



**Virginia Commission for the Arts
Commission Board Meeting
Williamsburg Lodge Autograph
Collection at Colonial Williamsburg
September 25, 2024**

Board Meeting Minutes

I. Attendees

- Commissioners: Barbara Parker, Lou Flowers, Jan Monroe, Dr. Vanessa Thaxton-Ward, Alex Grabiec, Yan “Tim” Zhao
- Not in attendance: Frazier Millner Armstrong
- Virtual attendance: Amanda Pillion
- Staff: Margaret Hancock, Cathy Welborn, Lorraine Bruner, Dawn LeHuray, Katie Brown
- Attorney General’s Office: Abigail Gump, Attorney
- Public: Brett Bonda, Virginians for the Arts President
- Virginia Repertory Theatre: Klaus Schuller, Director, Meredith Miles, Board Member

II. Call to Order

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed the VCA’s newly appointed Commissioners, Grabiec and Zhao. Executive Director Hancock introduced new Virginia Management Fellow, Katie Brown, and noted that an appointment for a Commissioner from region five is forthcoming.

Chair Parker recommended to amend the agenda to include two closed sessions: the first after Virginia Repertory’s presentation, and a second after Touring and Teaching Artist Roster votes.

III. Approval of Minutes from June 2024 Commission Board Meeting

Chair Parker called for a motion to approve the minutes from the VCA’s Board Meeting in June 2024.

Motion: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward
Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

All approved, motion passed

Commissioner Grabiec and Zhao abstained as they were not present at the June Board Meeting.

IV. Executive Update

Executive Director Hancock provided an overview of agency operations and initiatives.

FY25 Grants Recap

- \$4.6 million in Partnership Grants | GOS, OSS, and Creative Community Partnership Grants
- \$260k in Impact Grants | Community, Education, and VA250 Impact Grants
- \$355k in Artist Engagement Grants | Virginia Touring and Arts in Practice

Every City and County Mission

The FY25 grant cycle begins on a strong note, with only seven counties yet to have VCA funding: Amelia, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, King George, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Surry. The Artist Rosters continue to serve as an effective tool to engage organizations in these counties, including libraries, parks, and Rotary Clubs.

Recent Webinars

- Citizen Engagement Webinar | A panel featuring key officials and grantees from Virginia Beach discussed how the city secured tax benefits under the new tax code to support the arts.
- 5 Ways to Leverage Your VCA Grant | This session led by Executive Director Hancock provided grantees with valuable insights on maximizing their grants and making the most of state funding.

Grantee Resources

Director Hancock shared new resources that have been created and added to the VCA's General Resource page.

- FY25 Grantee List, which helps organizations identify other grantees statewide and regionally to foster connections and networking.
- Sample press release template to assist VCA grantees in generating media coverage for their grants.

Artist Roster Resources

Lorraine Bruner shared that the VCA has developed an online resource hub exclusive to Roster Artists. These Artists can now access the Roster Artist Handbook, past webinar recordings, social media badges, outreach templates, and more, in one location.

Arts License Plate

Director Hancock shared that 60% of license plate fees go back into VCA grants. Early success is demonstrated with 244 plates are on the road as of August. The agency will be running an ad to promote the license plate in A! Magazine.

Commissioner Pillion left the meeting at 10:00 am.

VI. Chair Update

Chair Parker asked fellow Commissioners to volunteer for one of the two standing committees: Budget & Policy Committee, led by Commissioner Pillion, or the Diversity & Accessibility Committee, led by Commissioner Monroe.

VII. Strategic Plan

Director Hancock provided an overview of the Strategic Planning process to date. This began with a public virtual charrette led by a consulting firm to gather feedback on how the VCA can best serve Virginians. The feedback report was shared with Commissioners at the June Board meeting. Building on this input, VCA staff held a retreat and editorial workshop to create the first draft. Chair Parker and Director Hancock met prior to this meeting to incorporate Chair Parker's edits.

Director Hancock shared the strategic plan's four priorities and invited feedback:

#1 | Empower Virginia's arts organizations to thrive and successfully expand access to the arts for all Virginians

Commissioner Monroe suggested continuing to prioritize business resources for grantees, such as webinars, on topics such as fundraising, board governance, and endowments, and promoting these resources not only on the website and in the newsletter, but also through Instagram.

#2 | Increase investments to fully align with our enabling legislation

Chair Parker expressed a desire to reach a dollar per capita in funding. She asked Commissioners to explore NASAA resources to compare our Virginia's standing with those of other states across the nation.

#3 | Maximize the Teaching and Touring Artist Roster to elevate Virginia artists and gig economy

2026 marks the 45th anniversary of the Artist Rosters. Maintaining this priority involves seamless language across both Rosters, deepening and diversifying the selection, and removing artists who are unable to utilize their allocations.

#4 | Solidify our role as a critical asset for the Commonwealth of Virginia

The agency is well-positioned for new collaborations and statewide partnerships.

Closing | As the 60th Anniversary approaches in 2028, how can the agency continue to elevate these priorities?

Director Hancock outlined the next steps, noting that a full vote of the Strategic Plan will take place at the December meeting before submission to the NEA.

VI. Grantee Update | Virginia Repertory Theatre

Chair Parker welcomed Managing Director Klaus Schuller, who presented Virginia Repertory Theatre's \$1.7 million deficit attributed to decreased ticket sales due to COVID-19, stalled marketing, lost pledges, rising personnel costs, inadequate budgeting, and lack of financial oversight.

Mr. Schuller shared that Virginia Repertory Theatre has made a public appeal with potential structural changes, including scaling back programming and liquidating the newly purchased arts education center. If they cannot sell the education center, they will have to close their doors in early 2025. Mr. Schuller requested additional funding and increased future awards from the Commission.

Chair Parker asked if the audit that was submitted in the FY24 GOS application was accurate. Mr. Schuller stated that the audit was correct but noted that the auditors may have only received a partial view of the overall situation. Virginia Repertory Theatre Board Member Meredith Miles explained that financial issues arose from key personnel changes and loss of institutional knowledge.

Director Hancock asked if Mr. Schuller or Ms. Miles had reviewed their grant application and if the proposed reductions in Mr. Schuller's presentation would support what was proposed in the application and the VCA's overall mission. Chair Parker clarified that the VCA does not fund deficits and that VCA funding has already been committed for the fiscal year. Director Hancock noted there was a separate line item for "Hugs and Kisses" from the Department of Health and the VCA had provided \$37,000 to Virginia Repertory Theatre in their FY25 GOS grant award.

Commissioner Pillion rejoined the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Director Hancock added that Virginia Repertory Theatre was the longest Touring Artist on the Roster and withdrew from Touring earlier this year. Mr. Schuller expressed hopes of reviving the touring program, noting that their fleet was outdated and frequently breaking down, and acknowledged that they had not been paying artists living wages. Cathy Welborn inquired about the availability of updated financials for FY24. Mr. Schuller responded that they are currently undergoing an audit, and the financials will be available once they file their 990 form. Commissioner Flowers requested a timeline and business plan to evaluate audience engagement and donations. Schuller indicated they have a plan and are hoping to continue to see sold-out shows. Brett Bonda inquired as a member of the public about the sale of the arts education center. Mr. Schuller reported developer interest and no restrictions on the sale.

Chair Parker thanked Virginia Repertory Theatre for their presentation.

Chair Parker asked for a motion to move the Commission Board Meeting to a closed session to meet with legal counsel. VCA grants officers were included in the closed session.

Motion: Commissioner Monroe
Seconded: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward

Roll call vote.
Zhao, aye
Flowers, aye
Monroe, aye
Thaxton-Ward, aye
Grabiec, aye
Parker, aye
Pillion, aye

All approved, motion passed
Chair Parker asked for a motion to move into open session.

Motion: Commissioner Monroe
Seconded: Commissioner Flowers

Roll call vote:
Zhao, aye
Flowers, aye
Monroe, aye
Thaxton-Ward, aye
Grabiec, aye
Parker, aye
Pillion, aye

All approved, motion passed

Chair Parker provided a certification of the closed session *in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3712 the Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge:*

- (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law, and*
- (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting*

Motion: Commissioner Flowers
Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

Roll call vote:
Zhao, aye
Flowers, aye
Monroe, aye
Thaxton-Ward, aye
Grabiec, aye
Parker, aye
Pillion, aye

All approved, motion passed

VII. Commission Votes

A. Touring and Teaching Artist Roster Advisory Panels

Director Hancock presented an overview of the four Advisory Panel Screening Sessions for the FY26 Touring Artist Roster and FY25 Teaching Artist Roster, highlighting a diverse range of applicants and disciplines. Commissioners then shared insights on each Artist Roster Advisory Panel Screening Session.

FY26 Touring Artist Roster Panel #1 | Commissioner Flowers relayed Commissioner Armstrong's thoughts, describing the Advisory Panel as a strong group with a good mix of artists and organizations possessing high expertise.

FY26 Touring Artist Roster Panel #2 | Commissioner Thaxton-Ward noted that the lead readers were effective and praised the balanced composition of the Advisory

Panel.

Cathy Welborn requested a clarification for the votes: Paul Reisler & The Three Good Reasons should be marked as a "no" for inclusion, contrary to the Board Book which indicated "yes."

FY25 Teaching Artist Roster Panel #1 | Commissioner Monroe shared that many Advisory Panelists can assess applications from a singular perspective, which pose challenges as the VCA strives to serve a broader audience.

FY25 Teaching Artist Roster Panel #2 | Chair Parker expressed her satisfaction with the Advisory Panel's composition and Panelist's thorough review of the applications.

B. Touring Artist Roster | Short and Long Form inclusions

Chair Parker provided an overview on the Short and Long Form application process for Touring Artists. There was a total of 64 inclusions: 45 Short Form applicants and 19 Long Form applicants.

- Total proposed budget for Short Form allocations as presented: \$234,250.
- Total proposed budget for Long Form allocations as presented: \$72,000.

Chair Parker called for a motion to accept all FY26 Touring Artists as recommended by Advisory Panelists and VCA staff.

Chair Parker opened the floor for discussion; no comments were made.

Motion: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward
Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

All approved, motion passed

C. Teaching Artist Roster

Chair Parker asked for a motion to accept new FY25 Teaching Artists as recommended by Advisory Panelists and VCA staff. Chair Parker opened the floor for discussion; no comments were made.

Motion: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward
Seconded: Commissioner Flowers

All approved, motion passed

D. FY26 Guidelines for Funding

Director Hancock presented proposed FY26 Guidelines for Funding updates:

- GOS | Update funding levels to \$3,500 minimum (currently \$2,500 – same as OSS)
- OSS | Increase previous year income to \$20,000 (currently \$10,000)
- OSS | Set debt maximum

- Education Impact | Eliminate to focus on Community Impact and Arts in Practice
- Teaching Artist Roster | Provide allocations to align Teaching Artist Roster with Touring Artist Roster
- Teaching and Touring Artist Roster | VCA staff may use discretion to remove artists not using their allocations / proving unresponsive to VCA staff or presenters/partnering organizations

Chair Parker called for a motion to approve the recommended updates to the FY26 Guidelines for Funding.

Chair Parker opened the floor for discussion; no comments were made.

Motion: Commissioner Flowers

Seconded: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward

All approved, motion passed

E. Virtual Meeting Policy

Attorney Abigail Gump shared updates on Commonwealth of Virginia meeting policies, noting that virtual meetings are now permitted for up to 50% of annual meetings, an increase from the previous 25%. She stated that Commissioners living more than 60 miles from the physical meeting can attend virtually but added that the VCA requires a minimum quorum of five commissioners to be physically present out of nine. Commissioners with a physical disability or those serving as caretakers for individuals with physical disabilities may attend virtually and have their attendance count as physically present. Virtual meetings may not be back-to-back, and the Commission must vote each year to accept virtual meeting policy.

Chair Parker called for a motion to approve the updates to the virtual policy.

Chair Parker open the floor to discussion, no comments were made.

Motion: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward

Seconded: Commissioner Monroe

All approved, motion passed

XI. Public Comment | Meeting Adjournment

Virginians for the Arts President Brett Bonda thanked the Commission and provided an update on VFTA's strategic planning process. VFTA aims for a dollar-per-capita investment in the arts and are engaging with the Governor's administration and legislators. Bonda highlighted the need to reestablish an arts caucus to advocate for funding. They will be hosting a webinar on Arts Advocacy training and local lobbying in collaboration with Americans for the Arts. Arts Advocacy Day is tentatively scheduled for January 23, 2025.

Chair Parker requested a motion to convene a closed meeting for personnel matters, limited to Executive Director Hancock, Commissioners, and legal counsel.

Motion: Commissioner Monroe
Seconded: Commissioner Flowers

Roll call:
Zhao, aye
Flowers, aye
Parker, aye
Monroe, aye
Thaxton-Ward, aye
Grabiec, aye
Pillion, aye

All approved, motion passed.

Chair Parker asked for a motion to move into open session.

Motion: Commissioner Monroe
Seconded: Commissioner Flowers

All approved, motion passed.

Chair Parker provided a certification in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3712, that the Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge:

(1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law, and

(2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting

Roll call vote:
Zhao, aye
Flowers, aye
Monroe, aye
Thaxton-Ward, aye
Grabiec, aye
Parker, aye
Pillion, aye

Director Hancock shared that the upcoming Board Meeting would take place virtually on December 4, and in-person in Staunton, March 12 – 13, 2025.

Chair Parker called for a motion to adjourn the September 25, 2024 Board Meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Flowers
Seconded: Commissioner Thaxton-Ward

All approved; motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.

