

Metro Arts Commission Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Time: 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Location: Metro Southeast Building,
Green Hills Conference Room,
1417 Murfreesboro Pike,
Nashville, TN 37217



Commissioners Present: Campbell West (Chair), Tré Hardin (Vice Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Evan Brown, Timothy Jester, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Mayra Yu, Brittany Cole & Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director, *ex-officio*)

Absent: Janet Kurtz

Metro Legal: Tessa Marsh-Ortiz

Metro Arts Staff: Capri Harston and Vivian Foxx

A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

- Chair West called the meeting to order and read the required legal disclaimer.
- Chair West welcomed new Commissioner Brittany Cole and new Finance Administrator Capri Harston.
- A formal land acknowledgement was read honoring Indigenous communities and the enslaved African peoples whose contributions shaped the present.

B. Public Comment

- No public comments were submitted online or in-person.

C. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of January 16 and March 3, 2025, meeting minutes were deferred to the next meeting due to needed edits.

D. Artist Spotlight: Kyshona Armstrong

- Chuck Beard introduced Kyshona Armstrong, a music therapist and founder of "Your Song," a songwriting initiative for underserved communities.

- Armstrong shared her mission of using music to promote healing and empowerment, especially for marginalized voices, and performed the song.

E. Action Items/Discussion

1. Executive Committee (Chair: Campbell West)

i. Executive Director Search Update

- Interim ED Bachelder and Chair West met with Director Shannon Hall from Metro HR. Search for a new Executive Director to begin July 2025 and conclude by end of the year. Director Hall will present the search process at the June meeting.

ii. Committee Assignments

- New committee assignments distributed.
- Jilah Kalil was confirmed as Public Art Committee member.
- Audit & Finance Committee seeking additional volunteers.

iii. Dissolution of the Advocacy Committee (ACTION ITEM)

- Discussion highlighted lack of recent activity and the intent to shift advocacy responsibilities across all committees and commissioners.
- After an extensive discussion, the Commission decided not to take any action to dissolve the committee and keep it in place.
- The Chair will appoint members and allow the committee to define its mission.

iv. Recommendation to Adopt Appeals Process (ACTION ITEM)

- Interim ED Bachelder presented the FY25 Appeals Process, which was discussed and recommended by the Executive Committee. The process outlined the steps and deadlines for appellants and the Director to submit information to the

Commission and the process for each party to address the commission for three minutes each.

A motion was made to approve the FY25 Appeals Process as recommended by the Executive Committee by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

2. Appeals (ACTION ITEMS)

i. International Black Film Festival – Operating Grant Appeal

Before beginning the appeal process, Commissioners were instructed to disclose conflicts of interest with the appellant, which would require them to abstain from discussion and the vote.

- Commissioner Wade recused herself due to a conflict of interest.
- The appellant Ingrid Brown was given 3 minutes to address the Commission.
 - The appellant explained that the appeal is about the amount of the grant, but raised concerns about the Submittable platform and her inability to access the applications that she felt should be resolved first.

A motion was made to amend the original process for 3 minutes plus the discretion of the Commission Chair for both the appellant and Executive Director in the process by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. Motion passed.

- The Chair gave 3 additional minutes to the appellant. The appellant emphasized the administrative and technical issues that she wished to be addressed.
- Interim Executive Director Bachelder was given 3 minutes to address the Commission.
 - Bachelder acknowledged technical frustrations but noted that funding amounts were determined based on revenue data from the original application.

A motion was made to amend the process to allow staff and appellants to answer questions related to the appeal by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.

- Commissioners engaged in discussion and question and answers with the Director and appellant, focused on the timeline of events, communications, guideline updates, technical difficulties, and application information.

A motion was made to deny the appeal request for the operating grant from the International Black Film Festival by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Khalil. Motion passed.

Roll Call Vote:

- *West: Yes*
- *Hardin: Yes*
- *Lefkowitz: Yes*
- *Brown: No*
- *Cole: No*
- *Jester: Yes*
- *Khalil: Yes*
- *Knight: Yes*
- *Yu: Yes*

ii. Dominique's Dominance (Thrive grant appeal)

- The appellant Chantea Kirkwood was given 3 minutes to address the Commission.
 - The appellant explained the artist work that was to be supported by the Metro Arts grant and the financial loss after not receiving it, citing a denial should not be made because of an error on the date in the application.
- Interim Executive Director Bachelder was given 3 minutes to address the Commission.
 - Bachelder explained the denial occurred during technical review for dates outside the timeline, and stated the application would have been regardless due to ineligibility for both Thrive and Operating grant support in the same cycle.

A motion was made to deny the appeal request for the Thrive grant application titled Dominique's Dominance by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed. Commissioner Cole abstained.

iii. The Art of Naturally Being: Volume II (Thrive grant appeal)

- No appellant was present to speak.
- Interim Executive Director Bachelder was given 3 minutes to address the Commission.
 - Bachelder described that the appeal stated the applicant had not been prompted to upload additional required forms. Bachelder described the information that was provided to the applicant and the missing required information.

A motion was made to deny the appeal request for the Thrive grant application titled The Art of Naturally Being: Volume II by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. Motion passed.

3. Public Art Committee - Chair Campbell West & Staff

i. Nashville Youth Campus for Empowerment (NYCE) - Atilio Murga

- Project Overview:
 - Project site: A 14-acre youth justice and services campus in District 2.
 - The proposed art site is a large, interior wall within the main entrance lobby of the courthouse, approximately 1,300 square feet.
 - The piece will be wall-mounted and exposed to natural light.
- Call to Artists:
 - National RFQ (Request for Qualifications), open to artists or artist teams.
 - Proposed release date: May 5, 2025; deadline: June 16, 2025.
 - What is being asked for approval today is the \$400,000 budget and the national RFQ.

A motion was made to approve the public art project for the Nashville Youth Campus for Empowerment as specified Commissioner and seconded by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade. Motion passed.

ii. Arthur Avenue Public Art Final Design (ACTION) - Anne-Leslie Owens

- An update was given about design updates for the Arthur Avenue Lighting Final Design
 - Removal of a proposed mural and benches due to maintenance and space limitations.
 - Incorporation of a solid blue paint in place of the mural.
 - Minor changes are in alignment with the original design and intent and continues to have strong community support.

A motion was made and seconded to approve Alex Braden's final design for the Arthur Avenue Public Art Lighting Project by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

4. Grants & Funding Committee - Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz & Staff

Grant committee updates included:

- Payment updates: 150 grants paid; 15 remaining due to waiting for contracts, vendor issues, or are in process.
- FY25 Community Engagement & Timeline: Director Bachelder gave an update about 5 community engagement sessions that were completed and provided a summary report about those meetings. The summary included discussion of operating funding formulas, Thrive fiscal sponsors, points of confusion in the last year, and attendees' interest in future events and finding ways to partner with each other and Metro Arts.
- An online survey is currently open to gather additional feedback; link included in the packet.
- The tentative timeline for FY26 outlines tentative approval of grant guidelines in May and June, with fund disbursement occurring in October/November.
- Acknowledged that while aiming to stay on track, potential delays (2–4 weeks) could occur if either Commission or Council review timelines shift.

5. Audit and Finance Committee Update – Commissioner Jester & Interim Director Bachelder

- This committee is a continuation of the former Budget and Oversight Committee.
- Important dates for FY26 budget process:
 - March 14 - Metro Arts budget hearing
 - June 3 - Public hearing on the budget

7. Community Engagement Update - Chuck Beard

- Chuck Beard provided an update that the AmeriCorps program was abruptly ended and thanked current and past AmeriCorps members for their service.

6. Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity - Commissioner Tre Hardin

- Staff have been meeting with CARE community members.
- Ongoing discussions are happening about community committee structures across departments and Metro.

Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM