

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 November 17, 2022.

Members Present:

Katelyn Armbruster
Kerry Lengel
Greg DeSimone
Theresa Schlechty
Melvin Van Vorst
Angela Buer
Colleen Byron
Ivan Martinez
Annalisa Alvrus
Nick Willis

Members Absent:

Brad Peterson

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein
Illya Riske
Sarah Goedicke
Mandy Tripoli
Jarrad Bittner
Simon Tipene Adlam
Alison Stoltman

Melvin Van Vorst moved to start the meeting and Annalisa Alvrus seconded. Nick Willis called the meeting to order at 4:04pm.

Public Comments: No members of the public were present.

Approval of Minutes from the September 22 Meeting:

Greg DeSimone motioned to approve the minutes from September 22 as presented and Colleen Byron seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from September 22 as written and they will be posted to the city's website.

Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein shared that the department is reviewing three proposals for Strategic Planning facilitation and hopes to move forward soon. This is for all three institutions across the department.

There is excellent collaboration going on in many ways across the department and staff are making good progress on working together and with colleagues across the city. One example of this is Development staff across Arts & Culture and other City departments that seek sponsorships have been meeting to share knowledge and ensure that sponsorship terms are in alignment with each other.

Cindy stated that senior staff are discussing how best to utilize and get the most from the Museum & Cultural Advisory Board and have spoken to colleagues across the city to see how their boards function and will bring information to the board in the next meeting. This will hopefully lead to discussions on how to make this board as rewarding and productive as possible.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Simon Tipene Adlam and Alison Stoltman

Halloween marked the second-year anniversary of reopening for the Arizona Museum of Natural History and the museum continues to experience tremendous growth. Attendance remains strong with 10,664 visitors in October – an increase of 26.48% compared to October 2021. Total revenue was \$83,375. Mesa Grande Cultural Park opened its doors for the season on October 22, 2023 with total attendance of 211, the majority from joint field trips. Two new Visitor Services part-time staff members were hired in October and are doing well. Alison Stoltman shared that the museum's fundraiser event Beer N Bones in October went well with over 500 attendees, including many community and city leaders.

AZMNH expects high attendance in November due to Veterans Day, the long Thanksgiving weekend, and an increase in school field trip reservations including joint field trips to include Mesa Grande Cultural Park. On Veterans Day, the museum will be free to all veterans and active military and their families (up to four guests). The museum also participated in MAC's October 19, 2023 NatGeo Live Series with Diana Magaloni-Kerpel, providing the introduction and leading the Q&A. This event was very successful, and the museum is collaborating with MAC to continue similar events in the future.

Research & Collections remain active and continue to work with research partners, NAGPRA, collections assessment, collections management RFP, planning to host a regional conference, large-scale exhibit planning, and the onboarding of a paid intern.

The Learning Reimagined program (a collaborative virtual resources program across Arts and Culture) had record breaking numbers in October. The curriculum was picked up by Teach For America in October. Over 5000 students viewed or used the resources, which is a new record! Total engagements for the month of October for Learning Reimagined are at 10,082, compared to the previous highest number of 1,853!

i.d.e.a. Museum – Jarrad Bittner

The museum is collaborating and knowledge sharing with MAC Engagement staff to look at ways to measure the true impact of its work. More than measuring participation, this includes things such as reading proficiencies at the system level and joining local coalitions and initiatives to look at this bigger systems-level work.

Membership numbers have been incredible. Jarrad stated that he thinks this is a big indicator of institutional success for an organization like the i.d.e.a. Museum because it shows that people want to have a long-term commitment with the mission, and value the work that the museum does. The museum is currently at 40% above membership targets for the year with a little over 1,500 active memberships.

In August, i.d.e.a. Museum launched its Access Membership program as an expansion of much of the work the museum does related to accessibility. Both museums have participated in the reduced admission for EBT card holders for a number of years, but this membership program allows qualifying families to get a membership costing up to \$22 maximum to the i.d.e.a. Museum. This has been the largest selling membership since it was launched but the other membership levels also continue to grow.

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

Cindy shared that MAC also has good news on membership numbers with about 990 members, which is close to the highest number of active memberships ever. Public participation in programs continues to be robust as well. Recently, the Studio art classes had an on sale day for their upcoming session and demand was so high that there was a line out the Box Office door that stretched to the South Studios building. That line took about one hour to go through and those registering online also had a long wait. At the end of the day, MAC did 60% more sales than the on sale for the same session last year and a number of classes are sold out.

Performing Live continues to add shows for this season and has now surpassed the \$3 million sales mark for the year. This of course has a human resource cost and senior management is focused on balancing things to avoid staff burnout and be sustainable in the long run. With part-time hourly labor, things are better than they were but it will still take a long time to return to normal.

On November 19, 2023, MAC is partnering with ASU to present the Emerge Festival on MAC campus and across the street at the Plaza and MIX Center. There will be music, food, art, and activities. It will be a very different festival that what MAC normally produces. MAC staff is mostly involved with operations support and booking the music, and the programming otherwise has been done by ASU.

Discuss: Public Art

Nick Willis reviewed highlights from the Public Art Working Group meeting. Cindy presented four projects coming up over next one to two years where the board can have direct impact on the process. The planned public art projects are in conjunction with the future Together Mesa project anticipated to include activities in all districts, new Mesa City Council Chambers, a new express library in SE Mesa, and the Dobson Ranch Public Library.

The Dobson Ranch Library reopens in early January and the city manager is budgeting funds for an outside art element. The Working Group discussed how they wanted to be involved in the Dobson Ranch project. Kevin Vaughan-Brubaker, Festivals Manager at MAC, gave an overview of best practices for getting community input on public art. The Working Group is interested in having the Board help guide this process to support Arts & Culture staff.

The group also discussed longer term goals such as managing a public art inventory and advocating for public art in other parts of the city. Ivan Martinez wanted to make sure the Board keeps an eye and focus on a long term plan as well as these short term projects, including getting developers interested and excited about public art. Cindy suggested that the group might want to meet with staff from the Economic Development department to get information on process and timelines for communications with new businesses coming to Mesa. Cindy also recommended that it may be helpful to working with Economic Development in crafting communications for private developers that illustrate the value of incorporating public art into their projects.

Nick motioned to make recommendations to city management, through Cindy, on best practices for public art regarding the Dobson library project as well as pledging the Board’s support and active engagement in the project. Angela Buer seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Nick stated the working group will meet again within the next two to three weeks and invited board members to join if they have not already. Angela requested to be put on the invite list for the next meeting.

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

Greg DeSimone volunteered at Día de los Muertos and said the event was amazing. Melvin Van Vorst also volunteered at Día de los Muertos and had a fantastic time. Katelyn served as a stage host for Día de los Muertos and stated it was a fantastic opportunity. Sarah Goedicke confirmed that Día de los Muertos again saw at least 30,000 visitors this year.

The next scheduled meeting date is January 26, 2023 and will be a hybrid meeting via zoom and in person at i.d.e.a Museum.

There being no further business, Melvin Van Vorst moved to end the meeting and Angela Buer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department