



**June 16-17, 2020  
Commission Board Meeting**

**Tuesday, June 16, 2020**

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

**Guests:** Fran Bradford, Deputy Secretary of Education; Beverly Hess, President, Virginians for the Arts; and Cynthia Norwood, Senior Assistant Attorney General

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

Note: an asterisk (\*) denotes an action item for which a vote is required.

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM by Chair Matt Conrad. Chair Conrad introduced Special Guest, Fran Bradford, Deputy Secretary of Education. Ms. Bradford thanked the Commission and staff on the behalf of the Governor for its leadership in the arts. She also discussed the importance of the arts especially in light of current events.

**Agenda Overview**

Janet Starke gave an overview of the agenda/processes for review.

**Meeting Minutes**

Chair Conrad brought attention to the meeting minutes for the December 12, 2019 meeting in Williamsburg; as well as the meeting minutes of the April 17, 2020 (Special) Meeting (electronic)\*.

Dave Trinkle made a motion to approve both the December 12, 2019 and April 17, 2020 meeting minutes. Abigail Gómez seconded. All approved. Minutes were approved.

**Special Guest - Presentation by Beverly Hess, President, Virginians for the Arts**

VFTA has decided to take a two-pronged approach to advocacy. Beverly Hess stated that they will wait to hear about the special (fall) session [of the General Assembly], but are still planning to hold their June meeting. The organization has already begun a Facebook page with impact stories of how the arts will be essential to the recovery of Virginia communities. VFTA will tag local legislators to keep the arts in the forefront of minds as the crisis continues. The second goal is in advocating at the federal level through Americans for the Arts to make the case with federal legislators for state arts funding. Matt Conrad thanked Beverly Hess for her support.

## **Updates from the Executive Director**

### **Virginia CARES Emergency Relief Grants**

Janet Starke gave an overview of the Virginia CARES Emergency Relief Grant program. She discussed the delay with the Department of Accounts and that now payments for the first round of 152 grants are going out. She detailed the National Endowment for the Arts (Endowment) guidelines stipulating funds can be used to support staff, facilities, or artistic staff costs only. 26 applications are pending as they are eligible to apply directly to the Endowment (and other federal/state sources) for potentially more funding. Robert Goudie asked what will be done with those funds not expended. Janet stated that the second round of pending grants would be filled, and that there could be a potential third wave of funding. Laurie Naismith asked about the groups that received Endowment funds. Janet said those were paneled by the Endowment as having received prior Endowment grants and reached a broad cross-section of disciplines, geographic location, etc. Janet stated that Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF) released its CARES grant opportunity, which VCA quickly forwarded to our grantees. To date, we know that many Virginia organizations applied.

### **Updates from the Field**

Janet Starke spoke about our efforts to be responsive to the field including our COVID-19 resource page and Listening Sessions. On May 8, we hosted a session with Individual Artists to share info on unemployment insurance, and on May 29<sup>th</sup>, we hosted a session for the Virginia Presenters Network and touring artists to discuss the challenges and concerns surrounding reopening. VCA is busy working to be a convener and resource for assessing the evolving circumstances, and the best practices related to reopening regulations from both the state and federal government. We co-hosted a webinar with Virginia Humanities (Matthew Gibson, Executive Director) to share our respective CARES Act grant programs, and continue to work in partnership on these efforts. Monthly webinars with MAAF are also taking place. Our partnership with Virginia Humanities has led to a strengthened relationship with Virginia Museum Association. Janet shared some of the creative responses to COVID impacts. Janet also shared there will be more furloughing for those organizations who will lose PPE. VCA is working to track the ways organizations are handling the fallout from the pandemic. Barter Theatre and American Shakespeare Center—among others--have been innovative in its response.

### **Creative Forces Community Connection Project**

Janet gave an overview of the projects (one project contract each of which was awarded for Ft. Belvoir and Hampton Roads' Creative Forces teams) which are concluding by June 30, 2020. As final reports are just being prepared now, more information will be shared at the fall meeting.

### **African Landing Memorial (in partnership with Fort Monroe Authority)**

Janet also gave an overview of the Fort Monroe African Landing Memorial Project, sharing that the Fort Monroe Authority and Foundation led a series of Listening Tours, in February, in Hampton, Richmond and Northern Virginia. The purpose was to more directly introduce the selected artist, Brian Owens, to the community and thanked Asa Jackson for his work, input and knowledge in the field on this project.

### **Presentation of the FY 2021 Grants Budget and Background Materials**

Janet Starke thanked the VCA staff for its teamwork. She then gave an overview of how the budget is determined. Budget Notes provided specific information on each line item.

### **Review of Grant Application Materials**

Janet opened the discussion by reminding members that General Operating Support (grants) requests totaled more than \$10M, with just under a \$3M budget for this category. This is a point for advocacy showing the overwhelming need for funding. Janet then discussed the criteria for Priority levels 1, 2 and 3. Amanda Pillion asked what would happen if an organization is unable to present activities, such as Virginia Highlands Festival. Janet discussed VCA attempts to reach out to each project grantee to discuss changes to the project scope and budget as well as updates/rescheduling. At this point, unless a GOS grantee is closing its doors completely, VCA's goal is to help support them, as they prepare for the upcoming year.

### **Discussion / Approval Creative Communities Partnership (CCPG) grants\***

Janet Starke gave an overview of the CCPG grant program. Localities must meet the match with documentation collected in final reports before payment is made. This year, 117 localities applied. Mike Markley made a motion to pass FY21 CCPG grants as presented, Dave Trinkle seconded. All approved. Motion passed.

### **Discussion / Overview General Operating Support (GOS) grants**

Janet gave an overview of GOS Short and Long form grant program. There were 4 organizations who were denied funding in this category as they did not meet various eligibility requirements as listed on the back page of the program information listed on tab nine of book one. Dena Jennings asked about funds requested vs funds available and how new organizations can find out about funding. Janet gave an overview of e-blasts and VCA grant workshops to develop awareness and stated that eight new organizations applied. She explained that although organizations can apply for 10% of previous year budget, VCA was only able to award 3% last year. Janet gave an overview of how Commissioners can report out on the regional panels they observed. Sushmita Mazumdar asked how [the VCA] defines an arts organization. Janet stated that the VCA looks at the mission and programming—seeking to determine how the organization is actively engaged (or engaging its participants) in art making or the creative process. For GOS eligibility, the arts must be the primary mission. Others can submit a Project Grant.

### **Discussion / Approval GOS Short Form grants\***

Janet gave an overview of the GOS Short Form process. In part, due to current challenges the Executive Director and Program Coordinator identified 18 additional grantees who could reasonably complete the short form, as they are in good standing and were reviewed in-house; this, in anticipation of dynamics of converting the grants panels to the virtual platform. Laurie Naismith made a motion to pass the FY21 GOS Short Forms as presented. David Trinkle seconded. All approved. Motion passed. Robert Goudie abstained from a vote on Greater Reston Arts Center and ARTS FAIRFAX; Mike Markley abstained from a vote on Fauquier Community Theatre; and Asa Jackson abstained from a vote on Peninsula Fine Arts Center.

### **Discussion / Approval Area I GOS grants\***

Amanda Pillion gave a brief overview of the Area 1 panel. She stated that the panelists were invested and involved in the process. Dena Jennings asked how feedback is given and how VCA follows up with concerns. Janet explained that the comments go to applicants. The applicants are asked to address those concerns in the next year's application. Commissioners can speak to organizations in their regions to discuss these concerns. Mike Markley asked about The Crooked Road's board and if there are any

members who are artists. Janet stated [the consensus was] that board could use more artists. Amanda Pillion made a motion to approve the Area 1 Long Form GOS applications as presented. Jan Monroe seconded. Roll call--all approved. Motion passed.

#### **Discussion / Approval Area II GOS grants\***

Barbara Parker gave a brief overview of the Area 2 panel. Barbara stated she served on GOS panels before and that this panel was one of the best and most prepared. She reiterated that the panels are there to evaluate and not advocate. She suggested that we go over the difference in Priority levels with panels again next year. Barbara Parker made a motion to approve the Area 2 Long Form GOS applications as presented. Abigail Gómez seconded. Roll call--all approved. Motion passed.

#### **Discussion / Approval Area III GOS grants\***

David Trinkle gave a brief overview of the Area 3 panel. He stated that this was his second year observing this panel and that it was prepared. Priority 1 recommendations had strong boards and financials. Priority 2 recommendations needed updated strategic plans, or had misalignment between programming and missions. Dave Trinkle agreed with the staff recommendations. He stated that Opera Roanoke does have new staff, but programming initiatives do not align with budgeting and agreed with the staff recommendation of Priority 2. Janet Starke agreed with Dave Trinkle regarding Opera Roanoke and stated that hopefully, new leadership will address the concerns cited. Barbara Parker stated that she also agreed with the staff recommendations. David Trinkle made a motion to approve the Area 3 Long Form GOS applications as presented. Barbara Parker seconded. Roll call-all approved. Motion passed.

#### **Discussion / Approval Area IVB GOS grants\***

Abigail Gómez and Mike Markley gave brief overviews of the Area 4B panel. Abigail stated that she was not present for the discussion on Kid Pan Alley and LakeRidge Chorale. Abigail stated that the panel was fantastic and that all panelists were highly qualified, well prepared and represented a diversity of expertise. Abigail asked about Windmore and Woodbridge Dance. Mike Markley stated that doing virtual panels is difficult. Mike Markley, in summarizing feedback of panelists, suggested Lake Ridge Chorale needs a consultant; Woodbridge Dance seems to have a big problem with separation of powers—he agreed with the staff assessment of Priority 3. Mike stated Windmore is not even a strong Priority 2. Janet stated that she agrees with the assessment of the Barns of Rose Hill. Abi stated that if the bylaws state this structure for Woodbridge, should they be penalized? Janet stated that lack of segregation of duties would present an exposure of risk from an auditing standpoint. Cathy Welborn added that Woodbridge Dance Company is a small organization and would receive the same amount of \$500 whether they were a Priority 2 or Priority 3 organization. Abigail Gomez made a motion to approve the Area 4B Long Form GOS applications as presented with staff adjustments. Mike Markley seconded. Roll Call—all approved. Motion passed.

#### **Discussion / Approval Area IVA GOS grants\***

Robert Goudie gave a brief overview of Day 1 of the 4A panel, stating the panel was thoroughly committed with excellent commentary and alert to questions regarding diversity. Sushmita Mazumdar gave an overview of Day 2. She also made note of the panelists' discussion on diversity in programming, staff, board and volunteers. What do we do if organizations do not diversify panels, staff, or boards? Janet stated that as concerns are identified (by panelists), they will be noted in the applicant's review, as they increasingly are). Dena Jennings asked what the difference is between

Priority 1 and Priority 2. Janet suggested that a Priority 1 should really be your ‘best practice’ organizations; and further, that we are in the first year of IDEA and accountability going forward will increasingly be stressed. Sushmita stated that diversity must be at the forefront. Abigail stated that we need to require accountability and that she has not seen a lot of movement in this area. The IDEA committee should draft language for this ongoing issue with finite requirements [which has been a goal of the Board.] Laurie Naismith stated we need to lay down strong markers for diversity and give organizations three years to improve. Cynthia Norwood, Assistant Attorney General stated that quotas are not legal. Janet stated that policy needs to be revised first, which would then inform funding guidelines, and suggested that (to Cynthia’s point) that perhaps the guidelines would indicate a competitive priority be given to applicant’s who indicate strong metrics in IDEA. Amanda Pillion stated that diversity is tougher in SWVA. Sometimes it is hard to find anyone to serve on a board in this region. Matt Conrad stated that regional diversity (and other characteristics) will be taken into consideration. Matt Conrad spoke to a matrix of board competencies and diversity that VCU uses. Cathy Welborn spoke to the questions regarding diversity in the application and the many variations it can take. Asa Jackson spoke to age diversity. Robert Goudie made a motion to approve the Area 4A Long Form GOS applications as presented. Sushmita Mazumdar seconded. Roll call—1 nay (Dena Jennings), 12 yays, to approve the Area 4A GOS Long Form applicants as presented. Robert Goudie recused from Public Arts Reston. Motion passed.

### **Break for Lunch**

The group dismissed for lunch at 12 Noon, reconvening at approximately 12:25 PM.

### **Discussion/Approval Area V GOS grants\***

Jan Monroe gave a brief overview of the Area 5 panel, stating it was prepared, with good diversity of expertise. She wanted to discuss Three Notch’d Road and Youth Orchestras of Central Virginia. Janet stated she agreed with the staff. She also stated that IX Art Park should be a P3. Janet stated that Three Notch’d Road reached out to say that nearly the entire board departed just prior to the panel meeting. There were many concerns about this group regarding the organizational structure. The artistic quality is high, but their skill set for running the business is lacking. Also, there was concern expressed among the panel, that the organization is largely guided by the founding artist with little input from an objective board. Janet stated that Youth Orchestras of Central VA has been going through a leadership transition with a multitude of structural issues that suggested a Priority 2. Swift Creek Mill Theatre was questioned—why is it a Priority 1? Janet stated the organization has demonstrated much improvement with the new managing director and they have made strong strides to resolve longstanding debt and other challenges. The panel assessed that the board is not as insular as they were, and they are resolving their debt. A question was asked of IX Art Park’s bylaws. Janet discussed the confusion and challenges surrounding Richmond Performing Arts Alliance, as a non-profit arts organization with a for-profit “subsidiary” who oversees operations of their venues. Jan Monroe stated she appreciated the feedback being given to each applicant. Jan Monroe made a motion to approve the Area 5 GOS Long Form applications as presented with staff changes. Roll call—all approved. Motion passed.

### **Discussion/Approval Area VI GOS grants\***

Asa Jackson and Laurie Naismith gave a brief overview of the Area 6 panel. Asa Jackson stated the panel was prepared and diverse. He noted that none of the dance/ballet companies were rated at the Priority 1 level. There were many questions about board diversity. He stated that Hampton Roads is a diverse region (ethnicity and age) and the boards of these organizations do not reflect those

demographics strongly enough. He also spoke to marketing/social media and how this seemed like an area of improvement for many organizations. Asa stated that he is highly concerned that many of these organizations overlook a large portion of the communities they serve and that so many do not have racial diversity on the boards. Laurie Naismith stated the panelists did so much work to prepare and were insightful. She agreed with Asa and stated she wanted to work with area organizations to address board/staff diversity. She specifically mentioned onboarding Armed Services Arts Partnership to reach veterans. VCA counsel stated that we must be careful not to state that we can deny funding, but must ask how we can help organizations diversify. Matt Conrad charged the IDEA committee to work with VCA counsel to address this issue. Abi Gomez stated that in the past when organizations had issues, the executive committee would approach the organizations with concerns. Perhaps the IDEA committee could approach these groups to find out how we can help them diversify. Asa Jackson stated that we could address these concerns at ArtWorks by finding keynote speakers to speak to the topic of IDEA. Dena Jennings stated that the IDEA and Policy Committees can work together on this issue. Janet stated that the VCA started by shaping policy and then education and awareness building. Being able to offer virtual convenings on the topic and best practices and examples will be important to give organizations strategies going forward. Janet gave an overview of the differences in panel and staff recommendations. Terry Buntrock asked if Priority 3 received funding. Janet stated yes. Laurie Naismith made a motion to approve the Area 6 GOS Long Form applications as presented. Asa Jackson seconded. Roll call—All approved. Motion passed.

#### **Discussion/Approval of Major Arts Organizations grants\***

Chair Matt Conrad gave a brief overview of the MAJORS panel. Matt stated the panel was high-caliber and that the panelists had a diversity of experience. Matt spoke to the split vote (by the advisory panel) for Barter Theatre. Coming out of a difficult and challenging time, and that it is the state theatre, he agreed with the Priority 1 level. The panel Virginia Opera increased the Priority level from a 3 to a 2 the panel, however he stated he agrees with the staff that the organization is still a Priority 3, particularly given that panel had no current financial documents to include in the review. Janet provided additional context on the Barter Theatre. She spoke about the new executive director, the transparency of the organization, and its plans to address the financial challenges. With respect to Virginia Opera, Janet gave a brief overview of the historical concerns regarding financial management. Last year, there was a great deal of conversation of whether to fund the organization at all. The FY2020 award letter stipulated they were to send a mid-year report in January, at which time they would receive the second payment (the Commission voted last year to divide their grant award into three payments in order to provide additional updates throughout). The Commission never received the mid-year report. Russell Allen announced his retirement last fall, but there was no additional information provided regarding his departure or search for a new ED. Janet reached out to get the report and spoke to Russell Allen by phone who admitted that the organization had overlooked the report. Staff turnover is high, especially the CFO position. The organization did not send its audit by the time of the panel which made it difficult for the panel to review carefully. The audit draft was delivered to the VCA just days before this Commission Board meeting. The organization has a significant overall debt of \$4M. The audit, again, stated “substantial doubt about the Association’s ability to continue as a going concern”. The artistic quality remains high. The organization has postponed all activities until next spring. The staff recommendation of Priority 3 is in support of new leadership, to be identified. Laurie Naismith stated that it is important because they are the state opera, and that a Priority 3 is generous. It is a concern that they have not followed through on mid-year reports. Amanda Pillion is in full support of Priority 1 for the Barter Theatre stating Katy Brown is an excellent new leader for the organization. She noted that if

the Barter were to close, the Town of Abingdon and Washington County would suffer. Abigail Gomez stated that she has a hard time giving Virginia Opera Priority 3 funding and that the issues surrounding its finances has gone on for too many years. There does not appear to be mutual respect. Abigail Gomez made a motion to approve all Majors except Virginia Opera. Barbara Parker seconded. Roll call—all approved. Motion carries.

**(Further) Virginia Opera Discussion.** Abigail Gomez made a motion to award only a symbolic amount such as \$5,000. Barbara Parker seconded. Discussion: Jan Monroe asked what the point of \$5K would be? Janet stated that a new CEO would be brought on by the end of the calendar year, and a minor award can help new leadership better establish their footing and sense of direction, with also a clear understanding of the concerns and expectations of the Commission. Abigail Gomez stated that this is the state opera of Virginia and that \$5K is a drop in the bucket. This would be a big jolt. Barbara Parker stated that the panel gave them a Priority 2. To give them no funding would put the panel and staff judgment in question. Laurie Naismith stated that that we could give them a Priority 3 with a letter stating no funding until the new executive director is in place and the VCA Executive Director has an opportunity to meet with this person, and board members to discuss concerns. Barbara Parker said they need to get the reports to us before funding. Janet stated that Russell Allen sent the panelists a letter right before the panel meeting with so much missing information that should have been in the application. Right now, we only have a draft audit, but it is expected to be approved in July. VCA will withhold funding until the audit is submitted (which is standard practice for the agency). Dena Jennings asked if we were singling them out with additional measures of accountability. Mike Markley stated that we should not be overly involved in their management. Giving them a Priority 3 is a significant message. Abigail Gomez stated they did not meet requirements to receive payments. The organization continues to receive the same comments. Giving them another Priority 3 rating gives them another \$15K and they did not meet the requirements. Terry Buntrock agreed with Abigail Gomez stating this keeps the door open, but sends a strong message. The motion under consideration is good—this takes responsibility off the Commission staff to keep chasing them down. Jan Monroe asked if this had happened to any other major arts organization. Cathy Welborn stated that Virginia Symphony was reduced many years ago, but was able to work through its challenges. Robert Goudie asked how they are raising \$5M a year. Janet stated that they have diversified funding. Robert Goudie stated that they have impressive reach. Is \$15K on \$5M budget even worth it? Janet stated that supporting the state opera and the art form is important. Cathy Welborn stated that not funding the organization could hurt both the Richmond and Virginia Symphony Orchestras. Abigail Gomez again made a motion to award \$5,000 to the Virginia Opera. Barbara Parker seconded. Roll Call: 8- yay, 2 nay, 1 abstention, 2 not present. Motion carries.

### **Public Comment**

Matt Conrad invited any listeners/observers to bring public comment: Beverly Hess stated she sat on the Majors panel for the two previous years. She stated that this was a thoughtful discussion and that tough decisions were made today. Matt thanked Beverly Hess for her service on both the Majors and 4B panels.

Meeting adjourned at 2:16 PM.

**Wednesday, June 17, 2020**

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

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

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

Commission Chair Matt Conrad opened the meeting at 9:00 AM. Janet Starke gave an overview of the day.

**Revised Plans/Discussion of 2021-2024 Strategic Plan.** Janet Starke showed the revised draft mission, and vision, with preliminary Goals/Objectives. She shared the revised timeline (continue to draft/revise over summer; potential. Committee work to be done in August/30-days public comment/goal to present draft at September meeting, final to be approved December 9-10 meeting. Mike Markley asked how we benchmark against arts groups across the country and gave an example of what is happening in Massachusetts. Janet said we are looking to other state agencies for best practices. Our small staff is overstretched. How can we leverage expertise with university networks to help the state and inform the field? Asa Jackson asked if the VCA can do programmatic work, not just give out grants? Janet stated that we do participate programmatically through programs such as Poetry Out Loud and Creative Forces. The idea to support public art is an interesting and valid idea. Asa asked whether the VCA might fundraise elsewhere for such initiatives, but Janet stated that could take away from the arts organizations who need funding. Asa reminded everyone that at the last meeting, the suggestion to make the IDEA committee a standing committee was made. Matt Conrad stated that we need to look at our Bylaws and that if ok, this would be a good idea. Janet will go back to Bylaws and if possible, we could call a special meeting of the officers. Laurie Naismith stated that the Massachusetts program sounds great, maybe VCU could discuss an arts extension program, with the VCA and other universities Laurie asked if our presenters at ArtWorks could be videoed and then placed on the website to help all arts organizations across the state who may not be able to attend ArtWorks. Janet shared that that is a significant additional cost that is currently not feasible for the VCA. If we do a virtual ArtWorks conference this year (2021), we should be able to record on the WebEx platform. More convenings will be planned for the upcoming year for best practices across a variety of topics with other national peer partners. Matt Conrad said that the arts extension service is a great idea to explore with the new Chair of the VCU School of the Arts. Matt said the model is there, such as Virginia Tech agriculture extension. Mike Markley stated that an extension plan could be done across the state—this is a premature discussion. Matt stated that to establish a new standing committee, we need call a special meeting in July and then establish the standing committee at the September 2020 meeting. Laurie asked if we could place Creative Ideas for COVID on our website. Janet stated that the new VCA website will include a place for this. Dena Jennings said that the Mission statement needs to be revised to reflect more of what we do. Dena stated that we need to be doing more on IDEA. We have been talking about IDEA—people are looking to us to elevate this. We need to get the Bylaws changed ASAP. Jan Monroe said we are a leader doing so much, providing connection to people regardless of race, ability, etc. This has been lost in the pandemic and recent events and needs to be reflected in the Strategic Plan.



**Establishing Nominating Committee for FY21.** Matt Conrad stated that although he has enjoyed serving as the Chair, with one year left in his term he would like to serve in an advisory role for the new Board Chair. A Nominating Committee must be formed to elect a new slate of officers. David Trinkle made a motion to include Dena Jennings, Barbara Parker, and Matt Conrad on the FY21 Nominating Committee. Roll call—all approved. Motion passed.

### **Discussion / Approval Arts Project Grants\***

Janet Starke gave an overview of the Project Grant program. Projects are reviewed by regional panels that also review GOS Long Form applications. Janet briefly discussed those grants that were not funded. She mentioned Chestnut Creek School of the Arts as an excellent organization, but one that has not been able to submit a successful application in the last couple of years. David Trinkle concurred with Area 3 ratings. Sushmita agreed with the Area 4A panel. MVLE has access to other funds. She asked how we can encourage groups such as this to continue working with the arts. Janet said they would get the feedback. Abi Gomez stated that Semilla Cultural is a small, all volunteer Latina organization and should not have to partner with other groups to present its project. This is a performance and demonstration group who does workshop and lessons. This is a cultural group who is not very well represented in our grantee pool. There were different negative panel comments such as the board being made up of Latina individuals and the board was not diverse. She stated that Eurocentric standards were used to evaluate this organization. Janet stated that there is an intentional focus to bring this diverse art form to the area. She stated that the panels' concerns were more about the business capacity and ability to carry out the project. Janet suggested we should work with them to cultivate organizational capacity over the next year so that they can apply again with a stronger application. Sushmita asked why food is not an eligible funding item. Cathy explained transportation is eligible, but according to our guidelines, the cost of receptions/food is ineligible. Janet stated we would highlight that project grantees would be asked again about timing for projects. If changes will be made, project grant awardees will have to inform the VCA in advance of those changes. Matt Conrad asked if there were any further questions. David Trinkle made a motion to approve the Project Grants as presented. Laurie Naismith seconded. Roll call: All approved. Matt Conrad recused on VCU Health Arts in Healthcare. Motion passed.

### **Discussion / Approval Arts in Education grants**

Barbara Parker gave an overview of the AIE and Teaching Artist Roster panel. The biggest question will be if any of the artists will be able to get into the school due to COVID-19 restrictions. The panel gave higher scores than staff recommendations. Barbara stated Halestone wants to bus kids to the studio instead of holding activities in the school which creates an large transportation cost. The younger ones could stay at the school. Barbara was not sure this should be rated a Priority 1. She also had concerns about Karar Dance studio, feeling that the company is largely driven by and showcases the founding director. Barbara agreed with all other staff recommendations. Terry Buntrock stated that the panel spent too much time fleshing out numerical numbers. Terry agreed with staff recommendations. Sushmita Mazumdar stated that the reason they wanted to take students to the studio is because it is difficult to perform at the school. Janet suggested that Karar is a professional development project. The leader is the face of the organization, but partnering with Dogwood Dance will better ensure authentic community engagement. Janet spoke of the value of going to the studio for Halestone activities. Transportation costs for the Origin Project were a greater concern. This is an innovative program—they were a 50 for 50 Award winner (though those awards did not take into account the business side of the institutions). Although they are bringing in noted authors and historians, intentional learning and

creative process for writing is missing. The intentional educational component was missing—the grant request was more for transportation to bring in well-known author/historians and not focused on the students. Virginia Winds applied for a project grant for new and emerging arts organization and could not double dip as a brand new organization.

VCA Chair Matt Conrad had to step away at approximately 10:30 AM; Vice President Abigail Gomez took the role of chairing the Commission meeting. Terry Buntrock made a motion to approve the AIE grants as presented. Mike Markley seconded. Roll call—all approved with the exception of Matt Conrad who was absent (quorum still present). Motion passed.

### **Teaching Artist Roster \***

Barbara Parker gave a brief overview of the diversity of the applicants. Janet Starke clarified that there is no funding tied to these artists, but rather this is resource of teaching artists for schools and community organizations, to apply for Artists in Education (or AIEEx) grants. Barbara shared that applicant Kasey Jones teaches African drumming, but he is not African American, recognizing the need to ensure that the cultural aspects are authentic and present. Janet stated that his talent is high, and he demonstrated diversity in his participants. Further, it is a unique offering, and needed in a rural community such as Floyd, but the perception is challenging. Kasey has the skill set and technical abilities. Cultural awareness and ability to communicate was evident in the application. Videos of workshops in VA were authentic and his groups were diverse. Dena Jennings stated that it should not be a problem that he is white if he is talented. If recommendations are coming from the African American community, this could help him. Janet would have to go back to application to see where letters of recommendation came from. Dena Jennings stated we need a letter, or risk being accused of cultural appropriation. Regarding other applicants: Teens with Purpose is a good organization doing great work with at-risk youth. Many people from this organization applied; some were highly qualified, but others did not have as much experience. Jan Monroe asked what the requirements are for Teaching Artists once they are on the roster. Casey Polczynski stated the artists apply with a three-year renewal process that is vetted by the staff. One of the incentives is that schools can apply for these artists and because they have already been vetted, they would not have to be reviewed again for that particular AIE grant activity. Barbara Parker stated that the work sample should show what they propose to do with students in the classroom, not just a picture of them performing. Barbara suggested that graphic artist Rene Quezada would appeal to middle and high school students, however needs to evidence stronger experience in teaching. His application was not complete, but he should be encouraged to apply again. This is an area we are missing on the roster. Barbara Parker made a motion to approve the FY21 Teaching Artist Roster as recommended by staff. Jan Monroe seconded. Roll call—all approved. Motion passed.

### **Special Recognition Award\***

Janet Starke gave an overview the Special Recognition Award and the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum. David Trinkle made a motion to approve the \$4,500 Special Recognition award to the Blue Ridge Institute once the application is submitted in August (application was delayed due to COVID-19 and staff being furloughed). Barbara Parker seconded. Roll call—all approved with the exception of Matt Conrad who was absent. Motion passed.

### **Discussion/Approval of FY21 Special Revisions to Guidelines for Funding**

Janet gave an overview of the revisions to allow for flexibility due to COVID challenges.

1. **Touring Assistance Grants:** to allow for virtual performances, with additional requirement that the artists must include purposeful audience engagement component. They cannot simply upload a pre-recorded video. Abigail Gomez stated that the word “live” should be added. Barbara stated that there should be a “best practices” for virtual touring. We can get best practices examples from American Shakespeare Center. Janet also spoke to the webinar with presenters and touring artists that is now on our website.

**Suggested revisions:**

Under eligible activities:

- For FY 21, Touring Assistance grants may be for virtual performances in which case negates the requirement for being outside of a 30-mile radius, provided that artist(s) include some purposeful component of live audience engagement (i.e. post-performance chat-back; etc.).

Also, pertaining to FY20 grants:

- FY 20 Touring Assistance grants that were extended, who then determine they need to revise contract to a virtual performance, they must submit a new application that includes a revised budget.

2. **Artists in Education Grants:** It will largely be left to schools and school divisions on how they will need to amend programs.

**Suggested revisions:**

Under eligible activities, add:

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, any FY21 AIE programs funded may take place virtually, however those changes **must be communicated to the VCA in advance, and any changes to the budget must be communicated in advance.** In addition, changes must still evidence meaningful engagement with learners (and teacher sponsors, where applicable).

3. **Emergency Relief Grant for Artists:** The Commission has been limited in its ability to offer direct unrestricted funds to practicing artists. This has been especially troubling during this time where they are losing income. VMFA is focusing on visual artists through its new artist relief grant program (albeit through Foundation funds). VCA funding could be more broadly distributed to performing, literary and/or practicing artists. Suggested is to—for this year only—convert the existing Artist Fellowship program to be an Emergency Relief Fund for Artists In part:

**Description:** The Emergency Relief Fund for Individual Artists provides grants of \$500 to Virginia artists impacted by the cancellation of a specific scheduled event, gig, or opportunity (e.g., commissions, performances, readings, contracts, teaching classes etc. ) because of COVID-19.

Eligible financial losses include, but are not limited to, those which- due to the COVID-19 pandemic- resulted from an inability to

- teach in-person arts classes or workshops
- participate in paid residencies
- perform in paid gigs
- display work in art galleries or museum shows
- offer services as a teaching artist

Janet stated is not intended for hobbyists, but for professional, practicing artists. The applications would be vetted by staff in order to get the grants out quickly. Abigail Gomez stated that we could use similar language as VMFA for eligible applicants---working artists that derive a significant amount of their income from their work. Laurie Naismith said she is concerned that there is no contract required. Everybody that participates in our panel process is invaluable to the Commission. A panel will broaden the reach of the Commission and not vetting the applications with panels is a mistake because the panels know the artists in their region and

provide insight and confirm that we are giving an artist \$500 with no strings attached. Without a public vetting process, this could lead to issues for the Commission. Laurie stated she did not believe turning this over to an Excel algorithm to select the artists would be wise. Abigail Gomez stated that this proposal is in keeping with other grant funding agencies delivering emergency relief funds. This will not be a blind process. Requiring a panel process goes against emergency relief. The randomized algorithm will not take race into consideration, or even names. It assigns numbers to applicants only. David Trinkle said it is a timely program, he likes the randomizer, to Laurie's point, you will have an application and resume. Janet suggested that the staff also takes into account the burden of application for a relatively small amount of funding. David Trinkle suggested that because it is temporary emergency relief, it does not have to be paneled. Could a letter from the canceling venue be a part of the process? Casey stated that getting these letters could be difficult and could be a barrier to many teaching artists especially when school is not in session. The Certification of Assurances would still be a required part of the process, as a means of accountability. Instead, lead contact info from the organization that cancelled the event could be provided. Social media cancellations could also be included.

David Trinkle made a motion to approve amendments 1(Tour) and 2 (AIE) revisions to the Guidelines to Funding. Mike Markley seconded. Roll Call. All approved with the exception of Matt Conrad and Dena Jennings who were absent. Motion passes.

David Trinkle made a motion to approve amendment #3 (Emergency Relief Funds for Artists) to the FY21 Guidelines to Funding. Jan Monroe seconded. Roll call--10 yay, 1 nay, 2 absent. Motion passes.

### **Discussion/Approval of the FY 2020-2021 Commission Budget\***

Janet Starke gave an overview of the proposed budget, including revisions incorporated since the Budget and Policy Committee approved as a working document. Janet gave an overview of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation dues and ROI in Virginia. Abigail Gomez stated that Mid Atlantic limits support to performing artists and asked why the dues are double that of NASAA dues? Janet stated that dues are going to fund programs, as opposed to NASAA which serves only the state arts agencies. The services are different. For prior year (most current reports), dues were \$36K, and Virginia arts organizations and touring artists leveraged a combined \$138,337, demonstrating a 2.5 fold return. Barbara Parker stated that she served on MAAF panels, it has evolved to be more important to large organizations. Small to medium arts organizations cannot afford the acts on their roster. However, it is a valuable tool for larger organizations and for VCA. Janet shared the organization has recently undergone strategic planning and seems to be reshaping their direction to be of more effective service to SAAs and the field. Janet also stated they are the fiscal agent for Poetry Out Loud.

### **Notes to the FY2021 Budget**

REVENUES 1. State Appropriation\*. The State budget signed by the Governor includes a \$118,000 Administration increase for the Commission in FY2021. Otherwise, the appropriation for Grants to Organizations is expected to remain level to FY20. The new budget total is \$3,973,138.

\*The General Assembly is due to return for a special session in late summer/early fall, to reassess (in concert with the Administration) the status of the state's budget; particularly revenues that will have been realized through the summer in response to the pandemic. It is possible that the agency may see further reductions at that time.

2. NEA Partnership Agreement. The Commission receives a single grant from the National Endowment for the Arts called the Partnership Agreement. The amount allocated for the basic state plan is determined by a formula, while the arts education and underserved communities funding is determined on a state-by-state basis. The Commission's estimated Arts Endowment grant for 2020-2021 has been increased to **\$760,000**, of which **\$20,000** is designated for Poetry Out Loud programs. The new federal award is \$44,000 (6%) higher than the previous year.

3. Virginia Arts Foundation. The General Assembly created the Virginia Arts Foundation, a non-reverting fund managed by the state Department of Accounts. This fund receives revenue from the arts license plate program and an income tax check-off (see below) for the arts. Interest funds from the Foundation principal are available in support of the Commission's operations and grant-making, and is always estimated for the year.

4. Tax Check Off. There is currently an income tax check-off for the arts on Virginia Income tax forms. The first has been in existence since 1997, and the income from that goes into the Virginia Arts Foundation. The other comes directly into the Commission accounts for distribution as grants.

5. Carry Forward Funds. The Commission pays most of its grants in two payments, with the second payment contingent upon receipt of a final report. There are always a few grantees who fail to file these reports. There are also grantees that release or return their grant funds when they are unable to carry out the project; a circumstance that has been admittedly exacerbated in this current pandemic crisis. At this time we are budgeting for Carry Forward Funds of approximately \$99,000 for FY21. We are also intending to advocate for the approval to use these funds to make final grants payments to FY20 Touring Assistance contracts, among other potential grant supports.

#### EXPENDITURES

6. Administration. This amount will change during the year as a result of General Fund Adjustments. With the General Assembly's approval of the Governor's revised budget (approved in April, signed by the Governor in May), Administration appropriations were increased by \$118,000, which included funds for a new position. The state is currently in a hiring freeze and this position will likely not be able to be filled in the year ahead.

7. NASAA dues. This amount is based on the state appropriations for state arts councils. NASAA is the member service organization for state arts agencies and councils, providing support through essential data, best management practices, other resources, and national advocacy assistance.

8. Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation dues. Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation is our Regional Arts Organization (RAO), which also operates under a Partnership Agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts. Virginia pays \$36,000 annually in MAAF dues which, in part, provides an opportunity for Virginia organizations to apply directly (to MAAF) for Touring funds. Information about the MAAF programs and the state's return on investment is included in this book.

8. Over-commitment of Grant Funds. The Commission has long had a practice of over committing the grants budget each year. Some grantees fail to file required reports, and other grantees release or return grant funds when they are unable to carry out the project. For FY2021, these funds would be carried, at least initially, as a contingency for unforeseen needs and requirements. Recouped funds expected from future unused touring assistance grants, among other programs, will be used to offset FY2021 reductions.

#### Grant Programs/Initiatives

9. General Operating Support. General Operating Support grants have been the Commission's first Priority for many years. The Commission's goal is to match 10% of the grantee's eligible income from the previous year, but the Commission has been unable to do so for many years. Since FY18, the

Commission has awarded Priority 1 applicants just 3% of its eligible revenue. The FY21 budget proposes \$2,810,533 in funding.

10. Technical Assistance. For FY20, \$40,000 in Technical Assistance grant funds will be available. These grants are awarded on a first-come-first-served basis, and may be an area for meeting

reductions, if directed. 12. Creative Communities Partnership Grants. These grants match contributions of town, city, and county governments to the arts. In FY2021, the Commission will provide up to \$4,500 to each locality that matches or surpasses that amount for arts organizations in their respective jurisdictions. The Commission typically funds CCP grants at 100% of the request. These requests total \$484,250 for 116 localities across the state.

13. Project Grants. These grants support new or expanded initiatives in the arts. With continued limited funds and in order to extend the reach of grant funds as far as possible, the Commission has restricted these grants to organizations that have not applied for General Operating Support. This year, Priority 1 will be funded at 80% of the request, with a minimum request of \$1,000. The Commission staff is recommending that Project Grants be funded at \$87,380.

14. Touring Assistance. These grants underwrite performance fees of the artists listed in the Commission's Performing Arts Tour Directory. In September 2019 the Commission board approved the 2020-2021 allocations. The adjusted total awarded for 2020-2021 was \$326,500. Following the Performing Arts Touring Directory Panel review this fall, the FY22 Touring budget will be set.

15. Artist Fellowships. As a result of nominal increased funding from the General Assembly in FY19, the Commission reinstated Artists Fellowships (which had been placed on hiatus for nearly four years). In December (FY20), the Commission awarded five Fellowships (in the discipline of Crafts) totaling \$17,000. In lieu of project-based Fellowship support in FY21, and in response to the pandemic crisis, the Commission staff is recommending funding in the amount of \$25,000 for emergency relief grant.

16. Artists in Education Grants. These grants provide Pre K - 12 students and teachers' opportunities to work with professional artists in an in-school or after-school setting, summer activities, or adult learning opportunities in a community setting. This year saw 42 applications, increasing the competitive process. Commission staff is recommending funding of \$94,026 for FY21, based upon Priority 1 (60%) and Priority 2 (30%) rankings.

17. The Arts in Education Express (AIEEx) grant program was a three-year pilot program (FY18-20) funded through several years of interest gained by the Virginia Arts Foundation, but that had not been appropriated to the Commission. FY20 marked the last year that collected interest was disbursed. With the agency budget remaining otherwise level in FY21, and as we realize our strategic plan, this program will need to be placed on hiatus as we assess future means of impact and sustainability.

18. Art Works for Virginia Conference. The Commission has allocated a base of \$50,000 for conference activities in Richmond. This may represent a cost reduction or reallocation measure, if needed, as we will likely need to go virtual in 2021.

19. Poetry Out Loud (POL). POL is a special initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Poetry Foundation in collaboration with all State Arts Agencies. The Commission works with schools and regional arts venues throughout the state to stage the poetry recitation competitions, and with VPM - Virginia Public Media (formerly Community Idea Stations) to host and record the state finals. The Arts Endowment stipulates that \$20,000 from the state's Partnership Agreement be designated for the state's POL program, representing a \$2,500 increase from recent years.

## **Potential Budget Cuts**

Janet gave an overview of where budget cuts could come from: ArtWorks, grants that could not be fulfilled under CCPG, Project, and AIE. Technical Assistance not used by a certain date. Tour Waitlist could be eliminated and unused funds used toward budget cuts.

Mike Markley asked if we could get funding back from CCPG. Cathy Welborn explained the award /final report process for CCPG grants. Janet explained that she has worked through several budget cut % and scenarios. Robert Goudie is restated interest in exploratory conversations about GOS being able to receive Project Grants. Janet Starke stated that the draft guidelines will be presented in September to discuss this. If we had gotten the budget increase, we may have been able to address this, but especially with cuts, to be equitable, more opportunities are needed for those who cannot apply for GOS.

Mike Markley made a motion to approve the FY2021 Budget as presented. Dave Trinkle seconded. Roll call: All approved with the exception of Matt Conrad and Dena Jennings who were absent.

## **Reports of the Chair / Committees / Commissioners on their regions**

Laurie Naismith said that she is impressed with the creativity involved with all the organizations that have to virtual programming. David Trinkle stated the City of Roanoke will cut funds to the Cultural Endowment. Janet stated that localities are cutting budgets—this weighs on the VCA. This will be a double hit to many organizations. Robert Goudie stated that it is a mixed bag moving to virtual platforms. Public Arts Reston does a chalkfest and took it virtual—it was a success. GRACE is taking summer camp virtual, but not sure how it will be monetized. So many festivals are being cancelled. The intimacy and connections with artists will hurt, in going virtual. It can be expensive to move to a sophisticated virtual platform. Artists are not receiving this well. Everyone is working hard to maintain delivery of the arts, but it is becoming increasingly difficult. Barbara Parker said Piedmont Arts is open again, visitors must wear masks. So many organizations in Area 2 were hurting before this happened—it remains to be seen what greater impacts will occur. Losing festivals also hurts the economies of these small towns. Terry Buntrock stated a new arts tax will be redirected in Williamsburg—this is terribly disappointing. Colonial Williamsburg is still shut down. It is still really tough in this area. Abigail Gomez stated that in northern 4B, there are many artists and not as many arts organizations. This makes emergency funds for artists more important. Jan Monroe stated in southern 4B (Fredericksburg), survival is the key. Virtual platforms are doing ok for music, but not as well for theatre. Any way that the VCA can be seen as connecting people in an online forum would be helpful—especially the brainstorming that could come from this. Janet said that we will look for more opportunities for online webinars to touch base and speak to challenges and best practices. The Community Foundations are shifting funding to social service needs, which is hurting many arts organizations. Advocacy on the impact of the arts is more important than ever.

Janet thanked Beverly Hess for her service. Beverly Hess thanked the Commission for its work and invited everyone to contact her if they had any questions regarding advocacy. Laurie asked if Janet was aware of groups that received NEA and NEH Cares Grants. Janet said that we are anticipating notice of these awards at the beginning of July.

Meeting adjourned at 12:56 pm.