

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via Zoom video conference on Thursday March 25, 2021.

Members Present:

Ivan Martinez
Theresa Schlechty
Ronna Green
Alycia de Mesa-Weeden
Michelle Streeter
Nick Willis
Melvin Van Vorst
Angela Buer

Members Absent:

Jocelyn Condon
Dilworth Brinton, Jr.
Tara Phelps

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein
Sarah Goedicke
Randy Vogel
Dyan Seaburg
Alison Stoltman
Illya Riske

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to start the meeting and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

Public Comments: There were no comments from the public.

Approval of Minutes from the February 4 Meeting:

Melvin Van Vorst moved to approve the minutes and Ivan Martinez seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from February 4, and they will be posted on the city's website.

Non-Discrimination Ordinance Support Discussion – Alycia de Mesa-Weeden & Nick Willis

Nick Willis gave a presentation that showed and dispelled myths related to the non-discrimination ordinance (NDO) (see Exhibit A) in response to a campaign to repeal it. He proposed that the Board create a working group to write a letter of support if the initiative to repeal the NDO makes it to the ballot, or if changes are subsequently made to the NDO as a result of this campaign.

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden stated that this ordinance is about inclusion of all people and is vital for the arts & culture community. Ivan Martinez listened to the Council meeting where this was discussed and voted upon and it was intense and a long discussion. He stated that the people opposed to the NDO are opposed for political reasons. He also pointed out that the last thing we want is for this issue to turn away performers, experiences, or visitors because they don't feel welcome here. Michelle Streeter stated that Visit Mesa has already created a letter of support and submitted it before the Council meeting where this was discussed.

Nick Willis made a motion to write a letter of support and Michelle Streeter seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the working group to write a letter of support of the NDO if needed, depending upon the results of the campaign to repeal it. Because things are moving quickly and changes are being proposed to the NDO, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden made a motion to allow the Board to approve the letter via email once written, and Nick Willis seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the letter via email once it is written.

Nick Willis, Ivan Martinez, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden, Michelle Streeter, Theresa Schlechty, and Melvin Van Vorst volunteered to be in the working group.

New Topics Discussion

Public Art – The Board revisited their previous discussion on public art in Mesa and discussed what to address over the coming months. This discussion was put on pause during the pandemic in order to advocate for needed funding for Mesa arts organizations, but this is a good time to take another look at the public art conversation. Cindy Ornstein gave a brief overview of the history of the program, that the City of Mesa used to have a public art program, but it was defunded years ago. The Board discussed the desire to advocate for a funded public art program as a part of revitalization in Downtown Mesa and Mesa at large, and how to advocate for that funding.

Cindy Ornstein explained that the term public art is used much more broadly now than when Mesa created its public art program and can include, but is not limited to, temporary art pieces, public art events, public festivals, and more. The Board would like to create a map of all public art downtown, including that created through private funding.

The working group that was previously created included Nick Willis, Ivan Martinez, Angela Buer, and Alycia de Mesa-Weeden and those members confirmed that they will still be part of the working group. Nick Willis will serve as the point person for this group.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

The department continues to see good demand for the limited capacity programs that are available. Both the museums and studios have seen excellent participation and many classes are sold out. This is a promising sign for when we reopen to full capacity in our facilities. The plan is to gradually increase capacity as time goes on, infections go down, and vaccinations go up.

Regarding Governor Ducey's removal of COVID restrictions at the city level, his executive order *does* allow for governments to set their own protocols for their facilities. Mayor Giles has already issued a statement that masks will continue to be required in all city buildings. For the immediate future, the Arts & Culture Department will not change overall protocol of distancing and masking. We will revisit this as infection rates go down and we will make some additional changes in July with new museum exhibits in place and will increase prices, which are currently reduced by 50%.

Staff Reports

Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Update on Programs and Operations – Cindy Ornstein & Illya Riske

The Creative Economy Fund would normally be accepting applications around this time, but this year will be different. We plan to grandfather in previous award recipients because no one was able to use their FY20 award since we were closed, and it will reduce administrative burden for groups. We plan to do this by using their prior score, which applies a percentage to their requested amount, to their new project budget. This depends on the department's budget situation, the status of the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, and our theater reopening date. We have communicated this plan to previous award recipients and let them know we will contact them later this summer.

Fundraising is going extremely well! We will have a January 2021 fundraiser with a very exciting performer and have had great success with sponsorships so far. We're almost at \$100,000 in sponsorships thanks to MAC Foundation Board member Traci Beagly and the Development team. Sponsorships for other programs next year also continue to do well. The MAC Foundation is also thinking about creating a virtual tour for donor cultivation.

MCA held a modified opening event with timed reservations to view the galleries, food truck coupons, and a DJ. The event went well by all accounts and they are planning a similar event for their May opening. We are cautiously planning fall festivals due to the uncertainty of where things will be. Season Kickoff and Día de los Muertos (DDL M) will be hybrid events with some things on campus (smaller than normal and more spread out to enable distancing) and some things online. The DDL M committee is reaching out to Downtown Mesa Association to discuss putting community altars in windows downtown.

Kim Forbes (Special Events Manager) will be retiring at the end of April after 16 years with MAC. Theaters are planning to reopen in September, and the few shows already on sale are selling very well! We plan to start rehiring 52 staff in July for all the Arts & Culture organizations and we will be busy onboarding those people over the next few months. The bulk of these rehires are part time workers. Cindy Ornstein congratulated Randy Vogel on building a very exciting 20-21 season despite the craziness of COVID. There are stellar things coming, and member sales will start in mid-May.

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

The museum just completed a huge project – the removal of items from the Historic Post Office building in preparation for renovations. The team is now turning their attention to two new galleries. Cindy Ornstein thanked Alison Stoltman, Dr. Emily Early, and Melanie Deer for their hard work on leading the process of the Historic Post Office building cleanout.

75 Million BC is slated for completion this summer. The museum is selling out time slots every day, and we are looking for ways to accommodate school field trips on non-public days. We are unable to have our popular dino egg hunt this Easter but will have an online video program with activities on the website. The team is designing a hybrid summer camps with one small group in person in addition to virtual options.

The lighting project is ongoing. We will change out light fixtures in the museum, going gallery by gallery because they have to be completely shut down and staff has to divert traffic and put up temporary lighting while those changes are happening.

i.d.e.a. Museum – Dyan Seaburg

Cindy Ornstein welcomed Dyan Seaburg as the new Acting Administrator for the i.d.e.a. Museum. She was brought in to help alleviate staff pressures, as Jeffery Morris' regular job was already demanding and they are missing a preparator, so he was acting as Curator, Operations Manager, a one-man Exhibits shop, and Acting Administrator. Luckily, the City Manager opened a new program to allow managers to act as interims in other departments. We are delighted to have Dyan, who's regular job in is Parks & Recreation as the Community Facilities Administrator and oversees Mesa Amphitheater, Mesa Convention Center, Dobson Golf Course, and the cemetery. She's experienced with public facing programs, public facilities, and we've partnered with her many times in the past. She started with the department in early March.

Dyan told the Board that the museum continues to operate under limited capacity with three sessions per day, two on Sunday. Sessions are selling out and they experimented with increasing capacity a bit over the weekend, which went very well. The museum is getting great survey feedback from guests regarding the safe, welcoming environment. Art of the Story will remain on exhibit until June 13. Robo Art will open on July 1, and staff are currently working on that exhibit.

The museum has Gallery Educator positions open and has restructured staff. The Education Department has shifted to a lot of virtual programming and will be crucial as capacity increases and the museum adds open more open days to the week. Staff is working on a Virtual VIP Imagine tour with testimonials, videos of each area, some of the changes with virtual programs, and a tour guide walking you through the areas of the museum. This will be a nice alternative for now, and moving forward, for people who can't come in for a tour.

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

Melvin Van Vorst and his wife are volunteering for the Governor's Arts Awards (GAA) March 26. He said that Joseph Benesh, Executive Director for Arizona Citizens for the Arts, was overwhelmed by the number of MAC volunteers working GAA and was impressed by the support for the arts in Mesa. Sarah Goedicke & Cindy Ornstein confirmed that the Arts & Culture Department donated many items for the silent auction.

Angela Buer is part of the Central Arizona Archaeological Society. They hold lectures for the public (currently online) and Angela asked if MAC or the Mesa Historical Museum (MHM) would be open to offering space for that kind of event. Cindy Ornstein stated MAC is not hosting any events or talks at the moment and the auditorium is unavailable at MHM due to construction. Cindy Ornstein said she was sure that Alison Stoltman would probably love to host something like that at AzMNH.

Michelle Streeter said that Visit Mesa filmed with Alison Stoltman as part of their "For the Love of Mesa" campaign, which is part of the extended video series "Meet our Makers." These will be up on www.fortheloveofmesa.com and Visit Mesa plans to feature all the culture venues. Visit Mesa also hopes to push out the Zuill Bailey video compilation mentioned in the February meeting sometime in early April. This is an emotional campaign to encourage people to travel back to Mesa.

Ivan Martinez and partner Councilmember Jen Duff toured Alice Cooper's Teen Rock Center in Mesa and they are very excited for that to open. It would be great to get the Board in for a tour there. Cindy Ornstein said she would reach out and arrange for a Board meeting to be there when everyone is comfortable meeting in person again. Ivan said they have musicians playing at the Mesa Farmers Market. Cindy stated that the Mesa Farmers Market is now on MAC campus, through the end of the calendar year, and MABEL (Mobile Arts Based Engagement Lab) is there every other weekend. Eventually, the farmers market will move across the street in the new plaza by Mesa City Center.

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden will be facilitating a panel for a Project Humanities film about bias, data, and artificial intelligence and how it affects everyday people. She will share with Sarah Goedicke to distribute to the group.

The next scheduled meeting date is May 27, 2021 via Zoom video conference.

There being no further business, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to end the meeting and Nick Willis seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department

Mesa's Non- Discrimination Ordinance

Background

- ▶ On March 1st, 2021, the Mesa City Council passed an LGBTQ+ inclusive non-discrimination ordinance by a vote of 5-2.
- ▶ Similar ordinances have already been implemented in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff, and Tempe.
- ▶ The “Center for Arizona Policy” is gathering signatures to refer the ordinance to the ballot.

What the Ordinance Does:

The ordinance aims to protect all Mesa residents from discrimination in:

"public accommodation, employment, and housing on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, veteran's status, marital status, and familial status,"

Exclusions apply to schools, small business, religious groups and First Amendment activities.

Myth Busting



Myth

This ordinance would allow for predators to enter women's restrooms and pose a threat to privacy and public safety.



Truth

- ▶ 300 US cities with similar ordinances have seen NO increase in public safety incidents.
- ▶ Nothing about this ordinance makes it ok or legal to enter a restroom and harass/harm others.
- ▶ Violators will still be prosecuted as they are today.

Myth Busting



Myth

My church will be forced to pay fines because of decisions on how to practice our religion.



Truth

- ▶ Religious organizations are excluded from this ordinance. This means that churches **WILL NOT** be fined and can continue to practice as they see fit.

Myth Busting



Myth

There is no need for this ordinance. It is purely political.



Truth

- ▶ Arizona ranks **5th** in the nation for the most hate crimes against LGBTQ+ identifying people
- ▶ Arizona is 10th worst state for LGBTQ+ biased crimes
 - **23%** of all biased crimes in Arizona perpetrated against LGBTQ+ members

Myth Busting



Myth

This ordinance would be bad for business in Mesa.



Truth

- ▶ In order to attract and retain talented and qualified people, Mesa must be open for business to everyone
- ▶ 94% of Fortune 500 companies have similar non-discrimination policies
- ▶ LGBTQ+ buying power is over \$970 billion nationally

Myth Busting



Myth

This has not been a community led ordinance.



Truth

- ▶ This was not a "snuck in."
- ▶ The ordinance has been in the works for over 5 years.
- ▶ City Council gave time to hear from citizens for and against.

Who Signed the NDO Support Letter

- ▶ United States Senator, Kyrsten Sinema
- ▶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Dale Willis
- ▶ The Right Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall, VI Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona
- ▶ Robert T. Hoshibata, Resident Bishop The Desert Southwest Conference
- ▶ The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer, Bishop, Grand Canyon Synod, ELCA
- ▶ Rev. Dr. William Lyons, Conference Minister Southwest Conference UCC
- ▶ Rabbi Robert L. Kravitz, D.D. Past-president, Board of Rabbis of Greater Phoenix
- ▶ Angela Hughey, President, ONE Community
- ▶ Michael Soto, Executive Director, Equality Arizona

Why We Should Support:

- ▶ The benefit of the NDO is that it sends a message to ALL potential visitors/customers that Mesa is a place that welcomes all people to all businesses.
- ▶ The concern is that there are some artists for whom, if they saw a citizen-led opposition and controversy developing around the NDO, might object or not want to engage with us in protest.
- ▶ Additionally, there is concern that future customers may protest our museum and cultural facilities if the ordinance is struck down.
- ▶ By showing our support, we can stave off any fallout that could occur with the partners of our cultural institutions, if the ordinance is struck down.

How We Can Support

- ▶ Our role: "advocate as individuals, as appropriate, on behalf of arts and culture."
- ▶ We can make a statement of support due to the importance that inclusion plays with our venues.
- ▶ The statement would be aimed at showing museum and cultural attendees, partners and staff that we are inclusive and inviting of all people.