

**CITY OF NORWALK
ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 5, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Marc Alan, Chair; Emerson Straniti; Peter Smyth; Melissa Matuska; Janet Evelyn; Bob Abriola; Kadeem Roberts; Brian Kaspr

STAFF: Sabrina Church, Business & Tourism; Michelle Rakowsky, Social Media

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Marc Alan called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

****MR. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 3, 2020 MINUTES**

****MS. EVELYN SECONDED**

****MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY.**

COMMITTEE & STAFF UPDATES

Budget Committee

Ms. Grudin was not present to give an update on Finance. Ms. Church said that they processed Ms. Rakowsky's invoice and other invoices have been requested and will be in hand within 2-3 weeks. She said with regards to FY21 that all will be transferred into next year's budget. \$20,000 has been approved for the operating budget and the capital request in the amount of \$50,000 for the MLK project has moved forward to planning. Ms. Church reported a substantial capital & operating budget next year.

Mr. Alan asked if they needed to re-allocate any items previously voted on regarding spending. Ms. Church said that the items have just been committed to categories, which are subject to change, and they don't have to approve of a new budget. She said that approximately \$15,000 from this year will rollover to FY21 and must be used within that year. She said they will probably be looking at around \$35,000 next year, plus the capital spending costs for the MLK corridor.

Mr. Smyth asked if that capital budget had to be used for that corridor. Ms. Church said it has to be used for that corridor, but not just for one specific project. It can be used for multiple programs in that specific geography, like a sculptures or signage. She said that these funds had to be used in FY21 as well.

Communications Committee

Mr. Smyth gave a shout out to Ms. Rakowsky, specifically for her work on the sculpture park. Ms. Rakowsky said that she appreciated any forwarding to her. She said she started a posting schedule for murals and virtual events. She is pulling content from the art world in general, as well as from the local community. Mr. Alan asked if she is posting resources for people in the arts community. Ms. Rakowsky said she shared information for a Connecticut-based grant.

Mr. Alan asked about boosting posts. Mr. Smyth said they can boost all the posts, and there will be metrics available, including information on geography.

Mr. Kaspr said that Ms. Rakowsky had shared a mural that he had painted, but was not mentioned in the post. He said he sent a direct message to the account and asked who was checking the inbox. Ms. Rakowsky said she was sharing someone else's post and she checks the direct messages. She said that she keeps the Instagram account consistent, which connects to Facebook.

Infrastructure Committee

Mr. Alan said that the Public Art Policy is in the hands of the Legal Department. He said that it is going slow, but they hope to have it back by the June meeting.

Ms. Church said that the Legal Department recently hired a new lawyer, who is starting from scratch, hence the delay.

Ms. Church discussed the Bylaws update. She said the Infrastructure Committee worked on the Public Art Policy, which included some changes to the Committees. She said that piece about committees has moved down to the Bylaws because that is where they have existed traditionally. Other updates include updating outdated language related to social media and similar things. She said that the Bylaws are not as major as the Public Art Policy, so the Legal Department won't be taking as deep a dive into that material. She said that hopefully they would have something back by the next meeting, so that everyone can review it before group approval. Mr. Alan said they would be voting on the Bylaws as well.

Ms. Church said that she was trying to go to Common Council with both documents at once with not a lot of changes. She said, according to the schedule, they can go to Common Council as soon as the second week of June.

Mr. Alan said that he was talking with Ms. Smyth to have the public art selections photographed by Judith Bacal. He said he was looking to propose a budget and set expectations for this project. Ms. Church said that, if the proposed budget was above \$1,000, then there has to be another quote provided. If the proposed budget was \$5,000-10,000, they would need to provide 3 quotes.

Ms. Matuska said that Westport used an online database to categorize their public art. She said that the Arts Commission wants to create standards for displaying this art online with regards to number of pixels or image size. She said that they can then present these standards to the person for bid. Mr. Alan agreed. Ms. Matuska suggested the Communication group work on this and said that she

had some experience working on this in a conference. She said they needed to decide on which platform to move this project forward on. Mr. Smyth said that this should stay in the Infrastructure group because it governs the website. Mr. Alan pointed out that Ms. Matuska worked on the Public Art Inventory. Ms. Matuska said that she marked down pieces that were in place or if they had been moved, missing, or on loan. She said she was mostly referencing pieces that were at Lockwood Mathews Mansion.

Discussion took place regarding services that may be needed to run the proposed database. Ms. Church said that maybe the photographer can both photograph and set up the database so that they can get a holistic number for the entire proposed project budget.

Events & Festivals

Ms. Smyth asked about the status of the NICE Festival and SoNo Arts Festival.

Ms. Church said that all city and concert events are cancelled throughout the summer, but not the recreational events. She said they haven't spoken about dates for potential gatherings yet. She said that half of the Summer Nights concerts are cancelled.

Ms. Church said that they haven't heard back about the Oyster Festival yet. She said they are waiting for a state decision and they need to determine if it makes financial sense for them. The same goes for the SoNo Arts Festival.

Mr. Alan said that Make Music Day is still going forward. He is looking for artists to stream their live events via the Arts Commission social media stream. He said he doesn't know the legal situation for people performing in front of a business yet.

Ms. Church said that the City is looking into more lenient outdoor eating opportunities due to the impact of the coronavirus. She said that she would keep the Arts Commission updated as to performances or events in the public realm. She said the City is looking into closing more streets for artistic & entertainment purposes once gathering is allowed.

Mr. Alan said that he had a meeting with the people at the Bike Walk organization. He said they were wanting to close streets for the Bike Walk event. Mr. Roberts said that they don't want to mess with them.

Mr. Alan said they were looking for people to endorse small outdoor events, but that makes organizations responsible, because they can't police that stuff.

Ms. Evelyn said that the NICE Festival is on hold regarding state and city decisions. She said they haven't cancelled the July 11 event yet. She said it is an outdoor program and, if they are able to do it on any scale, it would help the City get together. She said this festival is on a smaller scale and it can be quickly turned around in about 3-4 weeks. Mr. Smyth said that if they do this, the festival would be mobbed.

Ms. Evelyn said they may push the dates back. She said the community would celebrate wellness and coming together. She said they would need additional funding and support when the time comes. She said she is lining up a contingency schedule of performances they can leverage then. Ms. Smyth said that maybe by next meeting they will know more. Ms. Evelyn said they will need everyone's support, including Parks & Recreation, the Arts Commission, and other groups and organizations.

Mr. Alan asked if the NICE Festival could be an early fall event. Ms. Evelyn said that this depends on the Oyster Festival scheduling. She said the later in September, the more risk would be encountered. She spoke about salvaging summer and said that mid to late August would be a good time. She said that maybe by then they can mitigate this disease and manage the spread and maybe people will be more comfortable. Mr. Alan said that events are going from single occupancy to small pocket groups. Ms. Evelyn said that people will want to enjoy the performing arts.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Alan discussed the Art Park installation on Isaac Street. He said there are about 6 places for people to create a permanent art piece. The owner of the lot isn't paying artists, but he is paying for the wood slides. Artists can choose to work on the slides in their own studios or can work on site. He said that both he and Mr. Abriola will be doing one. Mr. Alan said the owner bought the El Dorado bar so he could hire a painter/New Canaan art teacher to do a "Stay At Home" mural.

Mr. Alan said that he was looking for a logo for the Norwalk Arts Community booth or for a t-shirt giveaway. Mr. Smyth displayed his "I Heart Art" logo, which was created as a giveaway for the NICE Festival. Mr. Smyth also mentioned the Art Speak logo.

Mr. Alan gave an update regarding Jam Studios, which is an arti & music business in Liberty Square. He said they lost their lease and they were looking for a space for the kids programs. Mr. Alan said that the Mad Lab will host the arts programming, and the Factory Underground will host the music programming.

Mr. Kaspr discussed the mural policy. He said that they agree that moments like these are important. He said that if anyone wants or has space available, he will paint for free. He has work posted at bkaspr.com and @bkaspr on Instagram. Mr. Kaspr said that people need to see that the creative community is involved.

Mr. Alan said that Weverson Ponte is painting the words "Be Creative" on the roof of the Mad Lab. Mr. Alan said he suggested painting "Mad Lab", but Mr. Ponte pointed out that would be considered a sign.

ADJOURNMENT

****MS. MATUSKA MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:01 PM**

****MR. SMYTH SECONDED**
****MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Anaya Sheils
Telesco Secretarial Services