



CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING

September 25, 2019

6:00 P.M.

**Savannah Cultural Arts Center
201 Montgomery Street**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: *Commissioners:* Darren Bagley-Heath, Lisa Clark, Eddie Edenfield, Linda J. Evans, Andrea Hall-Houston, Jan Kramer, Kareem McMichael, Kristopher Monroe, Courtney Papy

City Staff:

- Lissette Garcia Arrogante, Director, Cultural Resources
- Llana Samuel, Marketing Coordinator, Cultural Resources
- Veleeta McDonald, Special Projects Coordinator, Community Services

Absent: *Commissioners:* Barbara Essig, Janice James, Patrick Kelsey, Alix Laincy, Sue Ruby, Tanet Taharka-Myers, Anne Allen Westbrook, Linda Wilder-Bryan, Debra Zumstein

I. Determination of Quorum/ Review of meeting minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m. by Coco Papy, Chair.

Chair Papy determined there wasn't a quorum however, the July meeting minutes could be reviewed and a vote made when a quorum is present.

II. Announcements

Chair Papy announced that there is some turnover on the commission and that commissioners Zumstein and Taharka-Myers have resigned. She also announced that Commissioners Laincy and Clark's terms will be ending in December 2019. She added that in 2020 when the application process opens up, commissioners should encourage anyone who might be interested to apply.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath asked when the City will announce the applications and Ms. Papy stated it's usually every three months but she doesn't have a definite date. She added that once a date is announced, commissioners will be notified.

Commissioner Kramer asked who the second commissioner that resigned was and Ms. Papy replied that it was Ms. Taharka-Myers. Commissioner Monroe asked when all of the position changes for the commission go into effect and Ms. Papy replied that Commissioners Clark and Laincy's terms will end in December 2019 and the commissioners who have resigned are already no longer on the commission.

Commissioner Evans noted that with two commissioners no longer serving, the total number is sixteen and half of that is a quorum so they now have a quorum for the meeting. Chair Papy announced that there is a quorum of eight members so the July minutes may now be reviewed, edited if needed and approved.

Commissioner Evans stated that Ms. Samuel's preparation of the minutes are the most thorough minutes to date. Chair Papy reminded the commissioners that everything said during the meeting is public record so everyone should be mindful of how they say things.

Commissioner Edenfield asked whether the discussion about the "z" in Philharmonic in the Streetz took place at the investment review panel meeting or at the last commission meeting. Commissioner Monroe stated that it happened at the review meeting.

Chair Papy asked whether anyone had any comments or questions about the minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Bagley-Heath. Commissioner Edenfield seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously carried.

III. Cultural Program Assessment and Reports

Deep Center

Commissioner Monroe stated that he needs to check which organizations he is assigned to as he is unclear however, no commissioners attended any Deep Center events.

King Tisdell Cottage Foundation

Commissioner Kramer attended the August 28 lecture with Dr. Alicia Brunson and reported that it was a fascinating subject. Ms. Kramer noted that the way the lecture was presented was great and very organized. She also reported that the lecture started late again and that there were 16 attendees. No children were present, there were a few college students mostly 21 and up, and the City was recognized. Ms. Kramer said she received an invitation to the lecture and a newsletter. She asked whether the other commissioners received an email notifying them about the lecture. There were mixed responses.

Commissioner McMichael said if anyone is using Gmail they might need to check other categories such as a promotions. Commissioner Kramer stated she wanted to check that the organization had improved their email communication issue. She added that while the audience who attends enjoys the lectures, she would like to see a lot more attendance.

Commissioner Monroe stated that he thinks publicity for the Beach Institute and King Tisdell is lacking. Commissioner Kramer stated that other attendees have always said they heard about the lecture through word of mouth so maybe better marketing is needed.

Commissioner Evans attended the Drylongso genealogy event on September 21 and reported that the space was set up in a circle for people to come and share family stories in a public setting. She noted 22 people in attendance when she arrived. Commissioner Evans reminded the commission that this was a two year investment and 2018 was supposed to be the year everything was put in place and 2019 was supposed to be the implementation year. She noted there have only been two workshops and the organization should have held three by now.

Ms. Evans stated that the event didn't highlight any of the features of the genealogy center, didn't showcase any connections that could be made and, there was no use of the computers in the facility. There was no connection with the space which is what a lot of the funding went into setting up. Ms. Evans stated the handout materials included a survey and some basic information and that the event was a missed opportunity to notify the public of what this project is about. She reported that she received the invitation 9 days prior to the event which wasn't enough time for people to gather information about their families for sharing and that the event seemed hastily put together.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that the program sounds like it was very disappointing. Ms. Evans added that the venue was about half full and the acoustics of the room made it difficult to hear. She reported that demographically, everyone was African American except for one Caucasian and an Asian woman. The majority of attendees were female except for 4-5 males and there were no children, teens or young adults. Additionally, 60% of attendees were over the age of 60. Commissioner Evans stated that she did have to leave early so it's possible people were shy about talking and diving in so they might have engaged more after she left. Surveys were present however, it doesn't seem that the event fit any descriptions of proposed events for the investment.

Commissioner Kramer asked whether there was any improvement from the first genealogy event. Commissioner Evans responded no and that this event didn't

highlight any of the features that should have been running. Commissioner Kramer asked if there will be a third event and Ms. Evans responded that she does not know what they're going to do. Commissioner Bagley-Heath asked whether the City will disburse funds to King-Tisdell and Ms. Evans stated that time won't be up for the organization's programming until the end of 2019. Chair Papy announced that there are internal conversations taking place about what's needed for King-Tisdell to fulfill their contract. She added that the organization did not apply for 2020 funding and it most likely won't be a commission decision on whether the organization receives full funding.

Commissioner Kramer asked whether there was another turnover with the executive position within the last six months. Chair Papy noted that she thinks the interim for 2018-2019 was Susan Williams however, she's not sure. She added that Dr. Johnson-Simon was playing a key role but she's not sure if she is still there. She also stated that Ron Christopher is the Board Chair and Jenny McCord also works at the organization doing accounting and other tasks but she's not clear on their staffing. Commissioner Evans stated that Dr. Johnson Simon is solely in charge of the genealogy project.

Chair Papy stated that the more commissioners can show up and see what progress can be made, the more helpful it will be.

Commissioner Hall-Houston attended the August 28 lecture and reported that it was a great session but due to acoustic issues, she couldn't hear the presenter. She noted there were less than 20 people in attendance and surveys were given out at the end. She reported that their email marketing was great and that there was a mix of people in crowd in terms of race. She added that she wanted to see more college students due to the subject nature.

Savannah Music Festival

Commissioner Evans attended the teacher training session on September 12 and reported that it started on time, and 71 attendees were present. The venue was filled to capacity and almost all attendees were adults. She stated that she did not notice the City being credited verbally but it might have been on books given to teachers. She reported that the workshop was well organized, she was notified properly via email. She noted that two new genres were added (hip-hop and Jewish Klezmer music) as teachers were becoming tired of teaching the same genres. Musical performers also attended the event to demonstrate the genres and the teachers received high quality instruction.

Commissioner Edenfield asked who was sending the emails as he didn't receive any and Ms. Evans responded that Kat Clark is the staff member responsible for emails. Commissioner Kramer asked how far in advance Commissioner Evans received her email. Ms. Evans replied that her first email about the event was

received on August 16. She then received follow-up RSVP emails and event reminders.

Savannah Philharmonic

No commissioners attended Savannah Philharmonic events.

Telfair Museum of Art

Commissioner Monroe attended the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence lecture at the Jepson Center on September 12. He reported that the event was awesome, almost full to capacity but there wasn't a lot of younger people in attendance. The City was recognized and the publicity for the event was good. He also added that surveys were collected and their survey system might serve other organizations well.

Commissioner Evans also attended the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence lecture and reported that the event was a meaningful way of addressing the legacy of slavery. She noted that there were two scholars who looked at the lasting impact of slavery and their research and findings will be compiled into a publication. Ms. Evans stated that this addresses the neighborhood revitalization goal.

Commissioner Kramer stated that she heard Telfair's new director speak a few weeks prior about his vision for Telfair Museums over the next 10 years which included making the museums a public space.

Commissioner McMichael attended the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence lecture also and liked the collaboration efforts locally. He also thought the Q&A at the end was impressive.

Commissioner Edenfield asked whether there's going to be a culminating event. Commissioner Monroe stated that it's a series of programming and Commissioner Evans added that Ms. Arrogante might have some additional information on the programming as she's working with Telfair on the artistic component of the events.

Ms. Arrogante stated that there are some details she cannot share yet, but they are bringing in a lot of artists from around the country and the 2020 symposium will be held at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center.

Commissioner Kramer stated that she attended two Savannah Jazz Festival events during the week and asked whether she should save her reports for the next commission meeting. Chair Papy replied that they should save those reports for the next meeting

IV. Weave-A-Dream Committee Report

Commissioner Evans provided a handout on the current weave-a-dream program status and stated that there has been a lot happening with the program. She explained the color coding for the handout and reminded commissioners to attend the weave-a-dream programs to see what's happening. Ms. Evans added that there have been a lot of inquiries for the Weave-a-dream program but that many weren't ready to apply because they're ineligible to. There are two pending applications: Performance Initiatives and the Starland Mural Project. Both proposals will have a response by October 1, 2019. She reminded commissioners to push other organizations to apply for the program.

Commissioner Evans reported that there is about \$27,000 remaining in the weave-a-dream budget. If both pending applications are awarded the maximum amounts it will reduce the budget to \$20,906. Commissioner Evans stated that she received a question about why applicants are allowed to resubmit and get consultations for their applications. She responded that it's because this is the smaller program that provides guidance to applicants and they want to help applicants provide good services.

Chair Papy reminded commissioners that they can remove themselves from reviewing an application if they feel there is a conflict of interest and that she has done so with an application as well.

V. Subcommittee Updates

The Youth Advisory subcommittee reported that they need new members.

The City Priorities subcommittee had no members in attendance to report.

The Public Art subcommittee reported that they have submitted a public art ordinance draft to the City for review.

VI. Chair Report

Chair Papy reported that the attendance report will be coming soon and reminded commissioners of the absence policy. She added that evaluations must be submitted via email or physically and that six evaluations are required by the end of the year.

Commissioner Evans added that vacancies are opening up on the commission and asked commissioners to encourage anyone who would be a good fit to apply. Commissioner Kramer asked whether an applicant needs to wait for the applications to be available. Commissioner Evans and Chair Papy responded that they will need to wait for the vacancies to be announced and the application made available.

VII. Cultural Resources Director Report

Ms. Arrogante thanked the commissioners for attending the review panel on August 24. She reported that the members reviewed 10 applications and detailed the average scores of each organization.

Ms. Arrogante reported that she will be reviewing the scores with the rubric and preparing the documentation. She stated that Neighborly went well as a new application system and she welcomes feedback on the process. She added that weave-a-dream will be added to the Neighborly system for next year.

Ms. Arrogante reported that interviews were held in July for the Cultural Contracts Coordinator position and an offer was extended but the candidate declined the position before starting work. She notified the commission that the process will begin again and thanked them for their patience. She thanked Ms. Papy and Ms. Evans for guiding her through the contract services duties and stated that the situation was unfortunately beyond their control.

Chair Papy stated she is going to send out an email reminder for the next meeting and will include a link to the website with upcoming cultural events.

VIII. General Discussion and New Business

Chair Papy stated that a question came up about commissioner representation and how and when they represent themselves. She noted that it's always been fuzzy and that commissioner Monroe was really interested in this.

Ms. Papy said that a survey is going out to local elected officials about arts advocacy and commissioners were wondering whether they could sign onto that as a commissioner. She stated that her suggestion was no they could not but they could potentially sign onto it as an entire commission but that would require a vote.

Commissioner Monroe said he'd like to have clarity on when he's allowed to say he's a cultural affairs commissioner and when he is not allowed to say so. He added that he would like to share the fact he's on the commission but doesn't want to cross any ethical lines which is why he is asking for some clarification.

Commissioner Evans stated that commissioners were appointed as representatives for the community so she sees nothing wrong with people knowing someone is a member of the commission. She sees an issue if a document is signed as a commissioner instead of just as a citizen. This is because you don't want to represent you're speaking for the entire commission. Commissioner Evans reminded them that you do want to notify people you're on the commission as you bring their ideas back and advocate for them.

Chair Papy said members should actively be leaders and say they're on the commission but be careful to not use their status as a commissioner to push something forward. She also reminded commissioners that state advocacy as a commissioner is not allowed unless as an individual. She suggested that if advocacy isn't at the City level, commissioners should be careful.

Commissioner Monroe said it's confusing to him as he's both an individual and a member of the group so how can it translate with his public-facing representation. Commissioner Edenfield said making it clear that while they are a member of the commission they are not speaking for the commission should make things clearer. Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that it's the difference between the public and private self. When speaking as a commissioner you're speaking on behalf of the commission as a body and the City so one should speak as themselves on topics of personal opinion.

Commissioner Monroe addressed that he had a problem with the City's IT department and his emails bouncing back because of their filters. He stated that Ms. Samuel put him in touch with someone in IT to assist and he felt as though the staff member he spoke to, Mr. Campbell, decided his issue wasn't a problem. He stated that IT's suggested solution was to change his email address and he escalated the issue to the Director. Ms. Papy stated that there is a woman in IT who her and Linda have had help from with email issues and she told them it's a hyperlink issue. Mr. Monroe stated that his emails don't have any attachments or hyperlinks. He stated that he received a different explanation of the problem and that this issue is a problem for organizations who cannot get in touch with department staff.

Commissioner Evans announced that La Fiesta Latina is coming up on September 28 and encouraged commissioners to attend. Commissioner Edenfield asked whether weave-a-dream reviews counted toward the required six evaluations. Ms. Papy replied that they do.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting of the Commission will be held on January 8, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference room at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center.