



**Virginia Commission for the Arts**  
**Commission Meeting**  
**Jepson Alumni Center |**  
**University of Mary Washington**  
*March 13, 2024*

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## **Board Meeting Minutes**

### **I. Attendees**

- Commissioners: Dr. Dena Jennings, Jan Monroe, Barbara Parker, Frazier Millner Armstrong, Lou Flowers, Mike Markley, Dr. Vanessa Thaxton-Ward, Dr. David Trinkle, Roxana Jordan
- Staff: Margaret Hancock, Cathy Welborn, Lorraine Bruner
- Attorney General's Office: Abigail Gump, Attorney

### **II. Call to Order**

Chair Jennings called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Executive Director Hancock provided a welcome and thanked Commissioner Monroe for hosting the Commissioners in her region. Jennings extended an invitation to the newly appointed Commissioners Thaxton-Ward, Flowers, and Jordan, to introduce themselves.

### **III. Approval of Agenda**

Chair Jennings called for a motion to approve the agenda.

All approved; motion passed.

### **IV. Approval of Minutes from December 2023 Commission Board Meeting**

Chair Jennings called for a motion to approve the minutes from the VCA's Board meeting in December 2023.

Motion: Commissioner Trinkle

Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

All approved, motion passed. Commissioner Jordan abstained as she was not present at the December Commission Board Meeting.

### **V. Grants Update | FY24 and FY25**

Executive Director Hancock provided an overview FY24 and FY25 grant updates.

## **Teaching Artist Roster**

Director Hancock shared the newest cohort of VCA Teaching Artists that were voted on and approved at the December 2023 Board Meeting. The VCA actively engages Roster Artists through various outreach vehicles led by Lo Bruner, Artist Engagement Coordinator. These efforts include organizing Meet and Greet events, issuing press releases, distributing monthly newsletters, sharing updates on Instagram, providing marketing toolkits, and utilizing social media badges.

## **Poetry Out Loud**

In 2024, the VCA forged its inaugural partnership with the Wayne Theatre in Waynesboro for Poetry Out Loud (POL). By extending this program to external partners, the VCA offers a valuable opportunity for community engagement. Corey Holmes, the new POL lead and a VCA Teaching Artist, maintained regular check-ins with the former VCA lead, Deputy Director, Casey Polczynski. Their collaboration culminated in the successful execution of the March 8 State Finals.

## **Funding 100% of Municipalities**

This mission remains a collective effort, with only eight out of the initial 21 counties left to be funded. FY24 Virginia Touring and Arts in Practice Grants are the primary means through which funding is allocated in these remaining counties. The VCA has disbursed \$235,000 in FY24 Touring grant funds, an increase of 19 grantees from FY23, and \$72,256 in FY24 Arts in Practice grant funds, an increase in grantees from 34 to 50. Funding and grants are distributed across all eight regions.

## **Preliminary look at FY25 Grants**

Director Hancock provided an overview on FY25 Grant Applications.

- 65 GOS long form applications
- 87 GOS short form applications
- 95 OSS applications. This number has increased from 76 since its launch year in FY24.
- Eight new and former GOS applicants
- 22 new and former OSS applicants

Chair Jennings expressed gratitude to the Commissioners for their efforts during the grant refresh and guidelines updates, which were unanimously approved in FY23.

Director Hancock presented an overview of the new VA250 Impact Grant, developed in collaboration with the VA250 Commission, a legislative agency commemorating the VA250 celebration of the revolutionary war. The VA250 board approved \$100,000 in funding for the program. The grant's theme, 'revolution of ideas,' underscores artists as key proponents of revolutionary concepts. The VCA has introduced this pilot program at conferences and facilitated webinars in partnership with Virginia Humanities and Virginia Tourism.

## **Advisory Panel Focus Group**

Commissioner Armstrong provided an update on the Advisory Panel Focus Group. Advisory Panels continues to be a valuable asset and additional ideas to streamline and ensure long-term sustainability will be explored. Director Hancock shared that an Advisory Panel Training Session will be held on Monday, March 18.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

### **Executive Committee**

Chair Jennings shared an overview of House and Senate bills aimed at aligning the appointed Commissioners with the DOE regional map. The bipartisan bills, which received unanimous

votes at both the House and Senate levels, propose a new Board structure to include one member from each superintendent region and one at-large member. Additionally, the bills expand Commissioner eligibility to Commonwealth employees, broadening the pool of potential Commissioners to include high-level experts in the arts sector. The new Board structure will take effect on July 1, 2024. The Secretary of the Commonwealth will oversee transitions and fill current vacancies in regions five and eight.

### **Budget and Policy Committee**

Commissioner Trinkle introduced the meeting and Director Hancock provided an overview of funding sources. The General Assembly allocated over \$4.5 million, while the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) contributed over \$900,000. The VCA predicts level funding from the NEA, but President Biden's allocation of an additional \$300 million to the NEA could potentially impact the VCA. The VCA received increased funding in FY24, from \$865,000 in FY23 to \$934,000, with a current goal to reach \$1 million. Director Hancock added that the proposed \$2.9 million budget amendment by Virginians for the Arts was not advanced by the House or taken up by the Senate.

Director Hancock shared that efforts to increase administrative and grant funding resulted in maintaining level funding in December. However, a significant victory was achieved: if approved, all general funds would become mandatory carry forward instead of being returned to the state of Virginia, including funding tied to unsubmitted Final Reports. While this change may appear minor, it has significant implications for the agency's administrative procedures.

Director Hancock announced that the VCA's updated strategic plan, due in 2025, will involve working with a facilitator for a virtual charrette to engage citizen voice. The expected audience is threefold: artists (including Roster Artists), arts leaders and administrators, and citizens and local government. The charrette is scheduled for April 11, and a comprehensive report will be distributed to Commissioners afterward. A virtual platform will also be available for Commissioners and citizens to provide comments.

Commissioner Markley joined the Board Meeting and provided his insights from the Advisory Panel Focus Group as a follow up to the agenda item.

### **Ethics Committee**

Commissioner Parker introduced the newly created committee, highlighting its significance and purpose. Procedures were established for addressing issues: any concerns will be forwarded to the Chair, who will then involve the Ethics Committee. The committee revisited the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Conflict of Interest Act (COIA) policies. Chair Jennings announced that further details and the Code of Ethics would be outlined in the forthcoming Orientation Book. Abigail Gump emphasized the importance of utilizing recusal as a tool to prevent FOIA or COIA issues.

### **Diversity and Accesibility Committee**

Commissioner Armstrong outlined the agency's recently submitted Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion (DOI) plan, which defines each agency's objectives regarding diversity and inclusion with their employees and stakeholders. Director Hancock explained that the plan takes an expansive approach by integrating the VCA Artist Rosters, highlighting their role in carrying out VCA grant programming across the state. The plan also highlights newly implemented shared services with Department of Human Resource Management to ensure equal employment opportunity hiring and provide staff with access to individual HR support.

## **VII. License Plate Launch**

Director Hancock presented an overview of the license plate redesign process and launch,  
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which took place on January 19. Despite the cancellation of the Impact Celebration due to winter weather, VCA grantee, Charlottesville Ballet stepped in to assist in hosting a license plate launch at their studio. The VCA's promotional efforts since launching included statewide media, a dedicated webpage, newsletter stories, Instagram posts, posters, and shareable digital toolkits.

### **VIII. Meeting Adjournment**

Chair Jennings thanked Commissioner Trinkle for his years of service, as this would be his last Commission Board Meeting. Director Hancock announced a date change for the June Board Meeting, to be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, in Richmond.

Chair Jennings called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Trinkle

Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

All approved; motion passed.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Jennings at 1:34 p.m.