Oregon Arts Commission Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2021

Commission Members Present: Anne Taylor, Chair; Jenny Green, Vice Chair; Christopher Acebo, Avantika Bawa; Michael Dalton, David Harrelson; Harlen Springer; Matt Stringer

Board Members Absent:

Staff Present: Brian Rogers, Executive Director; Kat Bell, Grants & Office Coordinator; Carrie Kikel, Communications Manager; Eleanor Sandys, Interim Visual Arts Coordinator; Liora Sponko, Community Arts Coordinator.

Staff Absent:

Others Present: Sophorn Cheang, Business Oregon Director

Welcome and Call to Order
Anne Taylor called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. Brian Rogers introduced Sophorn Cheang and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Taylor welcomed Cheang. Cheang gave an update on the legislative session and new programs coming to Business Oregon.

Commission Governance
Taylor finishes her term as chair this month. She called for a motion for Jenny Green to succeed her as chair until July 2023.

Motion: Avantika Bawa moved that Jenny Green become chair until July 2023. Christopher Acebo seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Board Minutes, March 12, 2021, and July 7, 2021
Jenny Green said she is excited about the opportunity. She commended the staff for their work during the pandemic and hopes the future holds expansion.

She asked if anyone had any questions or corrections to the minutes.

**Motion:** Taylor moved approval of the March 12 and July 7 minutes. Harlen Springer seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Director Report
Rogers presented his report. Springer spoke to the work of the Governance Structure Joint Committee. They are working to finalize the goals of a joined organization. They plan to have a recommendation in 12 months.

Bawa said she would like to be involved in the hiring process for the Percent for Art position.
Spending Plan FY2021, Grant Program Allocation

Rogers presented his report. General fund allocation and NEA allocation will increase. He expects an increase in other funds from the Cultural Trust as well.

He explained the differences between the grant program allocation options and asked for input and questions.

Springer said he supports Option 3.

Green asked about the increase in the Small Operating Grant allocation. Liora Sponko said the American Rescue Plan funds will be allocated in FY2021.

Dalton said he supports Option 3. Taylor said she supports Option 1 because it increases Arts Learning funds.

Acebo asked about the difference between Options 2 and 3. Option 2 has a decrease in Operating Support and Small Operating Grants.

Taylor pointed out the synopsis in the packet.

Dalton asked if we could restructure the Arts Learning grants so that it’s most sustainable, not just a one-year award. Rogers said that might be a project for the new Arts Learning staff member.

Green said she likes Option 3 because everyone gets an increase.

Bawa confirmed that the staff recommendation is for Option 3. Rogers said yes.

Bawa asked if the Fellowships change in the options. Rogers said Options 2 and 3 have $5,000 more for Fellowships.

Bawa said she supports Option 3.

Rogers asked David Harrelson for his thoughts. He said he is leaning toward Option 3. He talked about impact of grant size and mentioned he would like to see a program for older people.

Motion: Dalton moved approval of Option 3 with the understanding that if the budget changes more than 5 percent the Commission will reconvene to re-discuss. Motion passed unanimously.

Operating Support, Abbreviated and New Applications

Rogers presented the report and pointed out the allocation under Option 3, just approved. He returns Operating Support amounts to 2018 levels.

Green said it was a fantastic panel and Sponko received many compliments for her coordination.

Sponko spoke to the panel discussion and recommendations per the memo. She also talked about the recommendations regarding new applicants.
Green asked if we have funded other organizations in past years that scored below 70. Rogers said yes and suggested that in the fall we talk about scoring trends and how to manage consistently low scoring applicants.

Springer said he an advocate for small organizations without grant writing resources, but he’s not sure we should award funds just because an organization applied. We have to be careful about lowering our standards.

Green said a low scoring Operating Support applicant could receive as much as a top scoring small organization.

Rogers pointed out the assessment score is factored into the funding formula.

Dalton asked why we consider an application from an organization moving from the Small Operating program into Operating Support new. Rogers said it’s likely due to the review needed for Operating Support grant awards.

Rogers said we can discuss during the October meeting.

Harrelson asked about the application process. Sponko talked about the history and application process for Small Operating Grants. It likely takes one to four hours. Operating Support has narrative sections and a Data Arts input process, which takes more time.

Further discussion about the value of considering growing small organizations new as they might then be flagged for additional staff support. Add discussion to the October meeting.

Rogers walked through the funding formula. All options show an increase in awards. Staff is leaning toward Recommendation A but would be okay with B as well.

Green said we should add to the October discussion how we are funding low scoring applications. Even low-scoring applicants are receiving an increase. Rogers said we could look at weighting applications even more. Also we haven’t reviewed full applications for two years.

Dalton said we should look at scores over time since they could have an off year. We should look at scores in a multi-year comprehensive way. Rogers agreed.

Springer asked about the maximum decrease in B and C. Rogers said the maximum decrease in all recommendations is 0.

Harrelson asked if staff is tracking scores. Rogers said yes, Kat Bell has prepared a spreadsheet that we can review in October.

Harrelson said that could allow staff to provide feedback and support. Dalton said he agrees we should be supporting them in improving.

Taylor said sometimes very large well-funded organizations score low due to holes in the applications.

Springer said organizations need to understand our standard.
Bawa said staff has always offered feedback. Bawa agreed and said we don’t need to fund mediocrity but we should offer support.

Dalton asked if we are sure the panels are making stable and consistent decisions. Bawa said we focus too much on diversity and not the backgrounds of panelists.

Rogers asked if Commissioners have thoughts on the recommendations.

Taylor asked the staff to point out differences between A and B. Rogers said the large organizations see a smaller increase in Recommendation B.

**Motion:** Dalton moved approval of Recommendation B with the exception of Bend Film. Harrelson seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Green turned the meeting over to Taylor.

**Motion:** Dalton moved approval of Recommendation B for Bend Film. Taylor seconded. Green recused herself. **Motion passed.**

Taylor turned the meeting back to Green.

Green called for a 10 minute break at 10:15 a.m.

Green reconvened the meeting at 10:26 a.m.

**Small Operating Support**
Sponko presented her memo. Organizations come from every region in Oregon. Option 3 will give each organization an award of $2,178, a 47 percent increase.

Harrelson said Region 5 has a noticeable disparity in funding. He would like to help make connections for the staff. Sponko thanked him and said all Commissioners are welcome to send her ideas on organizations to add to the list.

Matt Stringer joined the meeting and talked about recent improvements to the Japanese Garden at the Four Rivers Cultural Center and Museum.

**Arts Learning**
Sponko presented her memo. Stringer said the panel was the most focused and diverse he has experienced.

Dalton asked about the age group being served by the program. There could be opportunities for other age groups. Sponko said that seniors are prioritized in the Arts Build Communities program.

Springer said maybe we could consider an arts learning program for everyone. Harrelson said it reminds him of the Conversations project at Oregon Humanities, perhaps a What is Art conversation.

Discussion about Listening Sessions for Cultural Districts and how they reinforce the impact of the arts.
Springer said this relates very closely to the discussion the Governance Structure group is having. Art is all around you.

Bawa said she agrees but the Arts Learning grant is special and needs to be maintained. Perhaps how to serve other groups should be part of our October conversation.

Green said it would be exciting to have another grant program that serve other age groups such as the elderly.

**Motion:** Stringer moved approval of the FY2022 Arts Learning grant awards. Springer seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**Arts Access Report**
Sponko presented the report. Staff is recommending expanding timing from two to six months.

Green said the timeline creates an advantage for organizations with spring events.

Rogers asked Bell if she knew why the program is a reimbursement versus a grant program. Bell said she wasn't aware. Rogers said the staff will take a look at that. He said the Governor is about to issue a toolkit for DEI work. We should implement it for all our programs.

Green talked about a process she participated in that equalizes all applications by rewriting them in a uniform manner.

Discussion about potential changes to the Career Opportunity Program to make grant awards more accessible to diverse artists.

Taylor said the letters of recommendation for Career Opportunity Grants have been very helpful; perhaps we could consider that for other programs.

Bawa said the way The Ford Family Foundation funds are allocated has always raised questions for her.

Taylor said when the Foundation came forward with the funding it was to honor Hallie Ford.

Discussion about asking the Foundation to fund artists in rural areas.

Rogers said it's time to evaluate the program and learn from artists what would be meaningful to them. It could be more equitable. The Artist Registry will be helpful in that effort.

Dalton asked if the $50 million for venues will include funds for better access.

Harrelson said he is encouraged by the idea of asking artists what they need. Funding is often about leveraging and investing. When we enter into relationships with funders we shouldn't allow their priorities become ours. Leverage vs investment. Don't be colonized by the funders.

Springer said he would encourage a conversation with Ford Family Foundation.

**Commission and Staff Updates**
Green said the Warm Springs Museum is in need of help and their collection is at risk. Playa is under evacuation from the fires. Art in the High Desert just shut down. Tourists have retuned to Bend. The High Desert Museum has reopened and in person events are returning.

Springer said Peace Harbor Hospital is funding Art from the Heart this evening. The goal is to visit galleries and have your passport stamped. It’s raising funds for the hospital’s cardiac department. A middle school teacher created a Heart and Soul program creating models of cities that all will include an art gallery.

Acebo said the Schneider Museum hosted Arts Beyond which Bawa participated in. It was a wonderful effort.

Bawa said the Portland Art Museum is doing much better. Disjecta is now Oregon Contemporary. Next week she is going to Lexington for a two-person show. The following week she goes to Chicago to prepare a show that opens in September and will be up for six months.

Stringer said Four Rivers is now a $1 million+ organization. He was recently elected to the school board.

Harrelson said the funding from the legislature means 85 percent funding for the new Chehalem Cultural Center performance space. Tonight he will participate in the opening of the new Gerry Frank Amphitheatre on the Salem Waterfront to resemble a Native American basket. New art installation in Hillsboro called Wapato Woman. He’s excited they are submitting several proposals to Converge 45.

Taylor said there has been a lot of smoke from the fires. Arts East has a new show and the writing program is going on monthly. They are doing an event at the close of the show. They are excited to be open again.

Carrie Kikel gave a preview of the new Cultural Trust license plate artwork, which will be featured in murals at the airports in Eugene, Medford, Portland and Redmond. The license plate will debut Oct. 1.

Eleanor Sandys presented her report. Discussion about additional opportunities to promote the Artist Registry.

Sponko presented her report. Discussion about how feedback from listening session will be shared with the Commission.

Bell talked about her recent work on IT matters, including the effort to acquire new grant application software.

Adjourn
Green adjourned the meeting at 12:39 p.m.