



**Cultural Affairs Commission
Meeting**

June 13, 2017

**Cultural Affairs Arts Center
9 West Henry St.**

6:00 P.M.

Minutes

Present: Esther Buchsbaum, Brea Cali, Lisa Clark, Linda J. Evans, Dr. Rebecca Gaston-Dawson, Willia Johnson, Alix Laincy, Courtenay Papy, Mary Raines, Tanet Taharka-Meyers, Lisa White, Antwan Lang

Eileen Baker, Director
Rebecca Brown, Contract Coordinator
Rob Hernandez, City Manager
Marty Johnston, Deputy Assistant to the City Manager

Absent: Alexis Alexander

Legina Jackson, Administrative Assistant

I. Minutes Approval

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Linda J. Evans, Chair. Motion made and seconded to accept the minutes of the February 12, 2017 meeting. Motion carried.



II. Announcements

Linda Evans introduced City Manager, Rob Hernandez. Commissioner Evans reported on the functions of the Cultural Affairs Commission and the work that they conduct throughout the year. She asked Mr. Hernandez questions about the City intent for the Commission including; appointment of members to the Cultural Affairs Commission, the process of the 2017 investment allocations differing from the Commission recommendations, and the status of the 2018 Investment/Contract process.

Mr. Hernandez responded with an overview of the Savannah City Council Priority focus that is based on the Council approved strategic plan.

The City Manager stated that he had arrived at his first day at work, during Hurricane Mathew, and was informed that the proposed 2017 budget was unbalanced by 13 million dollars. He explained that the City Council determined, rather than reduce the total cultural allocation by \$200,000, the 2017 Cultural Investment/Contract funds would be set equal to the 2016 investment levels for each agency with no new applicants included.

Mr. Hernandez discussed possible funding sources that may be dedicated to Savannah's creative industries in the future, but he will not have a decision on the "Investment/Contract" initiative for 90 days.

Mr. Hernandez explained his plan for City reorganization and how the new structure will define and refine the functions of Savannah City Government. He stated that the reorganization plan places Savannah's Creative Industry and Historic Resources within the functions of Community Services. He added that a Public Art program will be a component of the new operations structure.

The City Manager stated that the appointments to Boards and Commissions are a function of the Mayor and Aldermen. He stated that Dyanne Reese, the Clerk of Council, is responsible for managing that process.

Alix Laincy asked about Savannah's high level of poverty.



The City manager provided statistics and explained how the City planned to use multiple approaches and combined strategies between program areas to assist with poverty reduction.

III. Assigned Agency Program Evaluation Report

SAVANNAH MUSIC FESTIVAL

Musical Explorers April-May

Linda J Evans and Brea Cali both stated that the Savannah Music Festival program, Musical Explorers, is an engaging program for young people. Chair, Linda Evans remarked on the variety of musical genres presented and the expanded cultural knowledge derived through the exposure through live presentations and the focused educational plans.

Commissioners commented that they would be interested in seeing how the progressions of these programs through three years affect student's development and learning capacity.

TELFAIR MUSEUM OF ART

Juneteenth- June 10

The lecture associated with Telfair's Juneteenth was canceled due to transportation issues with the invited speaker.

Commissioner Buchsbaum attended the Juneteenth Festival. She enjoyed each aspect of the hands on activities and performances. She stated that there was a large crowd at the Jepson Center. Several commissioners commented that the representation of the Gullah- Geechee dialect was an interesting and important contribution to the Saturday event.

Commissioner Gaston-Dawson attended the Juneteenth Festival. She stated that she enjoyed the program. Commissioner Gaston-Dawson noted the various activities that took place.

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SAVANNAH PHILHARMONIC

Pre-Concert Youth Program- April- Season Finale, Rachmaninoff-Dvorak-Mercer Theater

Mary Raines attended the program designed for middle and high school students that was held at the Mercer Theater. Approximately 600 students



attended the program. Commissioner Raines commented how the “break” in the program was disruptive.

Rebecca Gaston Dawson also attended the Philharmonic program, and noted that school groups left this program before it ended. She stated that she has years of experience with school field trips through her work in the school system.

Commissioner Evans added that the technology “engagement” components of the Philharmonic rehearsals educational programs, that were included when programs took place at the Lucas Theater, were not presented at the Mercer.

DEEP CENTER, INC.

Deep Speaks-Feb 2, Savannah Theater

Commissioner Laincy attended the Deep Speaks event. He noted that the spring/summer Deep Speaks numbers of audience attendees is less than the number who attends Fall Deep Speaks. He asked fellow Commissioners about the process for the selection of the Deep Laureate. Commissioners explained that there was an online voting process and a consensus vote of the Deep young authors.

Lisa Clark commented that some of the readers/speakers had stage fright and others were very comfortable on stage. The behind the stage coaches and emcee were an asset to the performed readings.

Antwan Lang stated that Deep is a model program that fits perfectly with strategies of increasing public safety, economic development and reducing poverty.

WEST BROAD STREET YMCA

Y Creative Arts-Y paint-M, W, F 4:00 P.M.



Linda Evans went to the West Broad Street YMCA, expecting to observe Y painting. She made several inquiries of Y staff and found young people dancing to popular music but no painting instruction.

Brea Cali stated that she has had similar experiences when attempting to evaluate Y contracted arts services this year.

Courtenay Papy added that she believed that the management practices and organizational structure of the Y are not conducive for the Y staff to lead creative programs.

Antwan Lang stated that the commission should consider recommending that no City funds are directed toward creative programs at WBSYMCA.

Commissioner Willia Johnson asked the commissioners: Has anyone spoken to the West Broad Street YMCA about the Commissioners' stated programming concerns? She suggested that a conversation take place between the Department of Cultural Affairs, The Cultural Affairs Commission, and the Board, followed by written documentation of agreement(s) and expectations. She stated that were the Board unable to provide sufficient programming, the Commission must consider an alternate organization to provide programming to residents on the West side of town. Given the Commission's duty to evaluate programming and recommend funding, it has a moral obligation to the residents served by participating agencies; therefore, the Commission should not abandon WBSYMCA's programs because it has not fulfilled its program obligations, as the Commission cannot continue to support WBSYMCA in its deficient programming. Commissioner Johnson also suggested that the Commission's communication with WBSYMCA should not only clarify what is wrong with its programming, but also provide insight(s) and possibly guidance, as to what may work and be deemed appropriate.

Courtenay Pappy remarked that individuals who are not employed or contracted by the WBSYMCA, but present programs at Y facility, are more successful at attracting participation.

ARMSTRONG STATE UNIVERSITY

Savannah Asian Cultural Festival-April 21 and April 22



Commissioner Evans attended the Friday night theater event and the Saturday outdoor event. She stated that most of the Friday night performances were enjoyable and well executed with the exception of Prince Pele's Polynesian Dance. The Prince Pele troupe consisted of family members who performed a "campy" and poorly executed "cruise ship" style show. She commented that the Pipa Solo by Lynn Yu was particularly educational and expertly presented. Linda Evans added that overall, the Asian Festival as presented by Armstrong, is a great improvement to long standing event that was held at the Civic Center.

Brea Cali attended the Friday evening event, and agreed with Linda's review of the evening. She added that the Prince Pele performance was a disappointment to an otherwise enjoyable evening.

Esther Buchsbaum attended the Friday night performance and she stated that she agreed with the review of Linda Evans and Brea Cali.

Lisa Clark attended both events of the Asian Festival. She reported that she thought that the Friday night event produced in 2016 was more lively and enjoyable.

WEAVE-A-DREAM

Historic Savannah Foundation Hands on History Camp

EVALUATORS: [Linda J. Evans](#), [Alix Lainya](#), [Mary Raines](#), [Brea Cali](#), [Courtenay Papy](#)

Vice Chair Evans attended the City Hall tour given by the City of Savannah Research Librarian, Luciana Spracher. She stated that the tour was interesting and that Luciana Spracher was an excellent guide. Commission Chair Evans stated that the Historic Savannah Foundation, Weave A Dream proposal, listed 28 young people as the intended audience for this program. However, 9 young people were in attendance. Additionally, she stated she is not sure what methods were used to notify all sectors of Savannah youth about the available free of charge week long program. She will know the reported outcomes/actuals verses the proposal when the final report is submitted.

IV. Weave-A-Dream Committee Report – Brea Cali



Commissioner Cali reported that Camp Urban Hope was funded at \$2000. There are no pending applications. The Weave-A-Dream account balance is \$2,906.06.

V. Chairperson's Report – Linda J. Evans

Linda Evans suggested that 3 Saturdays in September be held for possible commission review of RFPs.

VI. Director's Report – Eileen Baker

Eileen Baker stated that Terri O'Neal was appointed to the position of Executive Director of the Savannah Philharmonic. She has been contacted by Artists and groups expressing a desire to exhibit and perform at the new Cultural Center. No finalized plan has been established, many are particularly interested in the "opening" events.

VII. Contract Coordinator's Report – Rebecca Brown

Ms. Brown announced that the results of the national Economic Impact Study will be released nationally June 17. The Savannah study results will be released Monday June 19.

VIII. Upcoming Cultural Events

- ◆ Deep Center- Eastside Block Party- July 1, 2:00p.m. East Broad School
- ◆ Telfair Museum of Art – Summer Programs in Centers. (List provided)
August 5, 1:00 pm-5:00 p.m. Family Day William Wegman
- ◆ West Broad Street YMCA- Creative Arts and YPaints – listed as Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 4:00 pm
- ◆ Art Rise Savannah – Waters Avenue Parade, July 8, 3:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
Waters Avenue and 37th Street.
- ◆ Weave-A-Dream – Urban Hope, Inc.
- ◆ Next Commission Meeting – August 8, 2017 at 6 p.m.



Meeting Adjourned
8:30 p.m.