

## 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 November 29, 2007.

### Members Present:

Peter Cook  
Hector Benitez  
Amanda Buscas  
Daniel (DJ) Harper

John Hohmann  
Lars Nielson  
Andrea Soto

### Members Absent:

Douglas Brimhall  
Kent Layton  
Ramona Tecumseh

### Staff Present:

Johann Zietsman Rob Schultz  
Tom Wilson Jean Kaminski

Peter Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m.

### Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of October 10. There being none, Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, made a motion, Hector Benitez seconded, and all Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of October 10. The approved minutes will be posted on the City's Web page for Board and Committees.

### Items from Citizens Present

There were no citizens present.

### Hear a Presentation and Take Action – Finalize a Letter to the Mayor and City Council Regarding City Budget Items – Peter Cook

Due to the lack of a quorum on November 14, the Board was not able to address this issue; however, there was a reporter present who inquired about the letter after the meeting was cancelled. Peter Cook, Chair, shared the letter with the reporter. The reporter wrote an article referring to the letter, which unfortunately was not approved to forward to the Mayor and Council until the rescheduled meeting of November 29. Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, made a motion to accept the drafted letter with the discussed amendments, John Hohmann seconded, and all Board members present unanimously approved the following letter to be forwarded to Mayor Hawker and the City Council:

*The recent budget reductions have had a significant impact in areas that are within the purview of the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board. We refer in particular to the Arts and Cultural Community Aid Grants and the Public Art Program, which have been reduced to zero funding.*

*Both programs have made a significant contribution to the Quality of Life in Mesa. The Arts and Cultural Community Aid Grants support a variety of Mesa organizations whose activities enrich the life of the community. The Public Art Program has funded projects that add visual appeal to a wide variety of locations in Mesa.*

*These programs support and nurture a crucial level of community activity, which in turn enrich the context within which the three City institutions operate (Mesa Arts Center, Arizona Museum of Natural History, and Arizona Museum for Youth). The current situation has already had the impact on some community arts organizations of forcing them to move to other cities. Although they had been in place for many years, several years of no funding could well lead to the state of affairs where they are no longer considered a normal part of the City's budget.*

*In order to prevent those circumstances, the Museum and Cultural Advisory Board recommends that they 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, as soon as funding permits, to their previous levels.*

### Hear a Presentation and Discuss – Rental Fees for Local Arts Organizations – Johann Zietsman

At the October Board meeting, Carmen de Novais-Guerrero and Zarco Guerrero were present to speak of the hardships small, local arts organizations have to meet the rental fees at Mesa Arts Center. Part of this hardship is due to cutting grant funding from the City's budget and part is due to the directive from City Council for Mesa Arts Center to have 100% cost recovery, which made it necessary to raise rental fees. Ms. De Novais-Guerrero asked for a response from staff. In that vein, Johann Zietsman, Arts and Cultural Director, drafted the following document.

*As an arts center built on community foundations, the Mesa Arts Center's Mission articulates (among other values) our commitment to offer engaging arts experiences that are accessible*

*and relevant. This accessibility extends to audiences, artists, students and community groups. Our level of accessibility is influenced by a number of factors: some within our control, and some outside of our control. A primary factor is the level to which we are able to offer access to our services and facilities at publicly subsidized rates and fees. Our "Rates and Charges" are determined annually by Mesa City Council, and are influenced by economic and political realities at the time. Given the recent challenges of the City's budget, a new requirement was imposed on the Mesa Arts Center to recover 100% of direct costs related to the majority of our previously subsidized services, leading to higher fees.*

*At the same time, the Community Aid Grants Program of the City was de-funded, cutting public funding to all community groups associated with the Mesa Arts Center, and reducing their ability to afford our new (higher) fees.*

*We share the community's concern about this unfortunate set of circumstances, since it has a number of dramatic and negative impacts:*

- 1 Community groups, who form the backbone of Mesa's arts activities, face serious sustainability challenges;*
- 2 The absence of a healthy and vibrant community-based arts scene will result in the Mesa Arts Center having to operate in a vacuum;*
- 3 Higher fees will reduce community access, and will increase the perception that the Center has become exclusive and inaccessible to the very community that funded and supported its construction.*

*We hope the economic environment will improve in order to reverse this destructive trend.*

In closing, Mr. Zietsman stated that it is the intent of the Mesa Arts Center to be as accessible as possible within reality. A copy of the above document will be sent to Ms. de Novais-Guerrero. Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, commented that the Board would also be able to use this information as a helpful tool when speaking with the public.

## **Staff Reports**

### Arizona Museum for Youth – Rob Schultz and Johann Zietsman in Sunnee Spencer's Absence

- The "TOYS" exhibit has been de-installed and staff is working on installation of the "Henson" exhibit, which opens December 15 through March 9. This is the first time that the Museum has had to deal with timed admissions. Staff has the logistics worked out and are accepting reservations for admission. Guest lectures and tours are planned, which will create renewed interest throughout the length of the exhibit.
- In December, the Arizona Museum for Youth Friends Board will host "An AMYable Affair," the Museum's inaugural gala to celebrate the opening of "Jim Henson's Fantastic World." Tickets are \$125 per person or \$1,000 per table, with proceeds supporting the exhibition and programs. Guests at the event will be the first to tour the exhibition before it opens to the public. The evening features entertainment, a live and silent auction, and dinner. For more information, contact Lindsay Hochhalter at 644-5664.

### Arizona Museum of Natural History – Dr. Tom Wilson

- Signs with the Museum's new name are in place on the building. Staff continues to work on updating the Website, brochure, etc. Attendance has been up since the name change and revenue above projections.
- Contracted to have "Feathered Dinosaurs" exhibit for March 2008, which is a hot topic at the moment; it is well accepted in the scientific community that birds are descendents of dinosaurs. The original contract was for five months; however, because of the complications in scheduling on the lending institution's side, the Museum is able to have the exhibit for a total of seven months at a three-month fee.
- In archeological news, the City has asked the Museum to conduct the archeological investigation in regard to Riverview Park and the Waveyard project. The agreement with the Museum is a contingency; the City reimburses the Museum for any direct costs involved in the project, i.e., non-City staff (specialists), tools, etc.
- Mesa Grande: The Salt River Maricopa Indian Community extended a \$150,000 grant to the Museum. The first phase of that project will begin with a digital survey of the property to begin the first of next week.

Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, asked what has happened to the exhibit at the Banner Mesa Hospital. Dr. Wilson replied that the Museum has recovered the exhibit materials and a good portion of it is incorporated with the "Hohokam" exhibit. Once that exhibit closes, the plan is to use most of the items from the Banner exhibit to refurbish the Museum's Southwest Hall, which is one of the oldest halls in the Museum and in need of updating.

Amanda asked if the book on the History of Mesa is being published. Dr. Wilson responded, "Yes, Arcadia Press is publishing the book on the 'History of Mesa'" from the exhibit that started at Arizona Museum of Natural History and is now a permanent exhibit at Mesa Historical Museum. The book is 120 pages and photo heavy. It is at press now; Amazon.com is taking orders for the book and it should be available to the public around the first of March. The Mesa Historical Museum and the Arizona Museum of Natural History will share royalties from book sales.

### Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- The Store at Mesa Arts Center is collaborating with the gift stores at the Arizona Museum for Youth and the Arizona Museum of Natural History for a holiday sale on Saturday, December 8. Members of any of the three organizations will enjoy an additional 10 percent (%) discount at any of the stores.
- The Holiday Art and Music Festival was a great success. Feedback from the artists, volunteers, and patrons has been positive. Approximately 7,000 – 10,000 attended, which is 2,000 more than last year. Raising booth fees helped to increase revenues. Wrap-up continues with a staff meeting planned for next week to evaluate and discuss next year. Mr. Schultz commented that this year's event was at maximum capacity for the number of booths in the Shadow Walk. Staff will look at alternatives for expanded growth.
- Stageworks opens their second play of the season, "Cinderella The World's Favorite Fairy Tale," this Friday, November 30, and will play for three weekends closing on Sunday, December 16. Advance tickets sales are good; some shows have sold out.
- The next "Sound In The Ground" event is scheduled for Thursday, December 6, from 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Food, entertainment, and refreshments will be provided. Tickets are \$6.
- Staff met with Assistant City Manager Debbi Dollar and Deputy City Manager Kari Kent regarding the Falcon Gateway Public Art sculpture donation. In October, the Board recommended that City Council accept the donation of the art pieces. The City Manager would prefer that City Council hold off on the Board's recommendation and make that review part of the City's budget process to include a discussion on potential maintenance costs related to the sculptures.

### **Director's Report – Johann Zietsman**

Despite the "doom and gloom" financial message from the general economy, Arts and Cultural activities are doing well. The Museums are seeing greater numbers in both attendance and revenue; Arizona Museum for Youth gift shop, Arizona Museum of Natural History gift shop, and The Store at Mesa Arts Center are seeing higher revenue numbers; Mesa Arts Center's "The Day of the Dead" and "The Holiday Art and Music Festival" have seen record attendance and revenue numbers; Mesa Contemporary Arts continues to break records for attendance and for the first time has had sales from an exhibit; and Mesa Arts Center is meeting most internal goals. Box Office sales have slowed a bit and challenges remain, but the pool of support for arts and culture in Mesa is growing. With less negative press and recognizing opportunities to explain what Mesa Arts Center does and who Mesa Arts Center is has contributed to this upswing.

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

Peter Cook, Chair, reported that he and his wife Susan attended Southwest Shakespeare's Christmas show that traces Christmas throughout history from Dickens to Shakespeare, etc, and found the program outstanding and would recommend as a must see.

Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, reported that he saw the following shows at Mesa Arts Center. Symphony of the Southwest's "Shimmel Winners Shine Again" on November 10; Southwest Shakespeare's "taming of the Shrew," (best acted Shakespeare he has ever seen); Stageworks' "La Ofrenda" (best work seen to date from Stageworks in the new Mesa Arts Center – pleased to see programming targeted toward an audience not often reached – hope to see that kind of quality and diversity continue along with the well known, popular programming); Mesa Encore Theater's "Cabaret" (loved it); and thoroughly enjoyed the Holiday Art and Music Festival where he spent lots of cash. Mr. Harper stated he is looking forward to "Cinderella" (Stageworks) and the upcoming "Sound In The Ground." Prior to the meeting, he did his holiday shopping at the Box Office!

Peter Cook, Chair, noted the difficulty in gathering a quorum for the Board meetings in the past several months. He asked each Board member to respond verbally or via e-mail to Jean Kaminski at 644-6607 or [jean.Kaminski@cityofmesa.org](mailto:jean.Kaminski@cityofmesa.org) whether they will be attending or not attending each month, noting that it is a waste of people's time to be present if the Board is not going to be able to meet. The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 12, 3:30 p.m. Board members are asked to bring their calendar with them to the meeting to look at future meetings and determine if a quorum is expected.

Daniel Harper, Vice-Chair, asked Jean Kaminski to send a reminder each month of the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johann Zietsman, Director  
Arts and Cultural Department