



San Mateo County Arts Commission

Vacant, 1st District
Robin Rodricks, 2nd District
Sherrill Swan, 3rd District
Karen Chew, 4th District
Lisa Steel, 5th District

County Office Building
455 County Center, 4th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063
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Brenda Bennett, Clerk
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Regular Meeting of the Arts Commission
Wednesday, August 10, 2011
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
455 County Center, Room 401, 4th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Chair Steel called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Karen Chew, Robin Rodricks, Lisa Steel (Chair), Sherrill Swan

Staff Present: Bennett, Lockman

2. Agenda Amendments

Ms. Bennett noted that Youth Commissioner Karen Chee would not be able to attend.

3. Oral Communications

There was none.

4. Consideration of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of June 8, 2011

Commissioner Swan suggested better wording on page 4 for "under budget clouds." Minutes were changed to read: "because of the budget situation."

Commission Action: M/S Chew/Swan to approve as modified.

Motion carried 4-0.

5. Presentation

A. Introduction of Karen Chee, Youth Commissioner – Seren Knoll-Pendleton, Vista

Chair Steel asked Commissioner Rodricks to report on the Youth Commission meet and greet. Commissioner Rodricks said it was a wonderful experience and she had been

very impressed with the youth attending. She said that the Commission had two youth who were interested and Ms. Chee had emphasized how much she wanted to be the Youth Commissioner for the Arts Commission, and she was very please that Ms. Chee was the Commission's Youth Commissioner.

- B. *Speak Peace: American Voices Respond to Vietnamese Children's Paintings:*
Michael
H. Abkin, Ph.D

Mr. Mike Abkin said he was on the Board of Directors for the National Peace Academy and was looking for opportunities and venues to host the exhibit *Speak Peace* on the Peninsula. He said the exhibit featured original poems written by American children, veterans, and established poets in response to Vietnamese children's paintings on peace and war collected over the last 10 years by the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. He said the exhibit, consisting of 34 framed paintings and poems, was touring nationally from September 2010 through September 2013 and was typically displayed for a month at each location. He asked the Commission if they had potential venues and organizations that might be interested in hosting this exhibit.

Chair Steel asked how much the shipping for the exhibit cost. Mr. Abkins said he estimated about \$750 noting that it weighed 190 pounds but it depended on the distance shipped.

Ms. Tolmasoff suggested the San Mateo County Historical Association. Ms. Pisani suggested Notre Dame de Namur Wiegand Gallery. Ms. Tolmasoff said she also had a contact for an ecumenical group and would get that to him. Ms. Pisani suggested the Quaker Museum in San Francisco. Commissioner Chew suggested the County's Office of Education.

Mr. Abkin asked when he pursued the leads if he could say the exhibit had the Commission's endorsement.

Commission Action: M/S Chew/Steel to endorse the traveling exhibit "Speak Peace" for San Mateo County.

Motion carried 4-0.

6. Action Items

- A. Review Creating Arts for Tomorrow Report and Make Determinations and Recommendations on Next Steps

Ms. Pisani said the Commissioners had received three documents representing the CAST group's work over the past year. She said the first was the report on the survey which the Commission had received some time ago. She said the group noted that most of the survey respondents were women and for them that indicated women were the keepers of culture in this County. She said the survey results also reflected socio-

economic status. She said a significant number of women responding lived in households earning more than \$100,000 per year, which said something about the keepers of arts in society as to those who can afford and support art, and can fund museums, events and infrastructure to support art. She said the respondents were primarily Anglo or white yet the County has high percentages of different Asian and Hispanic communities and a percentage of African-American communities in the County that were not well represented. She said generally the survey would roll into the recommendation discussion. She said the other discussion was whether people live or work in communities. She said communities can attract audiences from people who work in their community. She said another issue was the absence of a funding group. She said previously Peninsula Community Foundation had provided a portion of what they funded in the arts but that organization was now merged with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, whose director found germane value in socio-economic issues and identified academics as the driver and did not see arts as the prime point in need of attention. She said funder responses were missing in the survey and so questions were unanswered such as why funders would support or would not support arts, where did they support art, what value did they see in arts in general academics and in the cultural values of the community. She said a study published by the Rand Corporation looked at the value of art in the brain model for learning. She suggested that was an important discussion to stimulate that the arts were brain supporting and an important developmental part of learning, creation and critical thinking.

Ms. Pisani said the CAST members included artist Ray Beldner, former head of the arts department at St. Mary's and an artist and sculptor; Kalamu Chache, who worked for Job Training Works and was a poet very active in East Palo Alto; Steven Hamilton, a board member for Shakespeare in the Parks; Alan Sarver, who set up instrumental music instruction at Carlmont High School and a foundation supporting music in the schools; Commissioner Chew and herself. She said in addition to the survey the CAST members also interviewed individuals. She said one theme that should not be ignored was that people who live in the County go elsewhere for the "where" places of the arts. She said they also complained that there was not much to do in the County in the evenings. She said generally those people also indicated arts were important to people and their relationship to nature and each other. She said parents who have children 7 to 12 years old were donating money to various arts foundations supporting arts in schools. She said one funder who was interviewed said that San Mateo County was not a vibrant area for the arts. She said it was well worth defining what the County has to offer.

Commissioner Chew said she had done other interviews including the Director of the Fair Oaks Community Center. She said the Director told her about a Quetzalcoatl Aztec dance group that was looking for exposure and did not know how to get their availability known by the general populace. She said artists also wanted to connect with each other, with the community and to locate new members for their arts organizations. She said there was a need for a hub of information and resources. She said exposure and resources were what she took away from the interviews.

Ms. Pisani said at the June CAST meeting, the group considered the survey and interviews, and liked the idea of “SMARTS” as the direction of County arts. She said the CAST members thought the County’s role was to lubricate the connections. She said CAST members asked who the “we” in the discussion was and what type of funding were they looking for. She said there were costs underlying public events. She said from these discussions her personal bias was for an arts organization built within the creator, consumer, and funding communities that kept those in balance and free moving. She said the group said leadership was needed for this and the question was how to get that leadership. She said the group visualized the County having individual pearls in the local arts commissions and organizations that want to be independent and how to string those pearls into a necklace with a strong clasp and what was the leadership needed to do that. Commissioner Rodricks asked if it was the County Arts Commission that should take that role. Ms. Pisani said that was a discussion as there were no definitive answers yet on who or what would take that role. She said her bias was that the County Arts Commission was itself only a pearl. She said the ideal organization for the arts in the County would have a short and long term vision and an ability to communicate. She said the previous arts partners were good but limited in connecting with other “pearls.” She said CAST had raised the idea of the County as a connector. She said previously some Arts Commissioners had visited with the Director of the Santa Cruz Arts Coalition, who saw his role as the convener of groups. She said he would invite art groups once a month to meet so that would see what people were doing, where they were finding their audiences, and what was needed in the County. She said more and more organizations started attending the meetings resulting in greater connections and collaboration. She said the question was what people wanted to talk about in the arts. She said the Commission in its efforts to meet with larger and smaller groups had found people wanted funding from the County. She said CAST suggested assessing what was available as far as artists, organizations, consumers, and funders in the County. She said another thing was to identify interests that tie together various groups such as types of art disciplines. She said the group also talked and recommended an interactive website for the arts. She said she believed the County was already invested in Artsopolis and suggested they should further explore that tool and see if it needed tweaking or not.

Ms. Pisani said if the Commission was looking at identifying a group to lead the arts in the County that they needed to find out if there were people/groups to do that and whether there was enough vitality in this county to support the arts in a different way. She said CAST suggested really looking at what was going on in the County, what was here, what was needed and determining if there were people willing to join in and create the mass needed to make things happen. She said she thought the Commission needed to find out what was the base and whether there were people who wanted an organization to support the arts and what did that support mean. She said they really need to find connectors who would fund an organization to get it off the ground and what that would look like. She used Napa as an example of a place where synergy among funders and organizations created a destination place for the arts. Commissioner Chew used the example of RAFT when the Commission has acted as a connector that ultimately resulted in a RAFT satellite in San Mateo County.

Chair Steel asked Commissioner Chew and Ms. Pisani what their preference was – whether to go to a 501.3c or develop an arts website to connect people. Ms. Pisani said the Commission had looked at that creating a 501.3c previously using the Parks Foundation as a model. She said to do that type of organization they had to get people talking. Commissioner Chew said she was willing to give up her position and create a “radical” group offsite noting a group that had done something similarly with parks support.

In response to Commissioner Rodricks’ query, Superintendent Lockman said there had been a group of citizens who were very interested in parks and wanted to fund parks but within the County structure there was not a mechanism to do that. He said this citizens group became the Alternative Funding Committee and identified a vision and goals for the funding of parks. He said one of the ideas they developed was a Parks Foundation and that they sold that concept to the Parks Commission and the Board. He said the Foundation was created and received seed money from the County.

Chair Steel said she thought CAST would have identified options and direction. Superintendent Lockman said there were probably multiple decisions the Commission needed to make. He said the budget had funds to use a consultant to gather information and identify what would best serve the arts in the County. Commissioner Swan said the Commission has had the conversation multiple times about finding funders for the arts, and they had never identified funders, and that had been missing ingredient. She said there was general agreement over the years that a different vehicle was needed to promote arts. Ms. Pisani said the other thing to know was that over time the State stopped putting money into the arts and when she first came on the Commission there was a fairly active arts council ARTShare but over time that ended and then the question was what the Arts Commission should do. Commissioner Rodricks said that the California Arts Council now has funding from license plate revenue.

Commissioner Rodricks said Hewlett has facilitators who will coach people and organizations through transition, and suggested they might be used to help. Ms. Bennett suggested that as part of the process a series of conversations were needed with all of the different organizations and people to identify what the centerpiece for the arts was that individuals/groups might agree to work upon. Commissioner Swan said they needed to find advocates who could provide the juice. Ms. Bennett mentioned that there were potentials for collaboration with Arts Council Silicon Valley. Ms. Pisani said it was important to convene groups across disciplines and find out if they were interested in a county organization to fund raise for the arts.

Chair Steel asked the Commission what the next steps might be. Commissioner Rodricks said she thought it would be helpful if the Commission met every month as they worked through this transition. Ms. Bennett suggested that the Commission could direct staff to draft a request for proposals in conjunction with Rob Lautz of the California Arts Council for consultant services to assist moving the County toward a

designated arts partner. It was the consensus of the Commission that if a special meeting was needed for such purposes that they were in support of doing so. There was discussion that there would be study sessions internally and other activities externally during this process.

Commission Action: M/S Rodricks/Swan to direct staff to schedule a special study session and develop a draft RFP for a consultant to lead and conduct process to transition the County to a designated arts partner.

Motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Swan said she had reservations with this proposal as the Commission had previously done workshops and examined transitions but had not had an action plan.

Superintendent Lockman said the process would define the path to reach an identified goal. Chair Steel suggested the Commission members think about what the next steps were and what they wanted for the arts in the County.

B. Review and Approve Draft Request for Proposal for Part Time Curator

Chair Steel said the draft Request for Proposal (RFP) as written was very intimidating and she thought it asked too much for what was essentially a part-time job. She said she was working with staff to simplify the process. Superintendent Lockman said that it was preferred to have the work done through agreement otherwise the County would have to consider adding an employee position. He said they could make the RFP simpler and get it sent out if the Commission so directed. He suggested that they would also want to create a selection committee.

Commission Action: M/S Rodricks/Swan to direct staff to finalize the RFP, have Commissioners Chew and Swan review, and send out the RFP.

Motion carried 4-0.

C. Review and Approve Support Letter for San Carlos Children's Theater Grant Application to the National Endowment of the Arts for Funding for After School Classes for Performing Arts

Chair Steel recognized Ms. Shelley Welch of the San Carlos Children's Theater. Ms. Welch said she was on the Board of the San Carlos Children's Theater (SCCT) and they were seeking a support letter from the Commission for a grant proposal they would make to National Endowment for the Arts to support a collaboration between SCCT and one or more elementary schools in Redwood City for an afterschool performing arts program including producing a show.

Commission Action: M/S Swan/Chew for the Arts Commission to provide a support letter for the San Carlos Children's Theater's grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts for an afterschool performing arts program in collaboration with Redwood City schools.

Motion carried 4-0.

7. Staff and Commission Reports

Chair Steel said she would like Commissioners to submit member project proposals by the October meeting. Superintendent Lockman suggested that the Commission might consider what the costs of hiring a consultant for the transition project might be and whether to hold some of the funds for members' projects as a buffer to add to what was already budgeted if needed. He said regarding the member projects that the Commission would want to have criteria on how recipients would receive funds, how the opportunities were advertised and how proposals were reviewed. He said before any decision was made on members' projects that the Commission should have criteria and process on how proposals were received and evaluated. Chair Steel said there was a mission statement for the members' projects which was general and open to allow flexibility.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.