

## Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular hybrid meeting via Zoom and at Mesa Arts Center on Thursday May 26, 2022.

### **Members Present:**

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden  
Annalisa Alvrus  
Colleen Byron  
Theresa Schlechty  
Nick Willis  
Melvin Van Vorst  
Angela Buer  
Brad Peterson  
Ivan Martinez  
Katelyn Armbruster  
Kerry Lengel

### **Members Absent:**

### **Staff Present:**

Cindy Ornstein  
Sarah Goedicke  
Jarrad Bittner  
Alison Stoltman  
Illya Riske  
Randy Vogel  
Mandy Tripoli

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to start the meeting and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden called the meeting to order at 4:03pm.

**Public Comments:** There were no members of the public present.

### **Introduction of New Board Members:**

New Board Member Kerry Lengel introduced himself and the existing Board members introduced themselves. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden shared that this will be her final meeting with the Board.

### **Take Action: Elect a Chair for FY 2022-2023 – Alycia de Mesa-Weeden:**

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden nominated Nick Willis for Chair and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. Nick Willis accepted the nomination. With no other nominations, Melvin Van Vorst moved to close nominations and Angela Buer seconded. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Nick Willis as Board Chair for FY23.

### **Take Action: Elect a Vice-Chair for FY 2022-2023 – Alycia de Mesa-Weeden:**

Nick Willis nominated Katelyn Armbruster for Vice-Chair and Colleen Byron seconded. Katelyn Armbruster accepted the nomination. With no other nominations, Angela Buer moved to close nominations and Colleen Byron seconded. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Katelyn Armbruster as Board Vice-Chair for FY23.

### **Approval of Minutes from the May 26 Meeting:**

Annalisa Alvrus stated that she was not in attendance at the May meeting as reflected on the minutes and that will need to be corrected. Sarah Goedicke will correct the attendance record for May's meeting before posting on the city's website. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to approve the minutes with corrections and Colleen Byron seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from May 26 with corrections, and they will be posted on the city's website.

### **Take Action: Decide on Board Meeting Format for FY 2022-2023**

The Board discussed virtual vs. in person vs. hybrid meeting formats and pros and cons of each. Many members prefer in-person meetings but still need the flexibility of virtual meetings. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to vote on a hybrid meeting format for FY23 and Colleen Byron seconded. The Board voted unanimously to hold hybrid meetings for FY23.

## **Discuss: Public Art**

For the benefit of new board members, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden gave a brief background on this initiative and Cindy gave a brief overview of the history of public art in Mesa. Alycia, Nick Willis, and Cindy Ornstein met with City Manager Chris Brady and Deputy City Manager Natalie Lewis in June. The city manager's office recognized the importance of special and iconic, artful pieces at public facilities and agreed that the city would benefit from its continued inclusion, when funds are available. The City Manager noted that an ordinance such as this (which hasn't been funded by Council since 2005/06 time period) can create challenges, and opposition, when the resulting art projects are disconnected from the source of revenues, and this is especially true when the capital projects are in utility infrastructure work, where an increased budget can have a direct cost impact to rate payers. In addition, we're in an environment in which costs of construction have gone up significantly, so there is already great sensitivity to project budget pressures.

For a first step, City Manager Brady recommended that board members be included in advising how public facility projects can be enhanced, which could include cool features and artful pieces to enhance the quality and meaningfulness for the public, and that ideas like this for enhancement could be included in projects that are currently underway as well as future projects, particularly and specifically in highly visible, public-facing projects such as the new City Council Chambers or the new Express Library. Alycia and Nick agreed that this is a positive first step and the board could also develop guidelines for community enhancement of public projects at City facilities to ensure future works include engaging public art. Board members also considered how art and community enhancement work might work within sustainability and the city's climate action plan. The board discussed having the working group meet again to create language providing guidance to present to the City Manager's office as things the board would like to see as part of the process or language regarding community enhancement, and which could lead to a refresh to further strengthen the partnership between the City and the MCAB. Alycia agreed that the group should meet to discuss language and storytelling.

Cindy Ornstein shared that Economic Development recently released a request for qualifications (RFQ) seeking a new public art piece to go on or around the exterior of their new location. Cindy and Sarah Goedicke assisted the department with creating the RFQ. Cindy also shared an updated concept for "Together Mesa," the cultural walk initiative that was introduced by Andrea Alicoate at a previous board meeting, which is being explored as having artist residencies in parks in different areas of Mesa, resulting in temporary or permanent public art. Andrea and the Human Relations Board will work collaboratively with this board to work on this project together.

## **Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein**

The budget is in place for FY23, and the department is going into this new fiscal year with a strong reserve. Arts & Culture (AC) is in good place financially, helped by money from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) from the federal government, the displaced funds from which will provide some emergency funds and funds for deferred maintenance.

The department continues to experience universal problems with labor shortages and part time staff turnover challenges. A lot of work is going into figuring out how to fix this so operations are not undermined. These struggles are compounded by COVID and backfilling positions still unfilled from COVID layoffs and HR backlogs.

AC will soon launch Mesa's participation in Arts and Economic Prosperity Study 6 (AEP6), a study conducted by Americans for the Arts (AFTA) in partnership with local government and nonprofit arts organizations. Mesa has participated for many years, but this is the first year the entire state of Arizona will participate, with Arizona Commission on the Arts covering rural and tribal communities. Once the study is released by AFTA, we will have economic data for the entire state of Arizona for the first time.

Cindy Ornstein stated that Sarah Goedicke will manage this project for the city of Mesa and includes two main phases: collection of data from audiences via surveys and collection of economic activity from nonprofit arts and culture organizations. This project will start collecting in earnest in September.

Cindy shared some exciting news regarding the excellent advocacy done this year by Arizona Citizens for the Arts that resulted in the legislature allocating \$5 million to the Arizona Commission on the Arts. This is a huge increase from the normal \$1-2 million they have allocated each year over the past decade.

Cindy also shared that the city has found its new director for the Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH). Simon Tipene Adlam will start on August 15 and there will be a welcome reception at the museum on August 16. The Board will receive that invitation soon if not already. Cindy thanked all the board members who took part in the interview process. Simon is a seasoned museum professional with two decades of experience, including ten years at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. He is originally from New Zealand and of Māori descent.

### **Staff Reports**

#### Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Update on Programs and Operations – Cindy Ornstein, Illya Riske, Randy Vogel, & Mandy Tripoli

Mandy Tripoli introduced herself and her new role, Deputy Director – Visual Arts and Education/Engagement. She invited the board to join MAC on August 18 from 4-6pm for Educator Preview Night, which is returning for the first time in two years. This event traditionally sees about 300 educators.

Randy Vogel introduced himself and his updated title, Deputy Director – Theaters. Randy stated that MAC's Assistant Food & Beverage Manager was promoted into the Food & Beverage Manager and MAC is seeking to backfill her position. She is doing a phenomenal job so far. Randy's team is also interviewing for two Event Coordinator positions. The Venue Connect conference was held in Phoenix in July and MAC was one of only two facilities toured as part of the conference and everyone was blown away by the cleanliness and upkeep of campus, given it is nearly 20 years old, and they complimented the quality of MAC staff.

Randy stated that MAC had a respectable FY22 season in light of COVID challenges. Performing Live hit \$2.5 million in ticket sales, which is not far from normal despite show cancellations and reschedules. The upcoming season is doing well, and we have sold about 35,000 tickets so far. Out to Lunch concerts begin on October 27, running through December 10 for the fall, except Thanksgiving week. Announcements on lineup coming soon.

Illya Riske stated that the Mirage summer concert series continues to run every Saturday and tickets are only \$11 for general admission seating. The exterior surfaces of MAC are being repainted over the late summer/fall. This will be most notable on the theater building.

Cindy Ornstein shared that FY22 saw a good comeback in participation and MAC was very close to a peak level of memberships. MAC received two multiyear gifts from the Virginia G. Piper Trust and the Flinn Foundation. Piper awarded \$65k per year for three years and Flinn awarded \$40K per year for two years. These are both unrestricted gifts, meaning MAC has full discretion on where to spend them, and the gift from Piper was unsolicited. We are very grateful for their support.

#### Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

Alison Stoltman shared that the museum recovered very well in FY22 and hit record revenue of about \$1.3 million. The previous big year the museum had was FY19 and this past year exceeded that. The

museum continues to have a fantastic summer and the museum store is doing well. The museum is struggling to fill Visitor Services staff, which creates challenges with the increase in attendance.

Staff are excited for the new director and are preparing for his arrival. In addition to the new director, the museum recently onboarded its first dedicated full time Marketing Specialist, Chad Amos. Education staff are collaborating with Mesa Public Schools to expose more kids to the museum and create more resources for teachers. Staff are also focusing on social-emotional and literacy standards as part of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded programs. Staff will also start moving collections back to the lower level of the Historic Post Office Building when it is completed.

There are big plans underway for exhibits this upcoming fiscal year including the Sonoran Desert's First People gallery, in collaboration with Gila River Indian Community and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The museum will also get two new animatronic dinosaurs for Dino Mountain.

i.d.e.a. Museum – Jarrad Bittner

The end of August will see the reopening of the Atrium, with Paintasaurus Rex making an appearance. Exhibits will close in early August in preparation of the new exhibit opening in late August. The museum has seen great numbers so far this summer and near-record memberships now that vaccines are available to most individuals and families. The museum is ramping up for its capital campaign.

i.d.e.a. Museum's Curator recently retired, and the museum is happy that the Exhibits Coordinator Mike Goodwin has been promoted into that role. We are now hiring to backfill the Exhibits Coordinator position.

**Discuss any Projects, Initiatives, or Presenters of Interest & Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only**

Katelyn Armbruster asked when the ASU MIX Center opens. ASU will have an opening and Parks will have another opening for the Plaza space. Cindy stated that the dates have been selected but not announced yet. Students will start classes in the new space in August. Staff will share the opening information with the board when available. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden told the board that ASU Prep Digital is experimenting with micro schools, where students can attend two days per week at the MIX Center.

Theresa Schlechty shared her nonprofit work with the board. Information can be found at [www.goldenrollerskates.org](http://www.goldenrollerskates.org).

***The next scheduled meeting date is September 22, 2022 and will be a hybrid meeting.***

There being no further business, Theresa Schlechty moved to end the meeting and Angela Buer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Ornstein, Director  
Arts and Culture Department