

**CITY OF NORWALK
ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Marc Alan; Janet Evelyn; Brian Kaspr; Elizabeth Tardif; Robert Abriola; Kadeem Roberts; Nori Grudin; Melissa Matuska (7:05)

STAFF:

OTHER: Oksana; Sabrina Church; Weaverson; Julio Pardo

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Alan called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. There was a quorum present.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Alan gave a roll call of the members present for the meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADMINISTRATION

APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 1, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

**** COMMISSIONER TARDIF MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 1, 2021 AS SUBMITTED.**

**** COMMISSIONER ABRIOLA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR (ALAN, TARDIF, ABRIOLA, KASPR, TARDIFF, ROBERTS) AND ONE ABSENTION (EVELYN).**

COMMITTEE/STAFF UPDATES

BUDGET COMMITTEE UPDATE

FINANCE UPDATE – NORI GRUDIN & SABRINA CHURCH

Commissioner Grudin and Ms. Church came forward to discuss this item.

The expenditures for the prior month were \$333 for the food at the NICE festival. Everything else came out of last year funds.

Commissioner Grudin said that they are starting with a new budget effective July 1 for the 2021-2022 year.

The budget is \$14,400 and then there is an additional \$25,000 in a capital account. Commissioner Grudin suggested that they send a recap of the last year budget and what would that cover. She thought there were some surpluses and carry over on that of that budget.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE – MICHELLE RAKOWSKY & MARC ALAN

Chairman Alan said that there was nothing new to add, except that they did vote for additional funds to go to Ms. Rakowsky for administering a newsletter from the Arts Commission. That was planned to start in July but there was no meeting in July so there was no progress made. Chairman Alan is planning to start that project in August. He is going to be relying on members of the Communications Committee to help with and primarily in terms of gathering information. This is planned for a quarterly release with potential plans for a monthly release in the future.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Commissioner Kaspr came forwards to deliver his report. They are working to have something to report to the voting body in regards to the MLK project. They don't have all the information on that right now but are working to have that ready for September meeting.

They are exploring the possibility of creating a database of building and/or landlord/property owners who are open to the idea of the Arts Commission utilizing their spaces for future projects so they can call upon them when needed and when the Commission has specific timelines and deadlines.

They are also exploring the possibility of creating a database of artists, locally, nationally, and internationally for contact for projects.

Commissioner Kaspr said that much of getting permission was just simply a matter of going out and asking people if they were willing to help.

Mr. Weaverson asked if there was a potential for the City to create either funds, incentives, or grants for business owners who facilitate our public art projects

Commissioner Kaspr said that this was the ultimate goal and most landlords are willing because they really have almost no involvement with the exception of permission.

Further discussion followed regarding the use of the database.

Commissioner Abriola suggested that they have a Commission member go to the Chamber of Commerce or business owners for discussion instead of knocking on doors.

STATE UNDERPASS PROJECT – BRIAN KASPR

Commissioner Kaspr came forward to discuss this item. The project involves getting in touch with the Department of Transportation and the state because route 7 and I-95 cut through the City providing large amounts of underpasses. He stated that the Commission was responsible for covering up graffiti. He wants to see every single underpass under 95 and route 7 painted. He thinks there is a unique opportunity especially because now there is the Norwalk River Trail which is being extended and is almost complete. There are several places where the walkway that goes underneath or near the underpasses. He suggested that the Commission should identify those spaces as free public art spaces. Some of the underpasses are perennially getting graffiti which costs the city money. It costs the city money to police anti-vandalism laws. Turning them into public spaces will cost the City \$0 with the exception of putting a trash can by these spaces.

Ms. Church said that they had had a monthly meeting with the mayor's office and she had seen if he would be interested in even pursuing it to make sure it is what he wants. He had responded positively. They were concerned with how to properly police the artwork if some type of profanity or something else goes up.

Chairman Alan said that the DoT's big concern is insurance and he was fearful of the City refusing because of liability.

MLK UPDATE – JANET EVELYN & JULIO PARDO

Commissioner Evelyn came forward to discuss this item. They've been working on this project since last summer. They started to identify areas within the MLK corridor that could potentially be key locations for a MLK initiative public art installation project. They have created numerous presentations, numerous proposals, taken the project through location, identifying submissions, getting actual mock ups of artwork on particularly on specific locations that could be put under consideration. They have identified three locations with three specific ideas around the art installation that Mr. Pardo would like to present. The Commission should be ready to vote on these items come the next meeting in September.

Mr. Pardo came forward to discuss this item. He provided images for the Commission to see.

When the Commission first started talking about this they talked about the impact and viability being the determining factors, and how they were to choose the locations. He went out and did a survey of the spaces that he thought were viable for public art and then ranked them in order from public to private. The public spaces require little approval that has already been vetted through. Then the other, longer range, goals of reaching out to private owners. Once they have the proof of concept as to what the Commission is trying to do within the corridor, people can get excited about the project and see the executions of it. He cycled through images of the locations for the Commission. They have obtained approval from D.P.W. and the various public institutions to move forward with that. He then shared the three artworks that had been submitted.

Chairman Alan said that they had said from the beginning that this was going to be organized under the infrastructure committee then presented to the Arts Commission for voting. They can't vote to approve it and then go back and select the actual pieces that they're going to do and then figure out what the price is going to be for that at that point. As a result, they are not presently ready for voting.

Commissioner Evelyn said that the purpose of the prior meeting of the Infrastructure Committee was to go through the various considerations and submissions. Unfortunately, several members couldn't attend due to the late scheduling of the meeting.

Commissioner Kaspr said that they were going to schedule a meeting enough in advance so as many members as possible can join. Then they can work out all the details in regards to recommendations on locations, recommendations on artists, and the proposed budgets. Then they'll be able to return in September, as the infrastructure committee, and comment on the viability of the projects.

Chairman Alan said that Ms. Church now has the ability to sign the contract with each artist. This will save them time as they don't have to go to the Common Council.

NEW BUSINESS

REVIEW OKSANA GALLERY LIGHT DISPLAY PROPOSAL

Commissioner Matuska joined at 7:05 P.M.

Ms. Oksana came forward to discuss this item. She owns a new business in Norwalk that started in December. She opened in her own gallery studio. She also exhibits worldwide. She works primarily with art involving light. She wants to do a sculpture project for Norwalk. She provided images of her proposed project for the Commission. She suggested the first sculpture be installed in Matthews Park or by the beach.

Commissioner Matuska said that some of the properties suggested were not places that they could put stuff such as in front of the SoNo Mall.

Ms. Church said they wouldn't have enough funding to cover the whole project considering they desire to do other things as well. Ms. Oksana is coming forwards hoping for funding and making connections. Ms. Oksana is also looking to do a mural on Water Street related to the aquarium. Ms. Church said she told Ms. Oksana that they could support it verbally but it wasn't their property. She is also interested in 50 Washington Plaza and the Maritime Aquarium for a location. Ms. Oksana provided an image of the proposed mural for the Maritime Aquarium for the Commission to see as well as several sample images of her prior work.

OLD BUSINESS

ART MANIFESTATION: ART JUDGING

A representative for the festival came forward to discuss this item. They have finalized the four paintings that they will be painting live during the festival. There will be five judges including two guest judges. They want to get some artists involved to actually represent their community and have the kind of background and be vetted artists to actually be able to get this look right. Both of these artists are very well known and are very skilled and have an extensive resume.

They are asking for the Art Commission's support and want to include the Commission within the actual festival in some capacity. They want to open up two spots for any person of the Commission to come to the festival and participate and be one of the judges. They reviewed the time schedule of the festival and judging for the Commission.

They are also welcoming the Commission to have the tent in their presence at the festival.

Chairman Alan asked what the cost would be for the tent.

The representative said that the booths are \$200 and that's the only cost associated with it. They will need to provide their own tent.

Chairman Alan said he would be there for the festival and would be involved with music and audio.

Commissioner Tardif volunteered to attend as well.

**** COMMISSIONER MATUSKA MOTIONED TO SPEND \$200 FOR THE BOOTH AT THE ART MANIFESTATION.**

**** COMMISSIONER KASPR SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The representative asked if Ms. Oksana had heard of the Art Manifestation.

Ms. Oksana responded that she had not.

He then reviewed possible suggestions for the Art Commission such as showcasing their upcoming projects including the MLK project.

Commissioner Abrida said that he wanted to inform the Commission about what had happened with the banners on Washington. There was a large amount of after-hours drinking happening outside of the restaurants. The mayor had attempted to deal with the problem resulting in the barriers with the banners on them being removed. The banners had only been up for little over a month. They can be still used elsewhere.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER TARDIF MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COMMISSIONER KASPR SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Ian A. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services