

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on April 8, 2009.

Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall	Kent Layton
Amanda Buscas	Rebecca Nolan
Peter G. Cook	Andrea Soto
Daniel (DJ) Harper	Ramona Tecumseh

Members Absent:

Hector P. Benitez
Lars Nielson, Jr.

Staff Present:

Johann Zietsman	Sunnee Spencer
Rob Schultz	Tom Wilson
Beth Bartholow	Jean Kaminski

Guests Present:

Kari Kent	Mike James
Lisa Procknow	Marc Soronson
	Bert Millett

Peter Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of February 11. There being none, Ramona Tecumseh made a motion, Douglas Brimhall seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of February 11. They are posted on the City's Web page.

Items from Citizens Present:

There were no items from citizens.

Introduction of New MAC Marketing/Communications Specialist II Staff Member, John Alecca – Rob Schultz

Rob Schultz introduced John Alecca. John has been working since Monday, April 6, at Mesa Arts Center as the second member of the marketing team. John will be responsible for the advertising portion of marketing as well as assisting Sarah Moran in the promotion of programs at Mesa Arts Center and the Museums. John previously worked with Blue Man Group in Las Vegas before relocating back to Arizona. John is excited to be working for such a "jewel;" he said he has seen many arts centers around the country, but never anything like Mesa Arts Center.

Discuss and Take Action – Consider Recommending Transportation's Proposal to Council Regarding the High Capacity Transit Study for Central Mesa – Jodi Sorrell

Marc Soronson presented an update Power Point on the High Capacity Transit Study for Central Mesa. Some of the slides included: a map of the corridors; community feedback and objectives that concluded that Light Rail would better serve the East Valley with an extension to east Gilbert Road; improved LINK Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service to match Light Rail frequencies; improved and expanded bus services to connect with Light Rail; better transit service to ASU Polytechnic Campus/Gateway; promote economic development by connecting Mesa residents and employment to other regional centers; and promote integration of Light Rail and land use planning to support sustainability and livable community initiatives.

The question was asked how Mesa merchants feel about Light Rail coming down Main Street. Peter Cook spoke as a downtown merchant and said that initially there were many merchants who opposed the Main Street construction, but since they have seen the new Light Rail in action, almost 100% of the merchants now embrace the Light Rail efforts and the rail coming down Main Street.

In the proposal, Light Rail is scheduled to be completed to Mesa Drive by 2015; the Gilbert Road expansion would be completed at a later date.

Mr. Soronson continued his presentation with slides that showed project funding sources; 53% from Federal Transit Administration funds and 47% from the Regional Public Transportation fund (provided by Proposition 400 approved in the 2004 election), with a total budget of \$194M (a 2008 dollar figure). The project follows the Federal process which takes time (can take 10 – 12 years from start to finish and requires four major approvals by FTA).

Also included in the presentation were slides comparing Light Rail to Bus Rapid Transit (Light Rail being the preference), as well as the tier 2 evaluation criteria, downtown Mesa evaluation criteria, preliminary alignment recommendation, preliminary ridership forecasts, capital cost estimates, end-of-line evaluation, potential construction schedule, and the next steps which include; presenting the proposal to City Council in May and to the METRO Board of Directors and MAG Regional Council in the summer of '09; initiate federal environmental documentation; creating a downtown Mesa stakeholder group; working with stakeholders to define criteria for downtown urban design elements; and initiating preliminary engineering.

After discussion, Daniel (DJ) Harper made a motion to concur with the Central Mesa Corridor Study that recommends Light Rail technology; using Main Street as the alignment corridor – continuing with Light Rail to Mesa Drive by 2015 and considering continuing Light Rail to Gilbert Road in Phase II; continuing LINK BRT service to Power Road/ASU Gateway; and to continue to advance transit supportive land use policies and initiatives in Mesa. Douglas Brimhall seconded, and the Board members present unanimously voted that they concur with the studies recommendations.

Information and Discussion – Update on the State of Arizona Museum for Youth – Bert Millett

Bert Millett, Arizona Museum for Youth Friends Board member, presented a Power Point on Arizona Museum for Youth's (AMY) relationship with the Friends Board. In 1978, Arizona Museum for Youth, Inc. was founded and operated with financial support from the City of Mesa and private individuals for nine years. In 1987, The City of Mesa acquired the assets of AMY and entered into a public/private partnership agreement with the Arizona Museum for Youth Friends, a 501(c)(3) support organization of the Museum.

The role of the City in the partnership is to: operate and manage the Museum in such a manner as to maintain the Museum's community reputation as a first-rate educational facility for children; hire employees to operate and staff the Museum; continue financial support for the Museum at or above the current operating budget; and consult with the Friends in all material decisions affecting the Museum, including the annual budget.

The role of the Friends in the partnership is to: advise the City in the operation and management of the Museum; raise private funds to generate revenue to be donated to the Museum for exhibits and enhancements.

In FY05-06, the City faced the beginning of the budget crisis and the Museum's budget was cut by 50% that included losing 50% of Museum staff. This left a tremendous void in maintaining the high standards and quality of exhibits and service the public came to know at the Museum. The Friends had a decision to make, either fill that financial void, or let the Museum go to an unacceptable level of operation. The Friends stepped up and decided they would help to fill the void with the hope that in a year or two they would go back to the original intent of the agreement, which is to raise funds to be donated for exhibitions and enhancements for the Museum. To-date, the budget has not recovered. The economy has gotten worse and the Museum was again directed to reduce their budget by 30%. The FY05-06 crisis created an unsustainable model for Friends – their reserves have been depleted. Museum Friends continue to strive to look for creative and supportive ways to assist in funding and keeping the Museum operating at the same high standard of operation, but would like to return to their original purpose as stated in the agreement.

Dealing with the current budget crisis and looking forward, the Museum has developed a strategic plan that includes hosting an annual gala (this year's event to be on April 25); complete the current staff commitment with terms extended; build an endowment; fundraising for growth; fundraising for special exhibits; and community advocating.

Some of the future exhibitions include: "Every Bead Tells A Story: Christy Puetz and Beads of Courage" (opening April 9 – August 9); "Monsters, Freaks & Creeps!" (June 19 – September 27); and coming in the fall "Pattern Wizardry" and "Under Contract." Planned for October 2010, NASA/Art: 50 Years of Exploration" and the blockbuster "The Art of the Warner Brothers Cartoons."

The Museum is developed a base of partners that include: Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development, Mesa United Way Family Fun Van, Beads of Courage®, Mesa Public Schools, Phoenix Zoo, Desert Botanical Gardens, AmeriCorps VISTA, Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture, Girl Scouts – Arizona Cactus-Pine Council, Inc., City of Mesa Libraries and Solid Waste, Arizona Commission on the Arts, and Arizona State University.

In closing, Sunnee Spencer, the Museum's Administrator, stated that the Arizona Museum for Youth is invaluable in teaching children multiple solutions and possibility thinking within complex problems, the ability to make critical judgments, to express the unsaid, stimulate achievement in other subjects and self confidence, have an experience unavailable from other sources, celebrating/understanding diversity in a global society, work ethics/values for future careers, and replaces the gap left from school program cuts.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- Sunnee Spencer attended the National Council on Aging Conference along with Ubuntu volunteers Karen Sherman and Vicki Bundy in Las Vegas – a great experience to see how other organizations utilize the skills of the 55 and older volunteers.
- Opening May 1 is "Little Lands in Fiber." Denise Currier will work with Arizona kids in learning and creating an art piece using fiber. The art will be displayed at the May 1 opening. There will be 20 selected, juried pieces that will be framed and presented as an award to the artist.

- Art Zone recently opened and has been a hit! Staff continues to develop new activities for that area.
- The Museum has received a lot of media coverage: Channel 3 "Are You My Family" segment; Channel 15 (twice) on Sonoran Living; Channel 12, Arizona Midday Show; *East Valley Tribune* – a "Monsters vs. Aliens" promo where kids draw their favorite monster or alien, submit to the Museum, and have a chance to win movie passes to the premiere. The drawings will be on display throughout the "My Favorite Monster" exhibition in May; *Kids Celebrate Magazine* featuring the Museum on the cover and a two-page spread inside; and *Trends Magazine* will be coming to the AMYable Affair Gala.
- Submitted a grant proposal to Mesa United Way in support of the "First Things First" project.
- A flyer on the Museum's summer Public Programs was distributed.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- Mesa Grande has been designated as a Centennial 2012 Legacy Project of the state of Arizona by the Arizona Historical Advisory Commission.
- Staff continues working on refurbishing the long-term exhibitions. Just re-opened the No-Sweat Mine and the History Courtyard.
- Attendance remains steady; total for this year to-date is 139,000. In March, the Museum saw 13,127 with revenue of over \$64,000 at the gate.
- The April free Sunday saw 2,296 visitors with 1,572 in March.
- Staff took a trip to Northern Arizona University to receive collections that the University donated to the Museum for the permanent collection.
- Dr. Robert McCord, Curator of Paleontology, has taken office as the new President of the Arizona and Nevada Academy of Arts and Sciences; a prestigious honor for him and the Museum.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- The City of Mesa and Mesa Arts Center has been working with the Phoenix Office of Arts and Cultural and Tempe Center for the Arts. The three organizations are funding a brochure/guide that highlights the arts and cultural facilities at the Light Rail stations. The plan is to print a half-million of the guides. The organizations met recently to select a graphic designer, discuss things to include in the brochure, etc. The project is hoped to be completed by the first of June.

Douglas Brimhall asked if Public Art would be included in the brochure. Mr. Schultz said that Public Art already has a separate brochure.

- Mesa Contemporary Arts (MCA) is hosting an opening reception Friday evening, April 10, for the Sergei Isupov and "The Trouble with Boys and Girls" exhibitions. NCECA, a major conference in ceramic education, began in Phoenix today, Wednesday, April 8. MCA is set to receive bus and van loads of attendees, as MCA is on the conference list of designated places to see good exhibitions of ceramic artwork. Approximately 6,000 attend the conference. The Store has also been advertised at the conference along with MCA. Sergei Isupov is a nationally known Russian ceramic artist who held workshops at MAC on April 6 and 7 with approximately 65 in attendance. This is his first major exhibition outside of Russia.
- Stageworks opened their final play of the season "The Emperor's New Clothes" on Friday, April 3, at the Herberger Theater in Phoenix running through April 11 and then back to MAC on April 17 running through May 3.
- MAC hosted the annual volunteer appreciation event with approximately 250 volunteers attending. Currently, MAC has approximately 700 volunteers who give of their time with a dollar value of approximately \$900,000. Last year, volunteer hours were equivalent to approximately 22 full time employees.
- Vilocity is the vendor who has been selected and approved by the City Manager to create the new MAC Website. MAC has entered into the formal process of reviewing basic strategy, goals, and what and how we want the site to operate. The process will take approximately four – five months with the hope of having the new Website fully up and operational by the beginning of the fall season in early September.

Director's Report – Johann Zietsman

Johann explained how the "Shop Mesa" "Mesa Bucks" initiative will work. The basic idea is that patrons bring their Mesa receipts to the Box Office and receive "Mesa Bucks" for the value of the sales tax. They can use their "Mesa Bucks" to purchase a second ticket to a show or admission to one of the Museums; basically a buy one, get one free with "Mesa Bucks" concept. The purpose of the initiative is to encourage people to shop in Mesa. The initiative is hoped to be launched around the first of July.

In terms of the Arts and Cultural budget, City cuts have been implemented and that work is done; however, the biggest challenge for arts and culture are the rolling public cuts. It is difficult to project public activity in purchasing tickets and/or admission. The Arizona Museum of Natural History has appeared to find the right formula; patrons feel they are getting good value for their money; however, the Arizona Museum for Youth and Mesa Arts Center continue to struggle to meet the year-

end projected budget goals. Mr. Zietsman said that staff knew early on that Mesa Arts Center couldn't cut any deeper without losing additional staff so they were forced to use some of the budget reserves. He continued to say that we will get through this, but with less money in reserve to rely on in future years. Staff has a short-term plan to deal with the situation with the hope things will be better next year.

Classes are doing better this year than last. Randy Vogel is adding some summer shows this year and education is bringing back the summer kids camps creating a product that staff feels is needed at this time. With finances being as they are, more people will do less traveling this summer and this is an affordable outlet for kids to have some fun and give parents a break during the summer months.

The National Association of State Arts Agencies met in Scottsdale. Dennis Kavanaugh, who is a member, had them spend one day in Mesa. They arrived early morning, spent the day meeting and lunching on our campus, had dinner on the rooftop of the Arizona Museum of Natural History, and ended the day with a performance in the Ikeda Theater. There were representatives from approximately 42 - 43 of the states attending the meeting – Johann received cards from at least 41 of those who attended saying how much they appreciated the hospitality of Mesa Arts Center and how much they loved Mesa and what the City of Mesa is doing for the community – we now have an advocate in most of the United States!

MACFest is winding down – last day is May 30. The committee is beginning to analyze survey feedback and will meet in mid-May to discuss season two. Currently, roughly 800 – 1,000 people pass the Information Booth each Saturday. Accumulatively, approximately 1,065 spaces have been rented to-date.

Mr. Zietsman attending the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Board meeting in Washington a week ago and heard that Mesa's arts and cultural issues are the same throughout the country. One of the benefits of sitting on this Board is to work with other arts leaders and hear how they deal with specific issues. One initiative the Kennedy Center in NY has implemented is called "Arts in Crisis," which has a number of mentors throughout the country, so, when someone is having a specific problem, they can be linked with a mentor who has experienced a similar problem and can receive the valuable advice of that mentor for free; a creative way of dealing with today's issues.

Daniel (DJ) Harper asked if the Arizona Museum of Natural History weathering the storm successfully is because of their name change. Dr. Wilson replied that he believes the name change is a factor, but admitted that he is not sure why they have continued to be successful, there haven't been any recent blockbuster exhibits, but he feels that refurbishing their permanent exhibitions and making them more interesting has helped to give the Museum a new look. He agreed with Mr. Zietsman's statement that visitors feel they are receiving good value for their money. Dr. Wilson stated that the Museum is looking forward to Light Rail coming to downtown Mesa, which they anticipate will increase the number of visitors at the Museum.

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

Daniel (DJ) Harper reported that he attending the hilariously funny Southwest Shakespeare play "Tartuffe."

Mr. Zietsman encouraged the Board to see the world-class Sergei Isupov exhibition at MCA – a must see, one you won't want to miss.

Ramona Tecumseh distributed a rack card on the PBS series "We Shall Remain" "America through Native Eyes," beginning Monday, April 13, and continuing every Monday through May 11.

Identify Items for Future Agendas

There were no items identified.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johann Zietsman, Director
Arts and Cultural Department