CITY OF NORWALK
ARTS & CULTURAL COMMISSION
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024
VIA TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE:	Brian Kaspr; Chair, Nori Grudin, Naomi Clark, Marc Alan, Steven Rust, Melissa Matuska, Bob Abriola (6:06 p.m.)
STAFF:	Sabrina Godeski, Director of Business Development & Tourism
OTHER:	Heather Dunn Common Council Member, Erika Wesley, Director of the Cultural Alliance of FFC

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kaspr acknowledged those in attendance as noted above. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The chair acknowledged the presence of Heather Dunn, Common Council member and Annemarie (no last name mentioned). Ms. Dunn was promoted to meeting member.

ADMINISTRATION

a. Approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024, special meeting of the Arts and Cultural Commission.

** **MR. ALAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**
** **MR. RUST SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION CARRIED WITH FIVE AYES AND ONE ABSTENTION (MS. CLARK)**

Mr. Abriola joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Budget Review – Bob Abriola

Mr. Abriola stated that there were no changes from the previous budget review. He indicated the council had money available and should determine where the funds should be applied.

b. Events Update – Ava Jacobs

Mr. Kaspr informed the committee that Ms. Jacobs stepped away from her position on the commission. This would leave the newly formed events committee without a leader. Ms. Godeski offered her services to help find a new member and to act as an intermediary.

Ms. Godeski noted that the Office of Business Development and Tourism was planning to start with small, monthly events to go along with the larger ones that will still go on in the city. She listed several ideas for these events.

Ms. Grudin asked about bringing back the library's Lit Crawl in April. Ms. Godeski indicated it was a possibility and listed several other events in planning that might pair well.

Ms. Dunn offered the list of poets she used when she set up a poetry stage.

Mr. Alan had questions about the poet laureate since the change of commission. Ms. Godeski stated that the position of poet laureate rolled over, and a new one didn't need to be nominated.

Mr. Abriola brought up a program in New York City he thought might be something to consider for Norwalk. He stated it would be free of charge for Norwalk residents.

c. Art Teaching Fellowship – Naomi Clark

Ms. Clark stated that the BOE was on board with an artist's residence and probably had available funds. She said she was waiting for a response to her proposal hoping for the program to be in place in a trial capacity by the 2024/2025 school year. She suggested an open call to find a candidate to be on board as a teaching artist.

Ms. Matuska asked if Ms. Clark had reached out to the Guggenheim about their program. Ms. Clark indicated it was still on her to-do list. She also discussed the potential salary hypothetically being $35,000 which is on trend. She also indicated that she would reach out to Ms. Dunn and Ms. Godeski for any tips or tricks they would have to offer.

d. Equity Statement Review – Marc Alan

Mr. Alan discussed creation of the initial draft of the Equity statement that he hoped would be a blueprint for the future. The statement was read into the record.

Ms. Wesley commented on the strength of the statement citing that many arts commissions and councils lack coherent equity statements. She recommended that in the future, the commission should think about what they've accomplished to date. Doing so would act as a means of grounding the conversation.
Ms. Wesley stated it helps people understand what you are committed to in real-time. She also suggested including future goals to show you are working on something actively.

Mr. Kaspr agreed that the Equity Statement would be for working within the commission and not to change the city.

Ms. Wesley suggested a digital suggestion box at the bottom of the statement for the website. Ms. Godeski said she would look into the logistics.

** **MR. ALAN MOVED A MOTION TO APPROVE AND ADOPT THE EQUITY STATEMENT.**
** **MS. MATUSKA SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

e. General Committee Member Updates

Mr. Kaspr gave a list of general updates on projects in the works. Ms. Clark and Ms. Dunn offered their help in planning the teaching events.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion on the Vines – Nori Grudin

Mr. Kaspr discussed the plans surrounding the moving of The Vines to make room for a new mural.

Ms. Grudin presented a history of the sculpture and its intended meaning. She discussed issues relating to its disassembly. She also questioned whether it should be removed, and if removed where it would go.

Mr. Alan indicated his only objection was there was never a formal vote to decommission the sculpture. Ms. Godeski explained that the piece was paid for and part of the public art collection which is overseen by the Arts and Cultural Commission. She also stated that Redevelopment had funding to facilitate whatever decision was made. Ms. Godeski listed the three options involving the sculpture and stated all options included the mural.

There was a discussion about the logistics of moving and/or painting around the sculpture. Ms. Clark suggested finding out if it could be removed and then working from there. Mr. Kaspr suggested if the sculpture was removed to get in touch with the artist. He said the artist should be consulted in an advisory capacity.

Ms. Grudin asked about the mural artists' response to incorporating the sculpture into the mural. Mr. Kaspr said their response was no. He brought up potential issues with the project should the artists back out and problems that could occur with decommissioning.

Mr. Rust put up a slide showing a potential location should the sculpture be removed.

Mr. Kaspr recommended the formation of an off-line sub-committee to come up with a recommendation based on the various discussed factors. He suggested a vote during the next meeting.

There was a discussion about other areas the sculpture could be moved to.

Ms. Grudin indicated the need to have a standard method to decommission artwork. Mr. Alan noted that putting out a call for public opinion might be relevant.

Ms. Grudin asked if a possible determination of how the sculpture is affixed to the wall could be made by the next meeting.

Mr. Kaspr discussed the temporary nature of public art and the fact that you eventually run out of space. He stated The Vines had been up for ten years and may have run its course.

Mr. Alan had questions as to how decommissioning should be defined.

Mr. Kaspr asked for volunteers for the off-line sub-committee.

Mr. Alan suggested that moving the sculpture could be a way of reintroducing it to the public. Ms. Grudin said it came with a plaque. The plaque is across the street and needed to be moved as well.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting ended at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Service