

Minutes

Metro Arts Commission

February 18, 2026 | 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Metro Southeast Building

1417 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37217



Commissioners Present: Campbell West (Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Evan Brown, Brittany Cole, Camille Greer, Timothy Jester, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight, Mayra Yu and Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director)

Staff: Capri Harston, Darius Barati, Vivian Foxx

Metro Legal: Macy Amos, Kelly Woodward

A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

Vivian Foxx called roll and confirmed quorum. Chair Campbell West called the meeting to order and read the land acknowledgement.

B. Public Comment

- Jonathan Harwell Dye: Public comment focused on Periscope artist training program, upcoming arts advocacy event, and Artist Thrive Summit

C. Featured Artist: Ashley Smith

Ashley Smith, Director of Comprehensive Care for The Branch of Nashville spoke about the FY26 Thrive funded project titled The Art of Belonging, with lead artist Damián Martínez. The project will transform industrial fencing inside the organization's food pantry area into seven large canvas paintings based on themes of belonging, cultural diversity and expression, civil rights, among other themes. The project is anticipated to be completed in April.

D. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve minutes from December 4, 2025, Specially Called Commission Meeting by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Greer.

E. Action & Discussion Items

1. Executive Committee Report

Chair West reported that the Executive Committee met the previous week focused on the public comment policy updates, the FY27 budget request, and consultant preliminary report. The committee is recommending several updates to the Commission's public comment policy.

Director Bachelder provided a brief overview of the changes that make the recommended policy more accessible, including expanding eligibility from Davidson County residents to Tennessee residents, broadening the eligible content for allowable topics to anything relevant to the Commission's work, and allowing for the submission of online public comments up to two hours before the start of the meeting time.

A motion was made to adopt the revised Arts Commission Comment Policy by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Jester. The motion passed.

Director Bachelder provided an overview of the Commission's FY27 budget modification requests and process. Seven total budget requests included requests for increased and additional grant panels, an increase to the grant budget, support for court-involved youth programming, professional development, administrative support including a language access budget, and rent. The mayor's budget will be released by April 30, and the Council must pass a budget by June 30.

Commissioners asked questions and shared comments regarding language access services, clarity on dates, external engagement in the budget process, and budget advocacy that includes proportional increases in the arts budget compared to the overall budget and comparisons to other city's public funding. Discussion included comments about community advocacy and membership models.

2. Public Art Committee Report

Atilio Murga shared an update about upcoming dates for the NYCE Empowerment Collection, including the final engagement meeting the following day, the March 6th RFP deadline, and anticipated selection panel in the spring.

3. Grants and Funding Committee Report

Commissioner Lefkowitz shared that the Grants and Funding Committee did not meet in February. Director Bachelder announced Jackie Hansom as the new Strategic Grants and Initiatives Manager, who briefly introduced herself. In lieu of having the committee meeting, Director Bachelder shared a brief report on upcoming dates, including current grantee check-in meetings, FY27 panelist guideline approvals in April, grant guideline approval in April, an application period in May-June, and grant approvals in August. Commissioners are welcome to attend a grant check-in meeting to observe.

4. Advocacy & Community Engagement Committee Report

Commissioner Cole reported on the committee's first meeting, where topics included historical context of the committee and discussion of determining the commission's purpose, scope and goals. A draft purpose statement was shared: champions the value of arts and culture in Nashville's civic 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. Potential goals included building the budget case, rebuilding trust, amplifying stories, and strengthening advocacy. This first committee meeting served as a brainstorming meeting. The committee will meet monthly.

F. Chair's Report

Chair West briefly referenced the organizational alignment summary from Cooper Performance Group, sharing that the engagement is completed. Director Bachelder explained that the handout includes a summary of Cooper Performance Group's recommendations, with notes indicating proposed or ongoing next steps for each one. A request was made to bring updated priorities to future meetings.

G. Director's Report

Director Bachelder shared a brief report, noting that the Public Art Manager recruitment is ongoing, Jackie Hansom's onboarding in her new role is ongoing, and a Grant Coordinator recruitment will begin soon. Metro Arts is still looking for a new office location, with some possibilities under discussion.

H. New Business

No new business was shared.

I. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:38 pm.

Certification of approval of the minutes:

The Secretary shall certify the minutes of full Commission meetings. The Secretary shall sign and date full Commission minutes upon affirmative approval by the Commission. If the Secretary is not present at the time of approval, the Vice Chair shall assume this duty.

Certified by:

Heather Lefkowitz

Name



Signature

Date of approval:

March 25, 2026