we could add, “including, but not limited to”.

Abigail Gómez made a motion to put forth the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan with the amended Mission Statement. Dena Jennings (and Mike Markley) seconded. Roll call. All approved. Motion passed.

Teaching Artist Roster Recommendations

Barbara Parker reported as Commissioner in attendance at this Panel Meeting. One artist had applied in the spring with a somewhat incomplete application. The artist applied again, but was still unable to demonstrate how he can transfer strong artistic skills to teaching. Sushmita Mazumdar asked if we give panelist notes to the applicants (affirmed).

Barbara Parker made a motion to approve four teaching artists be added to the Teaching Artist Roster. David Trinkle Seconded. Roll call. All approved, but for recusal by Jan Monroe for the approval of Courtney (Corey) Holmes. Motion passed.

AIEx Funding Recommendations

Barbara Parker reminded everyone that a total of \$34K was allocated for AIEx (with the approval of the FY21 budget in June (2020), with the Board choosing then to hold \$14K to determine more equitable funding needs. Upon review, the Education Committee noted that there were few applications from Areas 1, 2 and 6. Therefore, the Education Committee recommended to dedicate the remaining funds for those specific regions, identifying more teaching artists and organizations, with the goal of increasing applications by two in each region (through April 2021). Mike Markley made a motion to approve the use of the final \$14K as recommended by the Education Committee. Jan Monroe seconded. Roll call: All approved. Motion passed.

2021-2022 Guidelines for Funding

Janet Starke gave an overview of the changes to the Guidelines for Funding, noting the change for GOS change to be just Short Form and that eligible organizations have gone through some form of rigorous review by the panel in the last three years. We will put through the short forms at FY21 priority levels and average last two years of eligible income. Arts leaders were pleased by this news of being able to submit Short Forms. We are not accepting new applications for FY22, but those ineligible, could apply in other categories. Projects will be reviewed by a statewide panel. The Budget and Policy Committee reviewed an addendum to the guidelines that were made in an effort to increase goals related to IDEA under Project Grants. Mike Markley made a motion to approve the 2021-2022 Guidelines for Funding. David Trinkle seconded. Roll Call. All approved. Motion passed.

After a break, Committee Reports were given.

Education Committee

Barbara Parker spoke about topics of discussion and work

1. Background checks, including revising policies based on what other SAAs are doing, especially given increase in outreach to other vulnerable populations. Casey stated we are soliciting info from VMFA and other state agencies to bring a policy for approval at the March 2021 meeting
2. Reinforced support for arts teachers in schools.

IDEA Committee

Sushmita Mazumdar stated three points of committee work:

1. Defining IDEA—increasing awareness to the working definitions of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access
2. Modeling the work--gather examples of IDEA from grantees to share on VCA website and social media.
3. Holding ourselves accountable. Possibly giving an award or recognition to those doing good work in this area. Creating a rubric for IDEA.

Abigail Gómez stated that the Committee is reviewing the Policy Manual to consider revision addressing IDEA. Asa Jackson stated that he served on the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation's Resilience Fund Panel and he felt Virginia applicants fell behind in area of IDEA. The Commission needs to be encouraging groups without penalizing them. To that end, the IDEA Committee wants to promote this through small videos representing inclusion, diversity, equity and access.

Budget and Policy Committee

Mike Markley stated this Committee discussed the AIE proposal, changes to the Guidelines for Funding (which were approved earlier in the meeting), IDEA as a standing Committee, transfer of \$10K of unused Presenter Touring Assistance to Technical Assistance which will be voted on in New Business. Dena Jennings reminded everyone that we should not Reply All. Abigail Gómez shared that Dena Jennings needs to step down from serving as Secretary (of the Board) and Chair of the Budget and Policy Committee (due to her increasing role in the community in response to COVID work). Mike Markley has agreed to Chair the B & P committee.

Special Constituents Committee

David Trinkle stated this committee discussed defining special constituencies and how can we make special populations aware of available services and funding opportunities. The goal is to make arts accessible to those underserved populations.

Regional Reports from Commissioners

Area 1: Amanda Pillion stated that Barter Theatre is continuing to be creative in programming. Many organizations have had to close their doors due to large increases in COVID cases. Outdoor programming was successful until the winter months.

Area 2: Barbara Parker contacted 16 organizations in Region 2 who have received GOS or Project Grants. Southside is spread out with large segments that are highly underserved and struggling. She noted the expansion of the Academy Center in Lynchburg. Danville Symphony is doing great work virtually. Longwood Center for the Visual Arts has had to give up one of its galleries for classroom studies. Piedmont Arts is doing as much as it can with limited programming in the art garden, and virtually. Wolfbane Productions is also doing well. She shared concern about the Prizery, Jefferson Chorale Society and Opera on the James, who are not responding to emails. Barbara noted that Second Stage Amherst stated that its CCPG grant from Amherst County is not paying out on the FY21CCPG grant unless it presents receipts for work by Feb. 1 deadline. Janet stated that more than half of CCPG have not been fulfilled yet. Janet noted we may push the final report deadline to March. Janet noted that Jefferson Chorale Society and the Prizery will need to send a final report for the initial award. She noted all SAA EDs are discussing best practices for verifying how organizations are in business. VCCA was able to purchase its property from Sweetbriar College through the sale of a gifted Georgia O'Keefe painting.

Area 3: David Trinkle stated that many organizations are trying to hold on, but like everywhere, are hampered by opening and then having to close, based on COVID numbers. The Grandin is doing innovative programming, but still hurting. All organizations are appreciative of the VA Cares funding. Donors are helping. Roanoke Cultural Endowment got an anonymous donor while things are slow, so it has been paying for strategic planning while things are slow. Roanoke had its own CARES act where restaurants could also apply for up to \$4K to have support local musicians to play in an outdoor situation. He noted that summer and fall numbers for tourism were good. Confidence in travel is only 35%, so people are staying in and being safe (not visiting restaurants and arts orgs).

Area 4A: Robert Goudie reported that are two groups--the ones that rely on ticket revenue and are struggling, and another group that has adapted through technology. Sushmita Mazumdar stated Signature Theater is doing innovative online subscriptions with filmed productions. Visual arts organizations are doing a bit better. There has been a lot of innovative public art. Many artists are documenting the social justice movement and many are creating art once again as a way to cope with the stress of the times.

Area 4B: Mike Markley noted that those who rely on ticket sales are hurting but trying to adapt through online streaming of productions, and classes, to stay afloat. They are negotiating leases

and trying to reduce expenses. Dena Jennings noted the Arts Center in Orange petitioned for new equipment to present virtual programming. She also noted the increase and interest in public art (murals). Arts organizations are looking at open mic drive ups. Virtual programming has taken off and most groups have been able to adapt. This down time is a good time to plan for reopening. Abi Gómez noted that there is a lot of ingenuity and adaptation in programming in the Winchester area (e.g. Barns of Rose Hill). She noted increases in collaborations.

Area 5: Matt Conrad noted how large Area 5 is. Richmond is noted for being the epicenter of social unrest during this last year. The arts district was at the center of unrest and suffered greatly. The Poe Foundation was the focus of protest and had to transport its documents. The Robert E. Lee statue was reported as the most important piece of protest landing on the cover of National Geographic. Region 5 includes many inspiring stories of adaptation and survival. He noted amazing work being done in Charlottesville and Virginia Opera doing outdoor curbside performances. The Richmond Ballet did not lay off dancers, but reduced sizes of audiences with masked dancers. Visual Arts Center created home kits for arts. Virginia Repertory had to lay off employees, but did manage to put on a play about the life of Harriet Tubman, outdoors.

Area 6: Asa Jackson stated that Hampton Roads is also seeing mixed results. Good collaborations are taking place to stay afloat and address current social and political events including a huge increase in protest arts. Many organizations are hunkering down to plan while times are tough. Peninsula Fine Arts Center is closing and merging with CNU. D'art has closed and is moving locations. The start and stop of activities based on state COVID regulations is wreaking havoc on arts organizations and galleries. MOCA has laid off staff and postponed exhibitions. Laurie Naismith also noted creative virtual programming. She highlighted the Vibe District. She mentioned the new director at VA Opera and also noted that their decision to cancel all mainstage operas for the remainder of the season. She noted the creative programming of Zeider's Theatre; also noting that groups on the Eastern Shore are finding innovative ways to stay afloat. Terry Buntrock noted that Williamsburg Arts Commission is projected to be the same as the current year. There is a large outdoor focus including an audio recording of public art and an outdoor stage. The Muscarelle Museum is doing a lot of online work. Studio space is being reworked. The African American Monument funding is ongoing and will transform the campus.

LUNCH BREAK (12:25 - 12:55)

Executive Director's Report

Janet noted the agency continues to be in continuous assessment and response (to the field) on current opening guidelines.

With regards to the budget: We await the Governor's next budget. In the meantime, the administration lifted the hiring freeze, so we can pursue a new staff position this year.

State of the Arts: We are still largely seeing unseen impacts of budgets which will begin to show in 3rd and 4th quarters. Smaller organizations with low overhead are doing ok as they do not have to pay staff or in some cases, rent. There are donors stepping up, as earned income plummets. Touring is at a standstill, due to limited capacities and public trust/comfort. Many are doing virtual programming, but understand that revenue streams do not always follow. We are one of

the first industries to close and probably the last to open. Now is the time to assess where we see ourselves in midyear to see where and what we will have in terms of unused funds. Many organizations are beginning to have to tap endowments and rainy day funds. Janet noted several leadership transitions including Richmond Symphony, Virginia Opera, American Shakespeare, among others.

ArtWorks 2021 (January 26-28) planning is ongoing. We have honed into the theme of “Reinvented, Reimagined and Restored.” Janet gave an overview of the breakout session tracks.

Janet noted the passing of WSC Avant Bard Director Tom Prewitt, who died unexpectedly on November 11th. Tom was the backbone at WSC, and a 4A panelist who served the area and VCA tirelessly over the

Arts Education

Casey Polczynski gave an update on Poetry Out Loud (POL). The VCA led a national video project (links provided in the board book) with Teens with a Purpose (Norfolk). The project was funded by the Poetry Foundation. The state competition may be live or virtual, TBD in February. The agency is taking part in a working group that includes the VDOE and Coalition Fine Arts Education on an arts education data project.

Programs

Cathy Welborn gave updates on GOS, Touring, CCPG and Technical Assistance grant programs. She discussed unspent monies in all categories, and gave an update on the Application Assistance Workshop planned for the following week.

Abigail Gomez asked how groups that have not received GOS can receive CARES funding. Janet stated we can set aside some funding open grants to new groups.

Old Business/New Business

The Budget and Policy Committee reviewed a staff recommendation to transfer \$10K of unspent Touring Assistant funds to Technical Assistance grants. Mike Markley made a motion. Jan Monroe seconded. Roll call. All approved. Motion passed.

Abigail Gómez made a motion to make the IDEA Committee a Standing Committee of the board. Asa Jackson seconded. Roll call: All approved. Motion passed

Welcome Public Comment. None was submitted.

Abigail Gómez thanked the Commission and staff for their hard work. The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

NEXT MEETING: March 24 – 25, 2021
Location/Method: TBD