

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, 1 East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on Wednesday, August 8, 2007.

Members Present:

John Hohmann
Hector Benitez
Douglas Brimhall
Amanda Buscas
Crista Cloutier

Peter Cook
Daniel J. Harper
Kent Layton
Andrea Soto
Ramona Tecumseh

Members Absent:

Lennee Eller

Staff Present:

Rob Schultz
Tom Wilson
Jean Kaminski

Johann Zietsman
Sunnee Spencer

Dr. John Hohmann, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. John Hohmann, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of June 13. There being none, Peter Cook made a motion, Hector Benitez seconded, and the June 13 minutes were approved and posted on the Web page.

Introduction of New Board Member, Dr. Kent Layton – Dr. John Hohmann

Dr. John Hohmann, Chair, reported that Board member Lennee Eller has resigned. Ms. Eller stated in her resignation letter, "duties at work continue to limit the meetings that I am able to attend during work day hours."

Dr. Kent Layton is a physician and practices emergency medicine. He has been a long-time supporter of the arts and was a member of the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board serving his last term four years ago. Currently, he is President of the Board for Ballet Etudes and a member of the Mesa Arts Center Foundation Board. He is happy to be back on the Board, and stated that if he is absent at some meetings it is due to a hospital emergency.

Discuss and Take Action – Election of Chair – Dr. John Hohmann

Peter Cook nominated Dr. John Hohmann. Dr. Hohmann declined the nomination. Peter Cook nominated Daniel Harper. Daniel Harper declined, as he will be out of town in September and October and feels he cannot accept the nomination knowing that he will be absent at the next two meetings. Dr. Hohmann nominated Peter Cook, current Vice-Chair. Peter Cook expressed concern due to traveling and a potential conflict, as he is associated with the Downtown Merchant's Association. In that light, he accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dr. Hohmann asked for a vote, and all Board members present unanimously voted Peter Cook as the Chair for FY07-08.

Discuss and Take Action – Election of Vice-Chair – Dr. John Hohmann

Dr. John Hohmann, Chair, nominated Daniel Harper. Daniel Harper accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dr. Hohmann asked for a vote and all Board members present unanimously voted Daniel Harper as the Vice-Chair for FY07-08.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- Attendance for FY06-07 was 65,790 versus 70,546 in FY05-06. In spite of the budget cuts, revenue in FY06-07 was \$216,816 versus \$182,007 in FY05-06, due to an increase in admission fees in 2006.
- "TOYS" opened on Friday, August 3, with 200 attending – ArtVille re-opened with changes; staff received permission to do a room in the Performing Live area of ArtVille like the bedroom in the storybook "Goodnight Moon."
- The Gallery Shop is in the midst of renovation, moving closer to the entrance of the galleries rather than back in the corner. Once completed, the old Gallery Shop will become a "family zone" and "community resource," which will allow for classes such as parenting classes, safety classes, etc.
- Lindsay Hochhalter has been hired as the Development Assistant; funded by the Piper Trust grant.
- Rhonda Simms has been hired as an Office Assistant II and will begin on August 20.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- Thank you to the Board for their support in the name change from Mesa Southwest Museum to Arizona Museum of Natural History. Council passed the name change on July 9, to be effective October 1. The Department has been using the new name internally and Museum staff is working on a logo and what needs to be accomplished over the next month-and-a-half strategically, tactically, and developmentally. Staff is looking at questions such as "what can we do better than anybody else." The Museum has been dedicated to natural history for several years, but changing the name offers new opportunities of how all things within the institution are handled. The name change also opens up new opportunities for collaboration with such institutions as Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, The Grand Canyon Association, The Audubon Society, etc. and offers an opportunity for a state-wide footprint and presence.

- Attendance is down from the previous year. The Museum saw 131,220 in FY05-06 versus 107,676 in FY06-07. The difference is attributed to cutting nine hours of being open to the public in conjunction with budget cuts as well as having to close the Sistine House and stop the free Sunday program. Nevertheless, revenue was \$349,264 in FY05-06 versus \$427,792 in FY06-07, attributed to the new rates that were approved in April 2006. Looking forward from July 1, 2007, the Museum expects to see improved attendance and revenue in FY07-08.
- Upcoming exhibitions are looking good for increasing attendance and revenue. Opening October 6 is "Hohokam: Ancient Monuments of the Salt River Valley," with an opening reception in conjunction with celebrating the name change; following will be "Feathered Dinosaurs," which will open March 1 and run for five months; and following that, in collaboration with Arizona State University, NASA, and the University of Arizona, will be a major show on Mars.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- Johann Zietsman, new Executive Director as of June 25, was introduced. Mr. Zietsman, Mr. Rob Schultz, and Dr. John Hohmann, Chair, met earlier in the week to discuss the Board in general and get a sense of where the Board sees its main mandate and challenges for the future. Some issues discussed were maintaining a "squeak list" (things that are in the background, but need to remain in the forefront and not lost by default, i.e., Public Art Program and Arts and Cultural Grants). Even though these items have been de-funded from the City's budget due to financial restraints, the Arts and Cultural Department does not want to see these programs permanently removed from the budget. He further stated that if there would be a policy change to the existence of such programs, the Board and staff would want to be a part of that discussion before anything final was decided. Mr. Zietsman stated that the City has the makings and beginnings of a strong plant that can execute artistic and cultural activities, but the danger is that these elements stand alone and have to operate in a vacuum rather than operate in the context of a holistic arts and cultural policy, which would include such elements as a strong Public Art and Grants Program. Staff is broadening their mandate and beginning to articulate and frame what being the Arts and Cultural Department for the City means apart from simply operating three facilities. He strongly believes we can do more for the City of Mesa; that is the priority. One other burning issue is diversity, which needs to be present at all levels; not just ethnic diversity, but gender, economic, and all other aspects of what that means. There are citizens we are not reaching. We are striving to be a reflection of what the community wants, and will look to the community to guide, challenge, and stimulate us to find ways to develop vibrant arts and cultural facilities and programs.

Peter Cook stated that a third area of concentration would be to not let the current Museum budget levels become the status quo. The issue needs to be kept in the forefront and considered as a contingency operation with the view of restoring most of their budgets, if not all, in whatever time frame possible. He stated that the Board along with police and fire needs to continue to advocate and educate citizens on the fact that the City cannot continue as a viable operation by saving money on a pittance property tax, and the Board needs to do what they can to maintain that focus. He also suggested that the Board might revisit re-activating the Diversity sub-committee.

Crista Cloutier commented that the public needs to be educated on the benefits that a Public Art Program and a Arts and Cultural Grants have in a community.

Dr. Kent Layton expressed the importance of maintaining a budget line for Public Art and Arts and Cultural Grants on the City's budget each year, even though they have no funding at this time. He stated that one function of the Board could be to show the public how the world could exist through arts and culture by creating an arts vision for Mesa. Dr. Layton also suggested that a partnership with local media would be advantageous. It was also mentioned that candidates for City of Mesa public office should be asked about their position on funding for arts and culture.

Dr. Hohmann requested that a "Discuss and Take Action" item be included on the September agenda, which would be to write a formal letter from the Board to the Mayor and City Council reiterating the Board's strong commitment to seeing the Public Art Program and the Arts and Cultural Grants Program refunded, and to ensure that these programs are not eliminated without including staff and the Board in that discussion.

- Mesa Community College (MCC) classes begin on Saturday, August 18, and community ed classes begin on Monday, September 10.
- Staff is finalizing the agreement with MCC for FY07-08. It has been agreed to in principal and is with MCC's legal department at this time; classes are moving forward. Staff has met with Gateway Community College representatives who have expressed their interest in offering classes at Mesa Arts Center in the spring, as is Chandler-Gilbert Community College. It will be to Mesa Arts Center's advantage to have three partnerships in place next year when negotiating terms for use of Mesa Arts Center classroom spaces.

Dr. Kent Layton stated his 23 year-old son took a jewelry class last year and was so impressed that he is strongly considering metal-smithing as a career. Mesa Arts Center's Jewelry Studio has the best metal-smithing shop in the Southwest.

Daniel Harper asked how the Intergenerational classes (10 – adult) are handled, are they offered through MCC or Mesa Arts Center? Mr. Schultz replied that they are offered by Mesa Arts Center and have proved to be popular because of the interaction between children and adults.

- Performing Live season opens with "A Conversation with Cheech Marin" on September 13, in the style of "Inside the Actors Studio." Other performers coming to Mesa Arts Center are: Trisha Yearwood, September 28; Jewel, November 14; and Brian Setzer, December 13 and 14.
- Also on September 14, Mesa Contemporary Arts opens "Papel Chicano: Works on Paper from the Collection of Cheech Marin," one of the finest collections of Hispanic Latino artwork in the country. This is the most significant exhibit Mesa Contemporary Arts has had to date. Also opening that evening are: "Mysterium Fidei: the Art of Daniel Martin Diaz;" "Beyond the Cel: Influences of Animation on Contemporary Art," and "Cel Mates." Channel 3 will be on campus that morning and marketing is working on getting other media coverage.
- November 17, from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Mesa Arts Center presents the Holiday Arts and Music Festival, which will include artist, entertainment, and food and beverage booths. Between 6,000 and 7,000 patrons are expected. The evening will close with a performance by Queen Latifah in the Ikeda Theater at 7:00 p.m.
- Mesa Arts Center finished in the black for FY06-07.
- Mesa Arts Center is grateful to the volunteers whose number of contributed hours exceeded 50,000 last fiscal year. At a national value of \$18.77/hr, that represents a \$950,000 savings to the City. On Thursday, August 9, the tour guides will be formerly honored and recognized at a luncheon.

Crista Cloutier asked if Mesa Arts Center has considered closing Main Street for the Arts Festival. Mr. Schultz replied not this year, but if there were a large interest from artists, closing Center Street would be considered next year. The plan is to have 40 booths, which will include an information booth that would provide information about the Museums as well as other arts and cultural affiliates in Mesa.

She also asked if it were permissible to distribute a questionnaire asking if and how a patron supports the arts and to encourage them to be more pro-active. Mr. Schultz responded that City staff could provide factual information and encourage citizens to contact their Council representatives to have a dialogue regarding an issue; however, City staff is not allowed to advocate or influence citizens one way or another. If the Arts and Cultural non-profit organizations want to poll citizens, and/or those running for election, to gather factual information and distribute that information, that is within their premise.

Dr. Kent Layton suggested that Box Office offer a coupon during the Arts Festival if purchasing tickets that day to a performance/event of the season; or, have a visible presence such as a billboard or a poster listing upcoming performances/events at Mesa Arts Center to encourage ticket sales while here. Mr. Schultz said he would convey the idea to event staff.

Ramona Tecumseh asked if Tom Verploegen of the Mesa Downtown Association was aware of the Arts Festival and if the merchants were involved in some way. Mr. Schultz said he would make sure that the Mesa Downtown Association is aware and inquire whether the downtown merchants might assist in advertising the event in their stores.

Update Events – Board Members

Crista Cloutier announced that she would be moving to the south of France. She has resigned from the Board, and this would be her last meeting.

Johan Zietsman had a copy of the Herb Paine study on operating models for arts and cultural facilities sent to the Board to familiarize themselves with the study. The study does not make a recommendation for a specific model, but presents other options that can be explored.

Dr. John Hohmann stated that he has enjoyed serving as Chair this past year and will serve as a member as best he can during his final year with the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johann Zietsman
Arts and Cultural Department