

## 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 February 11, 2009.

### Members Present:

Hector P. Benitez  
Douglas Brimhall  
Peter G. Cook

Daniel (DJ) Harper  
Ramona Tecumseh

### Members Absent:

Dr. Kent Layton  
Amanda Buscas  
Lars Nielson, Jr.  
Andrea Soto

### Staff Present:

Johann Zietsman  
Sunnee Spencer  
Jean Kaminski

Rob Schultz  
Tom Wilson

### Member Present via Phone:

Rebecca Nolan

### Guests Present:

Vic Linhoff  
Lisa Anderson

Peter Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

### Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of December 10, 2008. Douglas Brimhall noted a spelling error to be corrected. Daniel (DJ) Harper made a motion to approve, Douglas Brimhall seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of December 10 and will be posted on the City's Website.

**Public Comments:** There were no citizens present.

### Discuss and Take Action: Consider Approval of Fees and Charges for Rentals at Mesa Arts Center and Mesa Contemporary Arts and Admission Fees for Arizona Museum for Youth – Johann Zietsman and Sunnee Spencer

Johann Zietsman reported that as part of re-visioning for budget purposes, staff was looking at areas where revenue could be increased – Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH) had already gone through this process.

After looking at other like venues, Arizona Museum for Youth (AMY) found that by modestly increasing admission fees, AMY would still be in line with other venues. AMY is proposing a \$1 increase in admission fees for non-members (from \$5.50 to \$6.50); admission for members and those under one-year of age will continue to be free.

Daniel (DJ) Harper asked what the Phoenix Children's Museum is charging. Sunnee Spencer replied \$9 for non-members; admission for members and those under one-year of age is free.

Daniel (DJ) Harper said that, in his opinion, AMY is worth every penny of the admission fee because of its quality exhibits and programming for children, but worries that we are setting a high threshold for admission. He further stated that he understands why it is necessary, but is sorry the Museum is in a position to have to again increase their fees. Sunnee Spencer commented that with the new Art Zone and renovations, she feels the public will perceive the Museum as a good value for the cost of admission. Mr. Harper stated, "It is already worth the value!"

Mesa Arts Center (MAC) hired a temporary assistant for the Event Services Coordinator with the intent that the assistant would bring in more rentals and cover her salary; her work has more than covered her salary. After looking at like venues, MAC found they are able to increase rental fees and still charge less or equal to other competitive venues. Therefore, MAC is proposing a small increase in rental fees. This increase would not be imposed on the local Affiliate groups.

Staff identified several spaces that could be rented for dinners, special events, weddings, etc., at the three Arts and Cultural facilities, which included MCA. Mesa Contemporary Arts (MCA) has never charged a rental fee. Event Services will handle the rentals for the three facilities.

Peter Cook, Chair, asked how much the MCA would be used. Mr. Zietsman responded that it has had limited use to-date other than exhibition space, but could be made available for corporate dinners, special gatherings, etc. In the past, the courtyard space and lecture hall was used mainly for free events. Mr. Cook also commented that on the positive side, making the spaces available for rent could expose people who have never been on our campuses before.

Mr. Cook also commended staff on their efforts in brainstorming ways to increase revenue.

Douglas Brimhall asked how it would work to rent space in the MCA galleries with exhibits. Mr. Zietsman said that if a patron is willing to pay to have their event in a gallery space, we will make it work; however, it does have to be in conjunction with

the current exhibit and we would have to look at how easily that exhibit can be maneuvered within the space for that particular event.

Ramona Tecumseh said that she agrees with Mr. Zietsman that we need to maximize the use of spaces available; as Mesa Arts Center is paid for, we need to do the best we can to keep staff and market what we have, commented Ms. Tecumseh.

Peter Cook, Chair, asked if a renter had to have certain qualifications or meet criteria in order to rent a space at one of the three facilities. Mr. Zietsman replied, "Yes, each client would be considered on a case-by-case basis."

Future plans are to create a rental flyer identifying the facilities available for rent, which would be distributed around the downtown area – Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, etc.

Dr. Tom Wilson reported that the Arizona Museum of Natural History has already rented one of their spaces since staff had identified rental areas.

Ramona Tecumseh made a motion that the proposed fees and charges be approved to move forward to City Council, Daniel (DJ) Harper seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the proposed fees and charges.

### **Information – Mesa Historical Museum Overview – Vic Linhoff**

Vic Linhoff is the President and CEO of the Mesa Historical Society and the current Chair. Mr. Linhoff reviewed a Power Point Presentation on how the Historical Museum got here and where it is going. He first reviewed the history of the Museum which included some of the following: beginning in 1947 noted Mesa archeologist Frank Midvale first discussed preserving Mesa's archeological history and creating a museum; 1973 - City of Mesa contributes \$50,000 towards Park of the Canals loan repayment; 1975 - City of Mesa gives MHAS south end of the old Police Building to establish a Museum; 1977 - Tracy Mead hired as first paid director; 1977 - Historical Museum officially opens – City of Mesa owns, operates, and maintains Museum; 1980 - Serrine House acquired by City of Mesa; 1986 - Serrine House opens to visitors; 1992 - City of Mesa provides nearly \$6,000 in emergency repair funds; 1995 - City Council approves \$21,000 grant; 1997 - receive \$54,398 in City grants for the year; 1999 - City Council approves \$100,000 grant funding to Museum, Tracy Wright Wagner succeeds Charlie Crismon as Executive Director; 2000 - City Council approves \$100,000 grant; 2001 - City approves \$105,000 stipulating that the Museum declare: "This activity made possible in part by the grant provided by the City of Mesa;" 2001 - first historical home tour; City Council approves a \$97,750 grant; 2003 - City Council reduces funding to \$79,800; 2004 - City Council reduces funds again to \$75,000; 2005 - City Council approves \$75,000 grant, admission fee introduced, Lisa Anderson becomes new Executive Director; 2006 - City support is discontinued; 2007 no City support; 2008 - no City support, Museum has 28,000 visitor-ship (highest ever in history of Museum); and 2009 - "Play Ball" exhibition opens with major media coverage. He also reported on the education and programming at the Museum.

Mr. Linhoff reported that the Museum has sustained for the past 43 years because of the commitment from a Board of Directors who represent influence, dedication, and the ability to get things done; a staff of five who keep the Museum's various activities running effectively and efficiently; and volunteers, who are so critical to meeting the demands of the Museum – volunteers have contributed more than \$100,000 in donated hours of service.

The Museum is owned and operated by the Mesa Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) organization, and sits on 4.5 acres that includes the Lehi School, cafeteria, and WPA auditorium. There is 30,000 sq. feet of gallery space. Lehi School, the Museum's most valuable asset, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Museum has received awards (AASLH Leadership in History of Merit and Museum Association of Arizona Award of Excellence, both in 2008) and recognition; nationally, the Museum has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Sun Times*, and Arizona Highways TV program; locally, the Museum has been in the *Arizona Republic*, *East Valley Tribune*, all local TV stations, key magazines, and the baseball programs at the Cactus League venues.

The Museum has implemented a diverse revenue stream: activities that include admissions; special events and programming; gift shop; major events such as the Annual Home Tour, Haunted Downtown Tour, Broadway Palm Dinner Theater, Citrus Valley Playhouse, Barbeque, and Mesa Symphony; rental income; annual fundraising campaign; capital campaign; grant funding; corporate sponsorships and underwritings; and aggressive membership drives. In 1999, the Museum operated on less than \$100,000; by 2003 the Museum's total assets reached nearly \$175,000; and the 2008 budget was \$260,000.

The Museum has numerous private and public partners that include: Walmart, Broadway Palm Dinner theater, Arizona Republic, KTVK, Channel 3, KPHO, channel 5, DMB, U.S. Airways, Mesa Bank, Wells Fargo, Southwest Gas, Boeing, Basha's Fresh & Easy, Americopy, Coldstone Creamery, Ron Peters, Mardenely's, PBS&J, SRP, and volunteer support; Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Arizona Humanities Council, Arizona Historical Society Professional Services, Heritage Fund

Preservation Grant, Arizona Museum of Natural History, Arizona Museum for Youth, Mesa Arts, Center, Mesa Room, and Mesa CVB.

Mr. Linhoff concluded by stating that the Museum is receiving national attention. It is the only entity conserving and archiving Mesa's past. Loss of the Museum would add considerable expense to the City (managing an aging historic property and disposing of a considerable collection of more than 80,000 artifacts). The site is valuable not only for the Museum itself, but also as a community gathering space; the auditorium is idea for concerts, performances, and other public events, and the Museum provides a significant contribution to the arts and culture of Mesa.

Mesa Historical Museum is aggressively seeking business support from corporate sectors including the City of Mesa. Mr. Linhoff added that as any good corporate citizen, the City of Mesa should be a supporting partner of the Museum. A former Society Board President found through research that "Museums in the Valley are funded by their cities from \$50K to \$138K per year" (approximately one-third of the budget).

The Museum does not expect or believe it is desirable for the City of Mesa to be the sole support for the Museum. City support is, however, a strong catalyst for private-sector support. City of Mesa support is critical to the sustainability of the Mesa Historical Museum.

Peter Cook noted that the Federal Building stands empty at this time, couldn't the City pull historical materials from the Historic Museum, the Mesa Room, etc. and use the Federal Building to house those resources in one central space.

Johann Zietsman commented that staff has had discussions and explored future steps for Mesa. The Federal Building could be a piece of that puzzle. One challenge of the Historic Museum is its location – out of the way, not an easy destination. The idea of a downtown Museum precinct makes sense. The Federal Building belongs to the City and is now used for storage space by the Arizona Museum of Natural History, but could be put to better use. Mr. Zietsman reported that a study will be commissioned to get a sense of the physical state of the building – there are some environmental issues that need to be dealt with. There are a number of places where funding may be available, such as Cultural Impact Fees, to do an environmental upgrade that would provide a shell that doesn't have built-in problems. Once that is completed, the City may be in a better financial position to look at what it would cost to covert the building into a usable space; possibly for Museum space, possibly something else, but there are exciting possibilities in the future.

Lisa Anderson, Museum Director, said that five years ago the Museum had no plan in place if City funding stopped. Then suddenly, City funding did stop and the Museum went into survival mode to sustain. They did an amazing job under the circumstances and are now in a better place, but still very much in need of City financial support. The Museum has developed a plan for the future, and has made strides in reaching those goals, but is in dire need of support with cash flow at this time.

The Museum and Cultural Advisory supports, advocates for the Mesa Historical Museum, and wants to encourage the City of Mesa to be as good a partner in preserving Mesa's history as the private sector by financially partnering once again with Mesa Historical Museum as soon as possible.

### **Discussion – Board Meeting Attendance Commitment – Peter Cook**

Peter Cook, Chair, once again, encouraged, even pleaded with Board members to RSVP as to their attendance of the monthly meeting in a timely manner – no later than 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, the day before meeting day. That will allow enough time to contact Board members that a quorum will not be present, if that is the case, and cancel the meeting so members don't have to leave their work and make the trip for nothing.

### **Staff Reports**

#### Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- Undergoing some changes to the "Recycle" exhibition, as the "Glow in the Dark" area is now closed; staff is incorporating new activities in that area.
- In the process of a soft-opening of the new ArtZone, where the gallery shop used to be. This is an area created for families to learn about art – the elements, principles, design, and experience art making activities.
- Ginny Kovalski, a volunteer for the Museum, completed cataloging the Education Library and has begun a project to reorganize the Museum's archives and centralize their location.
- Jacqui Baker, ASU Art Education Graduate School student, began her internship on January 28. She will focus on school and teacher programs as well as other things.
- Laura Matzer and Latonya Smith participated in a free webinar, "Gaming and the Future of Museums," on January 28, which has been helpful in forming the Museum's Website.

- Launched a new marketing promotion as part of a year-long celebration of the Museum's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary – free admission during the week of your birthday.
- Received several donations from the new Website, first time the Museum is able to accept donations on-line.
- Said good-bye to marketing volunteer, Pamela Cruzat, who returned to her hometown in Chili.
- The economy has affected the Museum – attendance is down approximately 20% from last year. Staff continues to work on marketing campaigns to bring those numbers back up.

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

- Dr. Jerry Howard and Dr. Tom Wilson spent considerable time preparing for a \$100,000 Arizona State Heritage Foundation Grant and were told in December it was approved. Last week the Museum received news that the money had been swept in the budget crisis of the state and not to spend any of the grant money. Dr. Howard and Dr. Wilson went before the State Parks Board meeting and after some discussion there are some questions as to the legality of sweeping the money – money that was granted and approved prior to the budget crisis. The Museum is waiting to hear the outcome.
- Holding first Mesa Grande interruptive meeting this Friday, February 13. The team consists of representatives from the Universities in Arizona, University of Advancing Technology, Director of Pueblo Grande Museum, Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Gila River Indian Community, appropriate City Departments, and Museum staff. This is the first step toward making the trails a reality; however, still putting together funds for this phase – Everyone involved is determined to move forward in accomplishing this goal.
- Arizona Humanities Council Board Meeting will take place at the Museum on February 20; first time the Board has ever met at one of the members own institutions.
- Staff will travel to Flagstaff to collect fossils that the Northern Arizona University is giving to the Museum as well as discuss the Therizinosaur exhibition that they will lend to the Museum next fall.
- Moved the Megalodon jaws above the entrance to the Natural History section of the Museum.
- New carpeting has been installed in the "Arizona in the Movies" area of the Museum giving it a fresh look.

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

- One of two marketing staff has moved to San Francisco – in the process of recruiting to replace that position; hope to have new hire by first of April.
- Pursuing a vendor to redesign the Website. After RFP process, looked at 18 applicants, and selected Velocity Interactive. The paperwork has been sent to Purchasing and will go to the City Manager to sign off in early March. Once paperwork is complete, it will take four to five months to have the new site up and running.
- Mesa Contemporary Arts held the opening winter reception for the "30<sup>th</sup> annual Contemporary Crafts" exhibition and "Imprints" exhibition, which is work by Mesa Arts Center faculty with invited guest artist, Jesse Armstrong. Approximately 500 attended the opening.
- The volunteer program had 361 volunteers contribute approximately 4,000 hours for a value to the City of approximately \$75,000.
- Stageworks will open the second play of the season, "Gooney Bird Green." It opens this Friday, February 13, at the Herberger Theater and will come to Mesa Arts Center the weekend of February 27. There were school shows at the Herberger as well.

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

The Main Street marquee is now up and running with some test images; programming will take place next week.

Performing Live continues to have Box Office (ticket sales) challenges. Mesa Arts Center has presented good shows that have been poorly attended due to the economy. Mr. Zietsman reported that he has heard from a number of his colleagues that they are experiencing the same issues around the country; people are purchasing tickets more last minute than in advance. A large percentage of our tickets are being sold at the door – typically we would sell around 20% at the door, now it is more like 50 – 60%, which has become a nightmare when trying to decide if the show should cancel or move to a smaller venue. It will be a challenge to reach our targets.

City cuts happened, we absorbed them as difficult as they were, but they are over; however, unlike most City Departments, Mesa Arts Center cuts by the public sector continue on a daily basis. It is difficult to strategize and plan on what we can count on.

The morale of staff is good – there is a sense of fatigue, doing more with less in areas, but overall staff is carrying on and doing well. Sharing resources within the Department is going well and relieving some pressure, but also causing some pressure in areas where staff has to adapt to new ideas and ways of operating.

Shop Mesa idea is close to being launched. A patron would bring their receipts to the Box Office and they would be refunded the sales tax in what we call "Mesa bucks" (like monopoly money). They can then redeem the "Mesa bucks" for arts and culture product, i.e., admission to the Museums, tickets for shows, etc. There is a maximum of \$200 per transaction.

Sunnee Spencer passed around the Arizona Museum for Youth's new apron that is given to helpers in ArtVille and a tote that is available for purchase on-line on the Website and will also be given to the volunteers at the "We Love Our Members" event.

Douglas Brimhall asked how the MACFest is going. Mr. Zietsman said that we are seeing a decline in the number of artists. Every Saturday from October through May is a long-term commitment and some artists are finding it difficult to be there every Saturday and are taking a break. We continue to see people shop and browse each week. The merchants are noticing a definite difference. Before next season, the committee will gather the artists and merchants to discuss how they would like to continue in the future. It may not be every week, but through May 2009, we will continue as planned.

Ramona Tecumseh reported that there is an Arizona Convocation 2009 March 1 and 2 at the Carefree Resort. This year the focus will be on sustaining cultural organizations during an economic downturn.

Daniel (DJ) Harper reported that he loved "Dixie's Tupperware Party" and found Southwest Shakespeare's "Othello enjoyable.

Peter Cook, Chair, also said that he and his wife loved "Dixie's Tupperware Party." "It was fun!"

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Johann Zietsman, Director  
Arts and Cultural Department