CITY OF NORWALK
ARTS & CULTURAL COMMISSION
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024
VIA TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE: Brian Kaspr; Chair, Danny L. George, Robert Abriola, Nori Grudin, Steven Rust, Melissa Matuska, Marc Allan (6:04 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski

OTHER: Ash Nichols

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kaspr called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Kaspr called the roll as reflected above

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella discussed reviewing the artist selection policy. She requested information on what defined a qualified artist. She suggested their objective should be to define regional and give preference to local and regional artists. She also noted, that where projects were being considered there was a need for the selection committee to have members responsible to the local constituents.

Due to technical issues, Ms. Lauricella could not continue.

It was noted Ms. Lauricella made some incorrect statements about the selection process. These statements were corrected for the record to correct the accuracy of the decision-making process. It was also noted that members of the Common Council have always been present at meetings. It was suggested if there is space Ms. Lauricella might join the committee.

Ms. Lauricella complained about the Zoom Workplace system. She asked if this was the final version of the policy. Mr. Kaspr stated this was the very beginning. Ms. Lauricella stated due to technical issues she would submit her suggestions in writing.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

a. Approve the minutes of the October 1, 2024, meeting of the Arts and Cultural Commission.

Mr. Kaspr noted under V. New Business Item B 367 needed to be changed to Space 67.

Mr. Alan joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

** **MR. ABRIOLA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 1, 2024 MEETING.**
** **MS. GRUDIN SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE AYES AND THREE ABSTENTIONS (MR. ALLAN, MR. RUST, AND MR. GEORGE).**

V. NEW BUSINESS

a. Budget Review – Bob Abriola & Sabrina Godeski

i. FY26 – Budget Requests (Capital and Operating)

Ms. Godeski presented the budget review. She indicated there were no changes from the previous report. She explained the various expenditures and stated they would be shown in the next report. She noted the receipt of the packages for the operating and capital budgets for the finance/budget committees to determine what projects to execute or any changes in operational expenses. Ms. Godeski then stated they would be entered in the next budget cycle starting July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

Mr. Kaspr inquired as to when they would have to submit the Capital requests. Ms. Godeski replied around the first week in December. Mr. Kaspr requested that the commission members start to consider what projects they should consider and what it might take to bring them to fruition.

Ms. Matuska discussed a project she wished to do. She explained Rowayton Elementary School had a traffic box in front of the school they were interested in painting. Ms. Godeski indicated there were funds available for the necessary supplies. She noted she would have to ask the DPW about the application fee and if it could be waived. She also indicated the DPW decides which boxes can be painted and they would have to be consulted to determine if the box was eligible before going forward.

Mr. Kaspr put forward the idea of revisiting the program and taking the reins. He asked for a volunteer to spearhead it. Ms. Godeski informed them of what was required and offered her assistance to provide whatever was necessary.

Mr. Rust pointed out that the upcoming mixer would be a good opportunity to have casual conversations with the public about what they might like to pursue.

Mr. Abriola had questions about the total expenditures in the Capital Budget. Ms. Godeski explained how the money was spent and what the totals were.

Mr. George proposed a program that would allow students to see and take part in various local Norwalk events. Mr. Kaspr asked for an outline that could be used to make the Capital request. Ms. Godeski indicated the program would be an operating expense, not a Capital request. She described how necessary funds could be allocated to the program. She defined the difference between the two and noted that both Capital and operating budgets go before the council at the same time. Mr. George discussed the many ideas he had. He asked which budget the money for the various projects would come from. Mr. Allan discussed possible collaboration with the Carver Center. Mr. Kaspr noted all these ideas would need to be fleshed out and dollar amounts figured in for submission for budget approval. He suggested chatting offline.

b. Event Updates – Janay Sylvester
    i. Creative Mixer

In Ms. Sylvester's absence, Mr. Kaspr discussed the mixer on November 13, 2024 at Space 67. He expressed his wish that his fellow community members would join him. He noted the various opportunities that would be available including the chance to connect with members of the public. Mr. Alan reiterated a previous comment and noted the opportunity to engage with the public. He stated that they should embrace the challenge and be open to all opinions even those that come in the form of criticism.

c. Website Updates – Melissa Matuska

Ms. Matuska discussed various updates on the website. She noted they were dealing with the outdated material still on the site. Ms. Godeski explained there is a lot of updating on the back end. She stated they had a ticket with IT and hoped the process would start soon. There was discussion about things on the website that could be removed. Mr. Rust inquired about the best place to find a list of commission members. He noted it wasn't available on the website. He also pointed out useful historical assets found on the old Gmail account. He stated they should be harvested before the account is closed.

d. Review of the Artist Selection Policy – Brian Kaspr

Mr. Kaspr gave an overview of the current selection process. Mr. Alan noted the need to be inclusive and not limit the process to just the open call on the website. He wanted to ensure reaching out to local and regional artists who may not be familiar with the website. Mr. Kaspr wanted to initiate an invitation process to encourage submissions. Mr. Rust asked about the artist commission process. Mr. Kaspr explained how they would proceed in the future. Mr. Abriola felt the process should be more inclusive and get more people involved in the jury selection. Mr. Kaspr described the learning process so far. Mr. Abriola suggested that in the future, projects should only use local artists. Mr. Kaspr wanted to leave the discussion open so they could work through the nuts and bolts before they presented the policy to the commission and adopted it as a process.

e. Arts and Cultural District Logo Review – Ash Nichols

Ms. Nichols discussed the initial concept and direction for the Arts and Cultural District logo. She showed a series of mood boards in preparation for developing the logo. Mr. Kaspr wanted the commission to decide which direction to take and then have Ms. Nichols begin to develop the logo within those parameters. The members discussed their likes and concerns about the three options. Mr. Alan and Mr. Rust expressed the need for a color and black-and-white representation for the logo. Mr. Kaspr opted for everyone to rank their choices, and he would compile them and forward to Ms. Nichols a specific direction.

f. Arts and Cultural Plan Update – Sabrina Godeski

Ms. Godeski gave her an update on the plan. She indicated they put together the RFP and have received responses. She noted they currently have a small sub-committee reviewing the responses. She stated the sub-committee will select a preferred vendor which they will then bring to the Arts and Cultural Commission and the Common Council. Ms. Godeski responded to Mr. Rust explaining the $100,000 line item was a fixed amount. Mr. Rust wanted clarification as to why they needed to hire a consultant. Ms. Godeski explained the reasoning, what was expected from the consultant, and how that would guide them in executing the plan.

Mr. George wanted to know exactly what the Arts and Cultural District meant and what it made them eligible for. Ms. Godeski referred to it as a marketing asset with the potential for participation in grant programs and funding. Mr. Rust expressed concerns about projects outside of the A&C District. Ms. Godeski indicated those projects would need separate funding.

g. General Committee Member Updates

There were no updates.

<u>VI. OLD BUSINESS</u>

a. West Avenue Wall Mural & Event Recap

Mr. Kaspr noted the mural was finished. He discussed the various events associated with the mural's completion.

Mr. George had questions about the process of dealing with projects and commissioners.

Ms. Grudin asked if the Arts and Cultural Commission was now a 501c3. Mr. Kaspr stated no. Ms. Godeski indicated they can take donations that are deductible but not considered charity donations.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

** MR. GEORGE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
** MS. GRUDIN SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting ended at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services