

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 May 9, 2007.

Members Present:

Peter Cook
Amanda Buscas
Crista Cloutier

Daniel Harper
Ramona Tecumseh

Members Absent:

Hector Benitez
John Hohmann
Doug Brimhall
Lennee Eller
Andrea Soto
Laurent Teichman

Staff Present:

Rob Schultz
Sunnee Spencer
Tom Wilson
Nancy Wolter
Jean Kaminski

Peter Cook, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Vice-Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of March 14. There was not a quorum present to approve the March 11 minutes. Vote is tabled until the June 13 meeting.

Peter Cook, Vice-chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of April 11. Daniel Harper requested that under "Information and Discussion – Continue to Develop Work Program and Finalize Strategies," number five be reworded to read, "and electronic media, such as blogs, regarding cultural experiences in Mesa." There was not a quorum present to approve the April 11 minutes. Vote is tabled until the June 13 meeting.

The change to the April 11 minutes was made and posted on the Web page.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Information and Discussion – Continue to Develop Work Program and Finalize Strategies – Nancy Wolter

Daniel Harper suggested that the development of strategies for the FY07-08 Work Plan be tabled until more Board members are present. All Board members present agreed. Nancy Wolter further suggested that the Board might wait until the new Executive Director, Johann Zietsman, is able to participate in July.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- The City's Planning Department hosted a luncheon in the Museum's atrium for Administrative Professionals Day. Of the 24 people who attended the luncheon, one had been to the Museum previously. Attendants were impressed by the Museum.
- "Youth at Risk: Tumbleweed Printmaking Project" opened on April 21. The exhibit is the first to open in the new South Gallery.
- On April 5, the "Discovering Nature's Alphabet" exhibit was featured on Good Morning Arizona, Channel 3. Reporter Kim Martinez did a great job of highlighting the exhibit. Discovering Nature's Alphabet book is on sale in the Gallery Shop and is selling well.
- Curator Jeff Morris completed a two-year calendar of upcoming exhibits. Coming this summer is, "Faces of Art," a mask exhibit featuring masks by Zarco Guerrero and other artists. Following the masks exhibit will be an exhibit on toys.
- Shelly White and Michelle Balani represented the Museum at the Dia de los Ninos event in Phoenix.
- Michelle Balani presented her marketing plan to the Smithsonian Institute for the Henson exhibit, which has been given the stamp of approval. Museum staff is working on acquiring sponsors for the exhibit.
- Sunnee Spencer gave a presentation, with Dr. Tom Wilson, at the Museum Association of Arizona on their collaborative effort due to City-wide budget cuts. The Museum is working with Mesa Community College (MCC) to investigate the possibility of having ArtVille as an art-teaching lab.
- Attendance at the Museum is down from last year at this time due to hosting an outreach event last year. Due to reduced staffing, the Museum was not able to host the event this year. However, revenue is up from last year at this time due to increased admission fees.
- Sunnee Spencer travels to Chicago to give a presentation at the Association of Children's Museums conference and will stay a few days to attend the American Association of Museums conference being held there as well.

Mesa Southwest Museum – Tom Wilson

- A copy of the mural of a rhynchotherium, a distinct elephant that roamed Arizona approximately 2.4 million years ago that hangs at the Mesa Southwest Museum, was passed for viewing. The Museum has acquired the skull, which arrived today, May 9, from Safford, with the collaboration of the Bureau of Land Management. The skull weighed approximately 1200 lbs. The Museum now has a complete skeleton of the rhynchotherium. A distinct feature of the rhynchotherium is its four tusks, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower jaw. Dr. Bob McCord believes it is the best rhynchotherium skeleton in the world.
- The Grand Canyon Grandeur catalogue will go to press tomorrow, May 10. Mesa Southwest Museum Foundation and the Museum Guild have collaborated on funding the catalogue.
- The next issue of *Southwest Qwest* will go to print next week.
- Rebecca Akins, former employee of Arizona Museum for Youth, has written an informative, narrative history of the Museum Association of Arizona titled, *Serving, Sharing, Saving, the First Twenty Five Years of the Museum Association of Arizona*. Ms. Akins was a former president of the association as was Rob Schultz. Dr. Wilson is the current president. This is the first publication of its kind in the United States. Mr. Schultz added that it is an enjoyable, easy read, and it is a highlight for the state association.
- "The Grand Canyon" exhibition has traveled to Prescott, opening at Charlotte Hall Museum on May 18. Later, it will travel to the Museum of Northern Arizona. Mobilizing the exhibition is the main reason the Museum published the catalogue. The Museum will receive a modest rental fee on the exhibit.
- The "Southwest Art" exhibit will remain at the Museum for another month. Following, "Your Healer Within" opens June 22 in the Museum's new gallery.
- In March, Daniel Harper commented that Councilmember Rex Griswold had told him that Mesa Southwest Museum was thinking of changing their name to the Arizona Museum of Natural History, and wondered if that were true. Dr. Wilson replied that he had mentioned that to Councilmember Griswold. The local newspaper heard of this and printed an article providing contact information for the public to express their opinion. Dr. Wilson reported that all responses have been positive and favorable, and the Mesa Southwest Museum Foundation has gone on record as being in favor. The next step is to continue gathering public opinion on the issue. On May 18, the Museum, founded in 1977, is celebrating their 30th birthday. The public is invited to the celebration, and as part of the celebration, the Museum will ask for input on the issue of changing their name. After compiling public input, the Museum will write a report that will go before the Museum and Council Advisory Board. Following approval of the Board, a report will go to Council for approval. Dr. Wilson has contacted the Corporation Commission and asked to reserve the name in hopes all will go through. Dr. Wilson thanked Daniel Harper for bringing the issue to the forefront.

Daniel Harper asked why the Mesa Southwest Museum was not involved in the excavating of the camel fossil found in late April. Dr. Wilson explained that when the bone was found, it was thought to be a human bone. The owner of the nursery who discovered the bone, who is a paleontologist on the side, called the Mesa Southwest Museum. Dr. Jerry Howard went to investigate and identified the findings as a pre-historic camel. Dr. Howard returned to the Mesa Southwest Museum. In the meantime, the owner contacted a friend of his from ASU's Paleontology Department. When Dr. Howard returned to the site, the ASU paleontologist had already begun to excavate the fossil. Dr. Wilson stated that the Museum was "annoyed" to say the least. The fossil would get much greater public exposure at Mesa Southwest Museum, and the Museum would research the fossil and have it written up in the scholarly domain. Supporters of the Mesa Southwest Museum are writing letters to ASU's School of Geology expressing their displeasure in the way this was handled.

Mr. Harper asked if it would be wise to have the City put a clause in future planning and zoning permits stating that any remains found would be excavated solely by Mesa Southwest Museum? Dr. Wilson replied that there have been negotiations over time with Planning and Zoning. The Mesa Southwest Museum has tried to ensure that planning and zoning permits contain language that deals with archeological and paleontological findings. Dr. Wilson stated that when there are such findings and the Museum is notified, it becomes top priority at the Museum.

Peter Cook, Vice-Chair, said that the Board would welcome direction from staff if there is anything they could do to help ensure future excavations for the Mesa Southwest Museum.

Interim Director's Report – Rob Schultz

Mesa Contemporary Arts has reached an agreement with Cheech Marin to bring selections from his collection to the Mesa Arts Center beginning September 15. Other activities are being planned while he is here, i.e., Performing Live will look at having him do a performance in the theater that evening, book signing, etc.

Mesa Arts Center hosted the second annual Volunteer Appreciation event. Approximately 225 volunteers attended and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. Food and entertainment were provided as well as awards handed out.

Development has received a \$20,000 grant from Salt River Project to continue offering free admission to Mesa Contemporary Arts on Thursdays. Nancy Wolter reported that the Mesa Arts Center also received an \$11,000 grant for the summer youth programming from a collaboration of three or four funding organizations that usually don't fund the arts; however, they are interested in funding programs that keep children active during the summer.

Volunteer program had over slightly over 400 volunteers donate approximately 7,000 hours for a total savings to the City of \$132,00 in April.

Negotiations continue with Mesa Community College to offer for-credit and non-credit arts classes for next year. No news to report at this time.

From the Performing Live area, Childsplay performed a Cajun version of "Red Riding Hood;" Theater League's "Cats" began on Monday and concludes Thursday, May 10; Steven Wright performs in the Ikeda on Sunday; Buddy Guy will performs on May 20; and Lindsey Buckingham performs on June 8.

Stageworks has completed their third play of the season. Several performances remain from Stageworks' performing troupes – Off Center Dance performs Friday, May 11, and Off the Cuff performs on Friday, May 18.

Sound In The Ground is Thursday, May 17, with its usual mix of interesting fair and attractions.

Mesa holds the "Second Friday" event this Friday, May 11. Mesa Contemporary Arts is hosting an open public reception that evening, as well as the Off Center Dance performance in the theater.

Peter Cook asked about the fire alarm that sounded during the last 10 minutes of Manheim Steamroller's performance last Friday, May 4. Rob Schultz stated that an alarm malfunctioned; there was no actual fire. Why the alarm went off is still being investigated. Staff is using the opportunity to review evacuation procedures. A letter was sent to thank volunteer staff for their assistance in evacuating the public. Another letter went to patrons offering a 50% discount on a single ticket purchase for next season. Randy Vogel will be sending a follow up letter to identify which performances will be included in the 50% offer.

Update Events – Board Members

Daniel Harper attended several performances in the theaters last month; "The Last Five Years," which he saw twice and found totally enjoyable; Stageworks' "Little Red Riding Hood," which he said was well done and thoroughly enjoyed; and Southwest Shakespeare's "Cyrano" performance, which he called "fabulous." Mr. Harper encouraged everyone to purchase their next season tickets and take in next week's Sound In The Ground event on Thursday night.

Ramona Tecumseh also saw "Cyrano" and said it brought tears. She also attended Sonoran Desert Chorales' most recent performance and said it was "wonderful."

Crista Cloutier reported that she attended a meeting with the Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture (MPAC), along with Dr. Tom Wilson, Sunnee Spencer, and Nancy Wolter. MPAC is meeting with arts organizations in the Valley to work on a proposal for a state sales tax to support the arts.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Schultz, Interim Director
Arts and Cultural Department