

Minutes

Metro Arts Commission Board Meeting

Thursday, October 23, 2025

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Howard Office Building,

Sonny West Auditorium,

700 President Ronald Reagan Way,

Nashville, TN 37210



Commissioners Present:

Tré Hardin (Vice Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Brittany Cole, Camille Greer, Timothy Jester, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Mayra Yu, and Ashley Bachelder (*Interim Executive Director, ex officio*).

Absent Commissioners: Campbell West (Chair), Evan Brown, & Jilah Kalil

Metro Arts Staff Present: Vivian Foxx

Metro Legal: Macy Amos & Kelli Woodward

A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

Vice Chair Hardin called the meeting to order shortly at 12:06 p.m. and confirmed quorum. He introduced new Commissioner Camille Greer, who shared about her background as a nonprofit leader and arts administrator.

B. Public Comment

There were no public comments submitted in advance or in person.

C. Featured Artist: Andrés Bustamante

The featured artist, Andrés Bustamante, a Colombian-born sculptor, Nashville-based public artist, and past and present Thrive awardee shared a presentation titled “*What If?*” exploring the importance of supporting the arts and artists and their vital role in society. He highlighted some of his works, including “Palabras de Esperanza. Words of Hope,” “Rosa Blanca,” “Nosotros Las Semillas,” and “Rio De Curiosidad.”

D. Approval of Minutes: September 25, 2025

A motion was made to approve minutes from September 25, 2025 with listed corrections by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Cole.

Corrections:

- *Commissioner Knight’s vote should be reflected in the roll call vote section and Commissioner Khalil’s vote should be “no.”*
- *Commissioner Wade was also noted as leaving the meeting during the recess (in addition to Commissioner Brown).*

E. Committee Updates

1. Public Art Committee

Atilio Murga provided an update on several ongoing public art projects, including:

- Arthur Avenue Project: Progress continues despite material sourcing delays. Completion is expected to be early 2026.
- Bordeaux Triangle Project: Staff are coordinating with NDOT regarding site needs and timeline. Next steps will be shared after more details are determined.
- NYCE, Lobby Wall Sculpture: Artist William Massey was selected last month. The contract is currently under legal review and staff are working with the artist and stakeholders for community engagement planning.
- NYCE, Empowerment Collection: Staff are preparing the next project to bring in November for 30 wall-hung artworks.
- Strobel House: Artist Omari Booker is moving into fabrication with installation expected Spring 2026.
- Old Hickory Community Center: Installation scheduled December 2025, with dedication tentatively late January 2026.

Commissioner Lefkowitz referenced the Bordeaux community engagement meeting and the possibility of a project budget increase. Staff confirmed budget review will follow site/legislative approvals.

2. Grants & Funding Committee

Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz and Interim Executive Director Ashley Bachelder provided updates from the last Grants Committee meeting. Commissioner Lefkowitz explained that the grants committee is developing a “parking lot” of topics that have been discussed or identified in the last year that need more discussion and attention. The grant committee will use this parking lot to shape discussion at the next meeting. Commissioner Lefkowitz referenced the past “Cultivate” program, available at times in the past for disaster or crisis funding, and noted that she asked staff to explore the feasibility of a similar initiative.

Ashley Bachelder provided an update on the community engagement meetings that staff have held and provided an overview of five years of grant funding, showing the funding trend that has shifted some grant funds from large and midsize organizations to the Thrive program and medium and small organizations. Additionally, Ashley provided a staff report that all grant contracts have been sent for signature to all grantees and that she is preparing to send the first batch of payment requests in coming days.

Commissioner Cole noted the number of organizations that received less funding this year compared to last, and identified an advocacy need to articulate the funding gap to clearly show the need for funding; what is the data that would help answer the question that for a city the size of Nashville, what is the amount of funding needed to support the arts community? Additional conversation included questions about measuring funding impact, programming/community reach, and unmet funding needs.

Ashley provided an update on the Community Arts Leaders of Nashville program, a paid internship program that places students with local arts organizations. Applications are open for undergraduate students and mentors with a November 3rd deadline. Host sites have been conditionally accepted, and student matching will take place in November. Staff anticipate bringing this to Commission for approval in November.

3. Executive Committee

Vice Chair Tré Hardin provided an update from the Executive Committee meeting, at which members reviewed the annual grants report, discussed bylaws revisions (particularly for term limits and committee structures), possible directions for the CARE and Advocacy committees, and a commission retreat in 2026.

F. Chair's Report

Chair West was absent; no report was presented.

G. Executive Director's Report

Interim Executive Director Ashley Bachelder provided an update on behalf of Chair West, reminding Commissioners that the Chair makes committee appointments in November. Any Commissioners who want to share a committee preference can reach out to Ashley. She invited Commissioners to the 1st Annual Thrive Reunion on November 12th at the Parthenon, informed them that Claudia Lawhon has transitioned off the staff and the recruitment and interviewing is ongoing for a Finance Officer, Strategic Grants and Initiatives Manager, and Public Art Manager. The staff has started the organizational alignment process with an outside facilitator. Due to ITS capacity, committee meetings are no longer livestreamed on Metro YouTube, but staff record meetings which can be shared, and are looking into options for posting on the Metro Arts website.

H. New/Old Business

The next meeting date is Thursday, November 20, 2025, due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

I. Adjournment

Vice Chair Hardin adjourned the meeting at 1:26p.m.