

## MEETING MINUTES

Metro Arts Commission Board Meeting  
Thursday October 17, 2024, 12:00-2:00PM  
2601 Bransford Ave.  
MNPS Administration Building  
Board of Education Meeting Room  
Nashville, TN 37204

### **Attendance at Meeting:**

**Commissioners:** Janet Kurtz (Vice Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Evan Brown, Tré Hardin, Timothy Jester, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight, Arlene Nicholas-Phillips, Jessie Rosenblum, Dawana Wade, Beverly Watts, Campbell West, Mayra Yu and Dr. Paulette Coleman (Interim Executive Director, ex-officio)

**Absent Commissioners:** Leah Dupree Love (Chair) and Carol McCoy

**Metro Arts Staff:** Chuck Beard, Claudia Lawhon, Jesse Ross, Masonya Osei, Josiah Golson, Sydnie Davis, & Vivian Foxx

### **Guest**

- Councilperson Joy Styles
- Rev. Davie Tucker

### **Action Items:**

- ☐ Submit questions about the current grant guidelines to Tessa Ortiz-Marsh or the Grants Committee.
- ☐ Schedule and post relevant committee meetings (Grants, Care, Executive) through the end of the year.
- ☐ Orient new Commissioners on fiduciary, procedural, and supervisory roles, and share information about the conciliation agreement.
- ☐ Widely disseminate the grant guidelines and Community Engagement Plan on the website and through other communication channels.
- ☐ Work collaboratively to integrate feedback and expertise into the FY26 grant guidelines.
- ☐ Create data visualizations on historic and recent grant funding to aid in community engagement and informed decision-making.

**Meeting Summary:**

The Metro Arts Commission meeting addressed several key issues. Commissioner Beverly Watts reported on the FY 24 budget closeout and staff vacancies. Commissioner Tim Jester highlighted the need for legal and public engagement reviews before approving grant criteria. Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz emphasized the importance of community engagement and transparency. Dr. Paulette Coleman discussed the Thrive program's timeline and funding allocation. The Commission approved the Community Arts Leaders of Nashville program for internships, with a budget of \$88,100 to fund 12 host sites. Fred Adam, the new senior finance executive, introduced himself and outlined his role in addressing financial oversight and audit findings.

**Agenda and Notes:****A. Call to Order**

- a. Commissioner Vice Chair Kurtz called meeting to order at 12:05

**B. Public Comment**

- Councilperson Joy Styles

**C. Approval of Minutes:**

- a. A motion to approve minutes from September 26, 2024, Special Called Meeting by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Hardin.

**D. Action Items/Discussion****1. Public Art Committee**

- **Ongoing Projects:**  
Commissioner West provided an update on the current activities of the Public Art Committee. Several projects are still in progress, with various stages of development.
- **Loqui Project:**  
Commissioner West highlighted that the Loqui project has been completed. The artwork has been successfully installed and the opening event was well-received, marking a significant milestone for the committee. The project was praised for its execution and public reception.
- **Looking Ahead:**  
The committee continues to work on upcoming public art initiatives and is focused on moving projects forward efficiently. Additional updates will be provided in future meetings as new milestones are reached.

**2. Budget & Oversight Committee**

- Commissioner Watts discussed ongoing budget work related to FY25.
- She also stated that it she received an update on audits, including progress and upcoming steps.
- Brief discussion held regarding conciliation meetings that are scheduled to take place soon.

### **1. Administrative Procedures & Staff Updates**

#### **- Administrative Procedures:**

Staff confirmed that administrative procedures for Metro Arts, which were believed to be nonexistent, do exist. A review was conducted in July and August to identify areas that need updating.

The staff is actively working on addressing any necessary updates and improvements.

### **2. Committee Structure Discussion**

- Commissioner Watts raised the previous topic of some committee members recommending that the Budget & Oversight Committee be dissolved and that those responsibilities transferred to another committee, but the decision would be up to the incoming chair.

### **3. Grants & Funding Committee (Commissioner Jester)**

- Commissioner Jester the opening the discussion on Grants by thanking everyone for their commitment to attending and apologizing for the earlier issues with meeting materials. He emphasized that the goal was not to capitalize on commissioners' time but to ensure that grant money flows effectively to artists and the arts community.

#### **1. Proposal Recommendation Conversation (Action Item)**

- Commissioner Jester began the discussion, explaining that the Grants and Funding Committee had met earlier in the week. He thanked the commissioners who attended, noting that the committee had voted to recommend the Commission approve the funding criteria, contingent on two main factors:

##### **1. Plan of action for community engagement**

##### **2. Legal review**

- However, legal review had not been provided sufficient time to thoroughly review the proposed guidelines, and there was a lack of public engagement on the plan.

- Commissioner Lefkowitz voiced concerns about the adequacy of the engagement process, specifically mentioning that there was insufficient public input and no clear plan for engaging the community as required by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) conciliation agreement.

- Commissioner Lefkowitz emphasized the need to ensure that the actions taken were not only legal and ethical but also transparent, inclusive, and in the best interest of the arts community.

- It was acknowledged that while the committee had recommended approval, Commissioner Jester felt it was important to continue discussions and raise all questions today. The matter should then return to the Grants and Funding Committee for more community engagement and further legal review before final approval.

### **3. Community Engagement & Legal Review**

- Commissioner Lefkowitz highlighted that Tessa Ortiz-Marsh (Metro Legal) had outlined a clear process in the August 14th meeting to ensure that the grants process complied with the HRC conciliation agreement. This process involved:

1. Community feedback prior to the Commission vote
2. Incorporation of feedback from the Grants Committee
3. A finalized version being submitted for approval and eventual consideration by Metro Council.

- Commissioner Lefkowitz noted that the process described in August had not been followed, particularly in terms of consulting the CARE Committee and obtaining sufficient public engagement.

- The timeline for community engagement, as presented, seemed focused on disseminating information rather than actively soliciting feedback and input on the grant proposal itself.

### **4. Transparency, Collaboration, and Accountability**

- Commissioner Lefkowitz stressed that the process needed to ensure trust with the community, especially given the history of tension around grant funding. The committee must work towards building trust through:

- Transparency
- Open communication
- Genuine collaboration

- The importance of ensuring that actions taken are compliant with the conciliation agreement and ethically sound was underscored. The committee acknowledged that this work would take time, but it was essential to proceed cautiously and thoughtfully.

### **5. Suggestions for Moving Forward**

- Commissioner Lefkowitz provided several suggestions to improve the process and ensure proper engagement and review:

1. Schedule and post relevant meetings for the incoming Commission leadership, including an orientation for new commissioners about their roles and the grants process.
2. Commissioners should submit questions about the current grant guidelines to Tessa Ortiz-Marsh (Metro Legal) rather than circulating questions amongst themselves.
3. Call and post a meeting, possibly led by the Chair or Chair-elect, specifically for orienting new commissioners and ensuring they understand their fiduciary, procedural, and supervisory roles.
4. Disseminate the grant guidelines and community engagement plan widely on the website and through other communication channels. While there is no communications manager, the Interim Director can coordinate the publicizing of these documents.
5. Begin thinking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026, aligning the work of the grants committee with the priorities and guidance of the Commission to integrate feedback from the community.
6. Create data visualizations that track historical and recent grant funding, providing

greater transparency. Commissioner Lefkowitz offered to work with the Grants Committee on these visualizations to make the data accessible for the public and new commissioners, as part of the community engagement and education process.

#### **Discussion Points:**

**1. Council Approval and Legislation Timeline:**

- **Councilwoman Styles** addressed the recent legislation that passed, which impacts both the operating grants and the Thrive program.
- The legislation mandates that the full council body must approve the grant process as a unified package. This means that both operating and Thrive grants must be considered together, not separately.
- There is concern about ensuring everything is aligned before presenting it to council, particularly around community engagement and checks and balances. The committee is aiming for a "one and done" approach to avoid delays and deferrals.

**2. Community Engagement and Planning:**

- A significant point raised by **Councilwoman Styles** is that the community engagement process needs to be completed before the grant process comes to council. This allows council members to report back to their colleagues with confidence that necessary steps have been taken.
- The timeline for presenting the plan to the council may shift to **November 19**, as Councilwoman Styles suggested, allowing a full month for further engagement and preparation.

**3. Council's Budget and Grants:**

- The need to finalize grant processes to secure budget allocations for the following year was emphasized. If the committee can successfully present a strong, well-engaged grant process, it could influence budget decisions and potentially increase funding for future grants.
- Councilwoman Styles expressed support for increasing grant funds but stressed the importance of a thorough, well-organized plan to gain council approval.

**4. Legislative Process and Deferrals:**

- **Councilwoman Styles** warned that a delay in moving forward with the grant process could result in deferrals and a slower path to approval. She recommended getting everything ready in time for the **second council meeting in December**, as it would likely be the last opportunity for approval in the current year.

**5. Legal and Operational Details:**

- There was discussion around legal review, particularly regarding the operating criteria and the Thrive program, with **Councilwoman Styles** noting that legal review is still pending.
- The committee needs to ensure that the processes for both operating grants and Thrive are presented together in a cohesive plan.

#### **4. Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity (Commissioner Hardin)**

##### **I. CARE Update**

###### **Meeting Status:**

- Last CARE meeting lacked quorum; unable to conduct official business.

###### **Equity Definition Progress:**

- Ongoing work to finalize the definition of equity.
- Aiming to present a draft for review and adoption soon.

###### **Committee Operations:**

- CARE Committee not yet functioning at full capacity.
- Commissioner Hardin to assume Co-Chair role officially in the future.

###### **Community Engagement:**

- Emphasis on fostering community engagement, especially for FY26 grant cycle.

###### **Next Steps:**

- Finalize definitions for equity and anti-racism specific to Metro Arts.
- Review and refine CARE guidelines before expanding community involvement.
- Collaborate with Dr. Coleman and Sydnie on next meeting agenda and engagement strategies.

#### **5. Approval of Community Arts Leaders of Nashville Criteria and Applications**

Presentation by Josiah Golson:

##### **- Program Details:**

- Budget: \$88,100
- Capacity for 12 host sites
- \$6,700 grant per host site
- \$3,750 for intern wages
- \$500 for transportation
- \$450 for mentor stipend
- \$2,500 for host site administration

##### **- Timeline:**

- Spring 2025 implementation (January-June)
- 15 initial host site applications received.

**Motion**

*A motion to approve the funding and operations of the Community Arts Leaders of Nashville for internships to be hosted from January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025. I believe it is important that we record this approval separately from our general grants and funding, and therefore, this will not be part of the operating grants or the other arts-related grants we provide Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner West.*

**Motion to Amend by Commissioner Hardin:**

*An amended motion to stipulate that the funding for these internships will not be taken from our operating budget and will not be attached to the operating grants or other related grants we supply by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner West.*

**E. Financial Report**

- a. Moved past due to time constraints.

**F. Interim Director's Report****Introduction of Senior Finance Executive**

- Dr. Coleman introduces Fred Adam, the new senior finance executive, who will assist with the financial situation at Metro Arts.
- Adam has extensive experience in financial accountability and auditing, with a focus on grants monitoring and audits.
- He will assist in addressing audit findings and training the finance staff.
- The commissioners express their appreciation for Adam's expertise and support.

**G. New/Old Business****H. Adjourn Meeting**

*Commissioner Vice Chair moved to adjourn meeting and seconded by Commissioner Jester at 1:45pm.*

**Submitted for approval by:**

Vivian Foxx