

Minutes

Metro Arts Commission

Advocacy & Engagement Committee

February 10, 2026 | 5:30 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

McCabe Park Community Center

101 46th Ave N., Nashville, TN



Committee Members Present: Brittany Cole (Chair), Camille Greer, Tre Hardin, Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director, ex-officio)

Absent: Mayra Yu

Metro Arts Staff: Darius Barati

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Commissioner Cole called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., welcomed attendees, and conducted roll call. A quorum was present.

Chair Cole framed the meeting as a reactivation of the Advocacy & Engagement Committee and emphasized the importance of the committee's work at this pivotal moment for Metro Arts.

B. Public Comment

There were no online or in person public comments.

C. Approval of Minutes

Not applicable.

E. Discussion Items

1. Committee History, Purpose, Scope, and Goals

Director Bachelder provided an overview of the committee's history, noting that the committee was previously named the Advocacy Committee, and we've now changed the name to Advocacy and Engagement Committee. Bachelder explained that the Advocacy Committee has been inactive since 2023. She explained that the committee had traditionally been most active during the city budget setting process. In the past there have been different community-driven advocacy coalitions that mobilized during budget approval process to advocate for more funding for the arts.

Chair Cole shared reflections about her time on the Commission, noting that the committee can be an important body to think about how engagement strategies can be used to continue the work of building and rebuilding trust and strengthening relationships. Discussion focused on how the committee's work should include advocacy that makes the case for funding and long-term investment in the arts plus engagement that is focused on two-way relationship building, acknowledgement of recent challenges, and transparency. Chair Cole shared a draft purpose statement for the Advocacy and Engagement Committee:

The Advocacy & Engagement Committee champions the value of arts and culture in Nashville's civic life by building authentic community relationships, strengthening Metro Arts' public voice, and advancing policy and budget priorities that ensure all Nashvillians have access to a creative life.

The committee had discussion around five draft goals:

- Goal 1: Build the Budget Case
- Goal 2: Rebuild Community Trust Through Authentic Engagement
- Goal 3: Establish Metro Arts as a Cross-Sector Voice
- Goal 4: Amplify Impact Stories
- Goal 5: Strengthen the Advocacy Pipeline

Discussion continued and included ways that staff can bring updates to the committee about ongoing work, about developing ways to centralize information about upcoming events, research that is needed about the arts' economic impact in Nashville, various community-driven advocacy efforts, and public policies that impact artists. Members discussed the importance of pairing quantitative data (economic impact, peer city comparisons, district-level reach) with qualitative storytelling to build a compelling case.

2. Metro Budget Process Overview and Budget Request

Director Bachelder provided an overview of the Metro budget process and the timeline for the FY2027 budget cycle, noting that the mayor's recommended budget will be filed by May 1. Bachelder reviewed the draft budget requests that Metro Arts is requesting, including additional resources for grant panels, increased grant budget, funding to restart restorative arts programming, professional development for staff, and an increase for administrative resources.

Bachelder emphasized that the budget process will move quickly and that this year's requests were developed based on operational needs of the department. The budget requests will be finalized in the coming days and shared at the next Commission and Executive Committee meetings. She noted that existing resources like the Metro Arts 2023 Comparison Study and the AFTA's economic prosperity tool can be shared. Further discussion focused on how the committee and staff can work together to map current relationships, identify additional advocacy partners and work through the structure of the stated goals.

F. New Business

No new business was introduced. Bachelder recapped various resources that staff will prepare and compile for the next committee meeting.

G. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.