

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 February 13, 2008.

Members Present:

Hector P. Benitez
Douglas Brimhall
Amanda Buscas
Peter G. Cook

Daniel (DJ) Harper
Lars Nielson, Jr.
Andrea Soto

Members Absent:

John Hohmann
Kent Layton
Ramona Tecumseh

Staff Present:

Johann Zietsman
Tom Wilson
Rob Schultz
Sunnee Spencer
Jean Kaminski

Peter Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of December 12. DJ Harper noted that under "Report on Conferences . . ." the word "play" should have been "plays." With that correction noted, DJ Harper made a motion, Hector Benitez seconded, and all Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of December 12, 2007. The minutes are posted on the City's Webpage.

Items from Citizens Present:

There were no citizens present.

Discuss and Take Action – Consider Approval of Proposed Fees and Charges for Mesa Arts Center, Arizona Museum of Natural History, Arizona Museum for Youth – Rob Schultz

Rob Schultz reviewed the Board Report and noted that the major changes involve changing specific fees to ranges. For "Art Studios," the current range is \$40 - \$126; however, the \$40 does not include the fee for an instructor to be present when a Studio is being rented, which is required. The request for Art Studios is to change the range from \$40 - \$126 to \$65.02 - \$126.00, which includes the current instructor fee of \$25.02 per hour. Under "Performing Live & Rentals," staff is recommending that the first and second year fees be removed from the books, as they are no longer pertinent. For FY07-08, staff is recommending the year range be eliminated allowing the current fees to remain in place until it is necessary to change them.

DJ Harper commented that although he understands the necessity to request a range of fees and the need for flexibility when having "blockbuster" exhibits, he hopes that Mesa Arts Center's original goal of keeping fees at an affordable rate for the community remain a priority when looking to change fees. Mr. Schultz replied that it is always foremost in the minds of those making those decisions.

Peter Cook commented that at the Arts and Cultural Mayoral Forum Rex Griswold had a great idea when he suggested that Arizona Museum of Natural History consider renting a room that they have for receptions, banquets, etc., to increase revenue. Arts and Cultural facilities continue to look at ways of increasing revenue.

Daniel (DJ) Harper made a motion, Doug Brimhall seconded, and all Board Members present unanimously approved the recommended fee changes move forward to Council for approval.

Discussion and Information – Presentation of City's Arts and Cultural Vision – Johann Zietsman

Johann Zietsman shared a Power Point Presentation that was developed by management of the Arts and Cultural Department titled "Imagining the future." The Presentation covers four major points: Background (the footprint), 06/07 in Context (the challenge), 2006/2007 (looking back), and Job One (priorities & vision).

Background (the footprint): Who we are – Mesa Arts Center, Arizona Museum for Youth, Arizona Museum of Natural History.

Review 2006/2007 (the challenge – looking back): Budget cuts – reduction in hours and staff at the Museums, critical environment, first full year for Mesa Arts Center, and 100% cost recovery requirement for Mesa Arts Center. In spite of all that, total attendance for the three Arts and Cultural facilities had only an 8 percent (%) decrease in attendance; exceeded budget targets; increased efficiencies; increased earned revenue over 2005/2006 by 3%, in short, we did more with less, which is a short term solution.

Job One (priorities): increase **social capital** – service, awareness, identity, and affinity; **leadership** – within all communities, ambassadors, articulate shared vision; **impact** – short term, measurable; and **manage** – relationships, budget, and programs.

The next slides clarify the vision: **Towards a Vision** – a point in time (bold vision, reinvigorate); ambition (redefining Mesa – 2025 vision); renaissance (things **are** happening); possibilities (our vision = our future); identify (regional distinction); and momentum (follow the dream).

Our Role – culture (who we are, how we live); arts (how we express ourselves); mirror and window (reflect and reveal); energize dialogue (what/who is Mesa?); and build and serve communities. It is our role to energize dialogue and explore community differences, similarities, challenges, etc.

Value (what we offer) – safe environment; creative opportunities for family interaction, learning and enjoyment; breadth of assessable and diverse culture experiences; sense of place, pride, and shared memories; excellent and relevant programs; opportunities to co-create the value/moment; and economic development opportunities.

Mission (what drives us) – to build better communities – enhance the quality of life *one person at a time*; to be accessible platforms for diverse community engagement and exchange – *breathe together*; to embrace, affirm, celebrate all diversities; and to increase inter-cultural understanding; to encourage self-inquiry, expression, and generosity; and to discover and develop creative potential.

Vision (our quest) – engage. entertain. educate. *everybody!*

Peter Cook commented that until a person tries, you might never know what your skills/capabilities are. Exposure to the arts lends to creating those possibilities.

Mr. Zietsman replied that a lot of people discover a latent talent through exposure to the arts. This has proven to be true, especially with at risk kids. Involvement in the arts has helped to unlock those talents and build confidence and self-esteem as children begin to believe in their own potential.

Sunnee Spencer noted that the Arizona Museum for Youth is working in collaboration with the Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development in Phoenix, who works with homeless and at risk youth. Damian Charette, artist, works with these kids and created one-of-a-kind monotype prints, which the Arizona Museum for Youth exhibited and sold some of the pieces. Arizona Museum for Youth has an on-going relationship with Tumbleweed.

The Arizona Museum of Natural History received a grant from *The Arizona Republic*, which allowed the Museum to bring at risk youth to the Museum, that ran for several years. Dr. Wilson hopes to find funding to restore that program in the near future.

DJ Harper inquired if the City provides any funding for at risk youth programs. The answer was, no, the funds are grant driven. Mr. Harper expressed concern that there is no City support for these programs.

Mr. Cook suggested that Mr. Zietsman's presentation be made available to the citizens of Mesa. Mr. Zietsman replied that he did not feel the presentation itself would motivate citizens to come and check out what we have to offer, but in the way we begin to express these values by doing more and more activities (as we can afford them) for the public will create a "buzz," which will bring attention to downtown and entice activity among merchants and patrons.

Hector Benitez noted that communication is important and there is a need to target the community through modern means. Laws now prohibit sending information through kids in the schools. He suggested using technology available today, i.e., YouTube, text messaging, etc.

Mr. Zietsman said, "Never underestimate the power of positive advocacy" and stressed the need to continue to spread the word. Arts and Cultural management staff are beginning to do more personal appearances speaking within the community.

Peter Cook, Chair, asked to have the item put on next month's agenda for further discussion.

Discussion and Information – Letter Sent to the Mayor and City Council – Peter Cook

Peter Cook, Chair, asked if anyone had heard anything from the Mayor or City Council regarding the letter sent in January. The letter was a request to retain money in the current budget for Arts and Cultural Community Aid Grants and Public Art Program – ". . . the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board recommends that these programs be retained as active accounts. Specifically, we suggest that each of these items (Arts and Cultural Community Aid Grants and Public Art Program) be funded to a level of at least \$10,000 (ten thousand dollars) per fiscal year. Our goal is that the City would restore these two items to their previous levels as soon as funding permits."

No Board members present, including staff, have heard anything from the Mayor or Council.

Mr. Cook reported that the 501(c)(3) organizations within the Arts and Cultural Department are discussing forming an Endowment Committee. He suggested that possibly, as part of this committee's work, they could raise funds specifically to fill the gap between what they can afford to pay for rent and the cost of renting at Mesa Arts Center, which would help where the City has cut off funds to local arts organizations. Some organizations have been forced to stay dark due to lack of funds to present their programming, or forced back to using local school gyms and auditoriums.

Johann Zietsman stated that those associated with the arts need to continue to advocate and remind the public that the Mesa Arts Center's original purpose was to build a resource for local arts organizations to present their programming and grow their organizations.

DJ Harper made two points: 1) that not only the original Mesa Affiliates, but arts organizations such as Xicanindio Artes, Inc., the Mesa Historical Museum, and new affiliates that may arise within the community, also have access to assistance for their programming even though they do not rent from Mesa Arts Center; and 2) he took offense when some spokesperson said something to the effect that Tempe Arts Center, *unlike the Mesa Arts Center*, was designed for and geared toward the community.

Mr. Zietsman reported that as of yesterday, February 12, the Mesa Arts Center was given confirmation and approval from the City Attorney and the City Auditor that the current mandates we operate under do allow us to revise our contractual relationship with our founding affiliates, which is what he had requested. The current relationship with the Affiliates is as renters at a preferential rate that assumes they will have the minimal financial achievement to afford rent at Mesa Arts Center; however, reality has shown that is not always the case. Even though it is not Mesa Arts Center's responsibility to make sure they are financially successful, the least we can do is to help them in any way we can so they do not disappear in Mesa. The goal is to move toward a co-production type model where we share the risk with the affiliate.

Mr. Cook requested that the item remain on the agenda for several months to see if anyone has any feedback to report.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- The Henson exhibit has doubled regular attendance, currently at 70 – 72 per hour. Membership has increased since the exhibit opened as well as the word spreading regarding the existence of Arizona Museum for Youth.
- The gala was a huge success with representatives from the Smithsonian who later sent a letter of praise about the Museum.
- "The Berenstain Bears Out West" opens on February 12 with an opening reception for guests and members on Friday, February 8, from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- Following "The Berenstain Bears" will be "Table Manners."
- Michelle Balani, Community Arts Coordinator, resigned and is moving to Texas leaving the marketing position at the Museum vacant.
- The Education Curator position has been filled. Laura Matzer is coming from Microsoft in Washington. She begins March 17.
- A new member of the Arizona Museum for Youth Friends Board is Bert Millet, a transactional lawyer, who will assist with writing by-laws, etc. Steven Stone has stepped down for personal reasons. The Board is moving forward with the Strategic Plan – Anita Durel is coming for Phase II, the fundraising aspect.
- As part of the Museum's continuing to brand themselves, the Friends Board just adopted a new mission statement: "the Arizona Museum for Youth inspires children of all ages to view the world differently through art creativity and imagination."

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- Dr. Wilson passed a copy of the new Mesa book, which was created in collaboration with the Mesa Historical Museum to help build the history of Mesa and what it is like to be from and live in Mesa. The book is available at the Museum Store, The Store at Mesa Arts Center, Lenhart's Hardware Store, commercial bookstores, and other stores around town.
- The Museum is about to launch their new Website: www.azmnh.org.
- A copy of the latest Southwest Quest, the Museum's publication, was distributed.
- The Museum participated in the February 2nd Friday Night Out event in downtown Mesa, with 375 patrons – that is with no advertising in the local papers. The Museum feels they can build momentum with the Friday night out events and bring more people to the Museum at night.
- The Museum's Grand Canyon Grandeur exhibit opened at the Museum of Northern Arizona last Friday, February 8, which brings revenue to the Museum along with advertising their name.
- "Feathered Dinosaurs" opens February 28. This will be the next "blockbuster" for the Museum since "Sue."

- The Museum is fairly sure they have found a dinosaur in southeast Arizona. Staff is not sure what type of dinosaur it is yet, but it is estimated to be 95 million years old. It was brought to the Museum's attention by federal authorities. Bob McCord, the Museum's paleontologist, and his team are going next week to look at the find.
- The Museum held one of the Mayoral Forum's at the Museum on January 30, which brought new people into the Museum.
- Tomorrow, February 14, is Statehood Day. The Museum and the Museum Association of Arizona are participating in several festivities being held at the state capital. At 9:00 a.m., Dr. Wilson, as president of the Museum Association of Arizona, and Roger Lidman, Chairman of Arizona Humanities Council, will be leading a conversation on advocacy looking particularly at federal and state issues; at 10:00 a.m., 35 museums from around Arizona will have tables on the senate lawn with activity regarding senators and representatives in the state; and around noon the Governor will be presenting a number of awards and recognizing the Museum, along with other venues, as sponsors of the event.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- The annual Volunteer Appreciation Event will take place on March 24. This is a formal event with refreshments and entertainment. 350 Volunteers are expected to attend; their value is immeasurable and this is our chance to recognize them.
- The Museum of Natural History will hold their volunteer luncheon next Saturday, February 23.
- The Volunteer tour guides were recently treated to a tour of the Tempe Center for the Arts in appreciation for what they do. Staff received positive comments on how much it meant to them to be recognized.
- There are two open positions in the marketing area at Mesa Arts Center and one at Arizona Museum for Youth. Mesa Arts Center is in final negotiations for the Marketing/Communications Coordinator position. Staff will then take a look again at the applications for the Coordinator position to see if there may be interest from those candidates in one of the other two positions. If there is no interest, then we go back to HR to advertise for the positions. These positions have been exempted from the hiring freeze, as they are essential to the success of the Department.
- Mesa Contemporary Arts had an opening reception for the "29th Annual Contemporary Crafts" and Jessica Calderwood's "Sensual Surfaces" exhibits on January 25 with close to 500 in attendance.
- Staff is currently meeting with Mesa Community College to discuss extending the collaboration agreement to offer for-credit classes at Mesa Arts Center for FY08-09.
- A skilled volunteer, Ann Rosenberg, is undertaking a project to create the first annual Mesa Arts Center report. She worked with Nielson Company in New York for nearly 14 years.

DJ Harper commented that he noticed that the upcoming Stageworks play, "Holes" opening February 29, is going to be in the Piper Repertory Theater rather than the smaller Nesbitt/Elliott Playhouse where they are usually held. Mr. Schultz replied that this is an effort to grow the program. Sales to-date are going well and there is strong interest in the final show for the season, "Ferdinand the Bull" opening April 18. Stageworks is doing four plays this season, which is a change from the normal three.

Director's Report – Johann Zietsman

Johann Zietsman reported on the challenges the City had to address to adjust the FY0-8-09 budget to stay in line with potential projections. Each Department was given a directive to reduce their budgets by a specific amount. Mr. Zietsman reported that it has been a positive exercise for Arts and Culture for a number of reasons: 1) Arts and Culture had great performance by the three institutions this past year, which allowed us to begin budget discussions from a stronger position; and 2) based on the positive performance of the Arts and Cultural Department, there is now a sense of flexibility with City Management and the Finance Department. We have been given permission to claim some additional revenue earnings over and above budget. In the past, if your earnings are over projections, the money is put back into the general fund. There is enough of a sense of confidence, because of budget performance, that Arts and Culture can reach budget goals and stay on track; this has allowed us to build a budget adjustment plan that does not only focus on cutting.

Discuss and Provide Direction – Look at Future Meeting Dates to Identify Dates When Members May Not Be Able to Be Present – Peter Cook

Peter Cook, Chair, had to leave before the meeting adjourned. Daniel (DJ) Harper, Vice-Chair, addressed the remaining items. Peter Cook did state before he left that he will not be attending the April 9 or October 8 meetings.

Amanda Buscus said she would not be able to attend the May 14 meeting.

With no problems in scheduling for next month, Mr. Harper said the March meeting would proceed as planned. If anyone has a reason why they cannot attend, let either Jean Kaminski or Peter Cook know.

Report on Conferences and/or Meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information Only

Doug Brimhall discovered all the films that Jim Henson did – he learned something attending the exhibit.

DJ Harper reported that he attended Southwest Shakespeare's Macbeth and enjoyed it thoroughly.

He saw Mesa Encore Theater's "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" – very cute and fun!

He attended National Geographic Live with Wade Davis – incredibly informative. Mr. Harper stated that he works in technology and always thought it takes away people's culture, but Wade David opened his eyes to the fact that it does not. People around the world are better connected with their cultures through technology and it can be a tool to help preserve culture. Technology in itself is not anti-culture.

Johann Zietsman stated that tonight's National Geographic Live, the last in a series of four performances, has double the bookings of the first one in the series. Mr. Harper asked if they are returning next year. Mr. Zietsman replied that they are and will include Robert Ballard, the Titanic man.

Mr. Harper also attended the "Jim Henson" exhibit at Arizona Museum for Youth with a mother and her child. The child loved it, mom loved it even more as did he. They also walked to the Arizona Museum of Natural History that evening and the child lost her shoe on the mountain. He was impressed at how helpful and kind the security guard was to help retrieve the shoe and commended Dr. Wilson on his staff.

Doug Brimhall attended "Defending the Caveman" and found it funny and informative!

Amanda Buscas thanked Johann Zietsman for his wonderful presentation at the Arts Congress on Monday, March 4; "you got the crowd going."

Identify Items for Future Agendas

- Continue visioning discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johann Zietsman, Director
Arts and Cultural Department