

Metro Arts

Commission Board Meeting – Minutes

Thursday, June 26, 2025

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Metro Southeast Building,

Green Hills Conference Room



Commissioners: Campbell West, Heather Lefkowitz, Tim Jester, Jilah Kalil, Dawana Wade, Marya Yu & Ashley Bachelder

Absent: Tre Hardin, Evan Brown, Brittany Cole, Shawn Knight & Janet Kurtz

Metro Arts Staff: Capri Harston, Anne-Leslie Owens, Atilio Murga, Masonya Osei, Chuck Beard, & Vivian Foxx

A. Call to Order, Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Chair West called the meeting to order at 12:37 pm

Attendance Roll Call was completed, and absent commissioners are shown above.

B. Public Comment

- No public Comments

C. Approval of Minutes: May 22, 2025

A motion was made to approve May 22, 2025, minutes by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.

D. Artist Spotlight

Ruben Torres, a local artist who is a Thrive grantee and Lending Library artist, gave an overview of his work and shared several images, a murals titled “We all Belong” and “Turnip Seeds,” a self-portrait, “Mississippi,” “La Danza,” and a series of portraits of women created through his 2024 residency at the Graduate Hotel.

E. Action Items & Discussion

1. Executive Committee – Chair Campbell West

- **Retreat (July 24, 2025):**
 - Retreat + commission meeting scheduled 8:30 am–3:00 pm.

- Location TBD breakfast & lunch provided.
 - Those unable to attend notify Vivian ASAP.
- **Executive Director Search:**
 - Job description and marketing materials are in progress.
 - HR presentation moved to July meeting.
- **ED Performance Review:**
 - Ashley Bachelder's evaluation is in progress and will be shared with Executive Committee in July, then to full Commission.
- **Bylaws Review:**
 - The review process is underway, and draft updates will be reviewed in next meetings.

2. Public Art Committee – Chair Campbell West & Staff

a. Arthur Avenue Public Art MOU – ACTION

Anne-Leslie Owens provided an update about this project, including:

- TDOT license agreement pending Metro Council passage (anticipated July 1).
- Once finalized Metro Arts will then begin painting, electrical, lighting, sidewalk repairs, plaque installation and dedication.
- A draft MOU between Metro Arts and NDOT outlining roles and responsibilities was reviewed and recommended by the Public Art Committee.

A motion was made to approve Arthur Avenue Public Art MOU with Nashville Department of Transportation with authority to delegate final edits to staff and Metro Legal Commissioner Kalil and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

b. Nashville Youth Campus for Empowerment Public Art Project (Lobby)

Atilio Murga provided an update about this project, including:

- Call for artists closed with **143 submissions**, setting a new record for Metro exceeding previous record of 126.
- Candidates came from across the country, but the highest number of submissions by state came from Tennessee, the highest number of submissions from a Metropolitan area was the greater Nashville area, and the highest submission from cities within Tennessee was Nashville.
- Community panelist applications are due **July 7th**. Panelists must reside in Davidson County.

c. Looby Community Center Mural Project

Masonya Osei provided an update, including:

- Mural project with Creative Girls Rock and lead artist Elisheba Mrozik

- The mural is completed and public unveiling and dedication ceremony scheduled on Wednesday, **July 16**, 12:30–2:30 pm.
- Commissioners invited to attend dedication; invitations to follow.

3. Grants & Funding Committee – Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz & Staff

Commission reviewed the FY26 General Operating Support and Thrive Project Grant guidelines and Panelist Criteria for approval.

a. Operating Grant Criteria & Guidelines – ACTION

Ashley Bachelder provided an overview of the proposed criteria and guidelines for FY26 Operating grants, highlighting new or updated components, including:

- Background check period extended from 2 to 5 years for individuals working with minors.
- Category size transition for organizations 10% over the maximum threshold, for which those organizations will be awarded the midpoint grant amount between categories
- Technical review correction period: Applicants will have an opportunity to fix reasons for technical review denials within 3 days to prevent disqualification.
- Grant check-in will be implemented to increase support, monitoring, and relationship building.

A motion was made to approve the Operating Grant FY26 Criteria & Guidelines for recommendation to Metro Councils next meeting for by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.

Motion passed.

b. Thrive Grant Criteria & Guidelines – ACTION

Ashley Bachelder provided an overview of the Thrive criteria and guidelines, highlighting areas that are new or updated, including:

- The creation, installation, and maintenance of public art will not be supported in the FY26 cycle. These proposals will be ineligible.
- Background check requirements within the last 5 years for adults who work with minors.
- Maximum request amount for FY26 is \$15,000.
- Thrive applicants will have the same correction period and grant check in as described for Operating applicants.
- Fiscal sponsors will receive \$750 administrative support as part of the final approved grant amount. This will be on top of the artist's approved budget.
- Organizations may only apply for one grant per cycle (Thrive or Operating).

A motion was made to approve Thrive Grants FY26 Criteria & Guideline for recommendation to Metro Councils next meeting by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Yu.

Motion passed.

c. Grant Panelist Criteria – ACTION

Ashley Bachelder provided an overview of the proposed grant panelist criteria for community members who will apply to score grant applications.

- Applicants must be 18 years of age, residents of Davidson County, have an interest in the arts, a basic understanding of grant making, and must commit to attend orientation and their assigned panel.
- Applicants who are Metro or MNPS employees, elected officials, Commission members, PAC or CARE members are not eligible. Individuals who are seeking grant funding or who have business or family relationships with anyone seeking funding are not eligible.

A motion was made to FY 2026 Grant Panelist Criteria made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner West.

d. Next Steps

Ashley Bachelder provided an updated timeline and tentative dates. The Metro Council will have to approve grant criteria, which is anticipated to be on the agenda July 15, 2025. If approval is obtained, applications will open July 16.

4. Audit & Finance Committee Update – Commissioner Timothy Jester & Interim Executive Director Ashley Bachelder

Commissioner Jester gave a brief update, noting that the Audit & Finance Committee didn't have any new business outside of what was already covered in the Executive Committee. Ashley shared that the audit had recently been reissued, and the focus now is on addressing grant-related recommendations from the audit report, with a target completion date of August 1, 2025. She showed an overview of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are being developed in response to the audit requirements.

.5. Community Engagement Update – Chuck Beard

Chuck recapped recent community events including a Coffee Talk at the 37208 Building in collaboration with MHRC and Urban Housing Solutions.

F. Interim Executive Director's Report – Ashley Bachelder

Ashley provided the following updates:

- **Staffing Updates:** Sydnie Davis is no longer with Metro Arts and Mollie Berliss is temporarily assisting with communications in a part-time capacity. A new Public Information Manager has been selected and is expected to start mid-July.
- **Budget:** The Metro Council passed on the budget on June 17. The department has retained funding for personnel, operations, and grants. \$34,000 has been restored from last year's targeted savings, and \$75,000 is available for rent, if needed, as Metro Arts continues to look for new office space.
- **Staff Training:** All full-time staff completed Metro's two-part Conscious Inclusion training. Additionally, Metro Arts is completing team training with Central HR on stylistic diversity, root cause analysis, and corrective action planning.

G. New Business

- None.

H. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.