



Thursday, December 7, 2023 | 5 p.m.  
Sandler Center for the Performing Arts | Classroom 1

The Business Meeting of the Arts & Humanities Commission was held on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at 5:00 pm on the second floor of the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts in Classroom 1.

**Commissioners Present:**

- **OFFICER:** Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair
- **OFFICER:** Hon. Winship C. Tower (Ret.), Secretary
- **OFFICER:** Alicia "Sunny" Phillips Peoples, Treasurer
- Michael Cloud-Butler
- Emma "Em" Davis, Champion for the Arts Committee Chair
- Susan C. Grube, Advocacy Committee Chair
- Raeesah Islam
- Ashley McLeod

**Cultural Affairs Department (CAD) Staff Present:**

- Emily Brookover, Public Art & Placemaking Manager
- Mari R. Coronado, Executive Assistant II
- Beth Hundley, Deputy Director
- Emily S. Labows, Director
- Hillary L. Plate, Public Programming & Partnerships Manager

**Absent:**

- **OFFICER:** Olga Torres-Baker, Vice Chair
- Mia Guile, Public Art Committee Chair
- Mark Johnson

**I. WELCOME**

The meeting started at **5:03 p.m.** After welcoming the Commission and guests, *Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair* opened the meeting by reading the Arts & Humanities Commission Mission Statement:

**"To make Virginia Beach a great city, the Virginia Beach Arts and Humanities Commission is dedicated to integrating the arts and humanities, in their full ethnic and cultural diversity, into the fabric of everyday life. Toward this end, the Commission serves as an advisory and funding entity, stimulating and supporting excellence and accessibility in the arts and humanities for all citizens."**

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**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There were no corrections to the November Business Meeting minutes.

**Motion I.**

A motion was made by the *Hon. Winship C. Tower (Ret.), Secretary*, seconded by *Alicia “Sunny” Phillips Peoples, Treasurer* for approval of the minutes from the November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. There was no discussion. **The motion *unanimously* passed to approve the business minutes for the November meeting.**

Members voting **AYE:** Romero, Tower, Peoples, Cloud-Butler, Davis, Grube, Islam, McLeod  
Members voting **NAY:** Zero  
Members **ABSTAINING:** Zero  
Members **ABSENT:** Torres-Baker, Guile, Johnson

**III. APPROVAL OF TREASURER’S REPORT**

*Alicia “Sunny” Phillips Peoples, Treasurer* reported the grant payments for Virginia Ballet and Virginia Stage Company were paid and due to issues with the grant software, Foundant Technologies, Inc., the final report is pending from Teens with a Purpose. The total amount disbursed is \$596,100.

**Motion II.**

A motion was made by *Susan C. Grube*, seconded by *Michael Cloud-Butler* for approval of the November Treasurer’s Report. There was no discussion. **The motion *unanimously* passed to approve the November Treasurer’s Report.**

Members voting **AYE:** Romero, Tower, Peoples, Cloud-Butler, Davis, Grube, Islam, McLeod  
Members voting **NAY:** Zero  
Members **ABSTAINING:** Zero  
Members **ABSENT:** Torres-Baker, Guile, Johnson

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

a. 2023 Arts & Humanities Commission Annual Holiday Social

- The Commission is grateful for the continued generosity of *Emma “Em” Davis* for again opening her home to host the event.
- The Commission was reminded to RSVP by December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The AHC Holiday Social will take place 5:30 p.m. on Friday, December 22.
- Those attending are asked to bring their beverage of choice.
- The agenda packet includes a copy of the invitation with all the details.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

a. FY24 Community Cultural Arts Grant (CCAG)

There are two presentations on the agenda for the Commission to review.

❖ Funding Request from **Virginia Opera Association**

Presenter: Sherelle Rodgers Jackson

Funding Amount Request: **\$2,000**

Project Description: Virginia Opera requests \$2,000 to bring "Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World", a bi-lingual 35-minute opera about a young girl living in Mexico City who has her portrait painted by Frida Kahlo to organizations focused on disabled patrons located in the City of Virginia Beach.

**QUESTIONS:**

Grube: Please talk more about the production.

This is a short-compact opera lasting 35-minutes (an average opera being 2.5 hrs) to allow audiences (ages 4-18) to sit through comfortably without getting lost. The performance is open to the public.

Grube: How will the public find out about the program?

They have updated their website; events are posted through "Virginia Community"; promotion through their partners and use of social media platforms and their Saturday newsletters.

Grube: Please explain the project budget.

\$1,100 will be used for the artists with the rest going to production. The \$66,000 budget is for the entire state of Virginia.

Grube/Peoples: Is there a budget for the City of Virginia Beach? A budget for the City of Virginia Beach will be required as part for the grant application. There is no budget for Virginia Beach, but they can provide one.

Peoples: Since the production is a total of 35 minutes, what is the anticipated amount of time spent with the audience? Is there another component to help access and make connections with the audience?

Outside of the 15-minute audience interaction before the production, which is contingent on how much time is available, there is no other audience engagement.

Romero/Davis: Short of providing a budget targeting towards the City of Virginia Beach - for the \$2,000 amount being requested, what would it be used for?

\$1,100 would be used for the artists and the rest would be allotted for production costs i.g., wigs, costumes and other production materials.

Romero: The Commission recognizes that the timing of the show is to start January 1 through January 31, but an informed decision cannot be made without a dedicated budget for the City of Virginia Beach.

The Commission has decided to defer their decision until receipt of the Virginia Beach budget from Virginia Opera Association.

❖ Funding Request from **Virginia Beach Library Foundation**

Presenters: Kelly Weber Stefonowich & Katie Cerqua

Funding Amount Request: **\$4,000**

Project Description: Virginia Beach Public Library (VBPL) is requesting funding to hold an artist workshop targeting approximately 150 youth in grades 3-7 (but welcome to all ages) and educators featuring graphic novelist Johnnie Christmas to connect with the students. The workshop will include an artist workshop, author talk, Q&A, and book signing. He will then coach students through illustrating the first panel of a graphic novel. The Youth Workshop with Johnnie Christmas will occur in conjunction with Virginia Beach Public Library's 2024 Battle of the Books.

**QUESTIONS:**

Grube: It appears that funding is primarily for Johnnie Christmas workshops for 150-200 students. The grant shows a breakdown of the expenses and the \$250 meal stipend would need to be specifically excluded or be eliminated from the calculation. For the 150-200 students, it would cost approximately \$30-\$37 per student. If the \$250 meal stipend is removed from the \$5,500 budget, the \$4000 is more than 75%. If the event is open to the public, how would non-Battle of the Book students find out about the program?

They would work closely with all school groups, promoting mostly through public and private school, newsletters. Their marketing and communication team uses a Tier 1 marketing campaign i.e., social media, flyers, posters. Communication is also through their community partners i.e., Virginia African American Cultural Center and the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

**Motion III.**

A motion was made by *Susan C. Grube* to approve \$3,900 adjusted to remove the meal stipend, to the Virginia Beach Library Foundation, seconded by *Alicia "Sunny" Phillips Peoples, Treasurer*. There was no further discussion. **The motion *unanimously* passed for approval of the Community Cultural Arts Grant adjusted to remove food expenses funding of \$3,900 to the Virginia Beach Library Foundation.**

Members voting **AYE:** Romero, Tower, Peoples, Cloud-Butler, Davis, Grube, Islam, McLeod  
Members voting **NAY:** Zero  
Members **ABSTAINING:** Zero  
Members **ABSENT:** Torres-Baker, Guile, Johnson

2. Upcoming deadline

- After approval of the CCAG funding of \$3,900 to the Virginia Beach Library Foundation, the remaining balance is \$6,100.
- The Round 3 FY24 CCAG applications are due on February 6, 2024 along with the FY25 Project Grant applications. Grant presentations are scheduled for March 21, 2024.

b. 90-Day City Festival Task Force Update

- City Council approved a measure to convene a task force to examine city sponsored festivals.
- It would recommend updates to the Oceanfront parks policy and develop a more formal way to evaluate funding requests. Recommendations are due to City Council within 90 days of its first meeting.
- The task force will consist of 17 members, some coming from the Resort Advisory Commission, the Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission and the Virginia Beach Hotel Association.
- *Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair* volunteered to represent the AHC seat, formally thanking City Council for including the Arts & Humanities Commission in that conversation.

c. FY25 Project Grant Review

a. Deliberation Discussion

- For the FY25 Project Grant application process, *Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair* asked the Commission that once notified to review the grant applications on Foundant, to be cognizant of dedicating ample review time for the grant applications and to also be mindful of the time spent by the organizations in gathering all the rich information for their application.
- Staff will peruse each application to ensure they are completed and eligible prior to sending for Commission review.
- Ready-made tutorials for Foundant Technologies are made available to the Commission to help acclimate them to the grant software.
- At the February meeting, the agenda will dedicate time to go through the Foundant portal for the Commission to experience a live demo of viewing pending grant applications.
- *Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair* formally recognized *Susan C. Grube* as a good mentor for the deliberation process and made a request for her to share some helpful advice on how to make grant recommendations.
- In addition to offering to answer any questions, *Susan C. Grube* shared the following key components to look for:
  - A balanced budget
  - A project data sheet which breaks each project down
  - What is the cost per person for each project?
  - How does the project work from a logistic standpoint?
- *Hillary L. Plate, Public Programming & Partnerships Manager* referred the Commission to view the [Policy/Eligibility Guidelines](#) and [Grant Budget Tips](#) on the [AHC Website](#).

b. January Grant Workshops

- *Hillary L. Plate, Public Programming & Partnerships Manager* will host January grant workshops for all arts organizations.
- The Commission can schedule an appointment any Friday in January with *Ms. Plate* for one-on-one time to review the grant process and answer any questions on Foundant Technologies.

- c. Approval of FY25 Project Grant application and policy
  - There are no content changes to the FY25 Project Grant application and policy therefore, no approval vote is needed.

## VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### a. Advertising and Marketing Committee

*Alicia "Sunny" Phillips Peoples, Treasurer/Committee Chair* reported that Alex Dye had prepared an informative flyer about the Commission, grants available, the city's public art program and opportunities for exhibiting art at the Sandler Center Gallery. It was distributed at the following events:

- May: Community meeting
- September: "Culture Meets Council" meeting
- November: ViBe's CreativeMornings Virginia Beach featuring Rita Addico Cohen

### b. Advocacy Committee

There is no report.

### c. Champion for the Arts Committee

*Committee Chair Em Davis* reported the following;

- The Committee is to review the current nomination form before the February 2024 release date.
- The nomination period will take place from February through April.
- The forms are due on April 1, 2024.
- The reception for the recipient will be held the first Thursday in August at the Sandler Center.

### d. Cultural Equity Committee

On behalf of *Committee Chair Olga Torres-Baker* who was absent, *Staff Liaison Hillary Plate* reported the following:

- The Cultural Equity Statement and Commitment was approved at the last meeting that includes actions steps and accountability measures.
- The Cultural Equity Committee is working with Alex Dye, Media & Communications Coordinator to create a one-sheet to post online and circulate to the public .
- Quarterly meeting schedule to begin in January 2024 and meet quarterly in April, July and October and opened to the public.
- *Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair* added the reminder that the City of Virginia Beach is recognizing the importance and the critical role that arts and humanities are playing in the city.

### e. Public Art Committee

*Committee Chair Mia Guile* is out of town. *Emily Brookover, Public Art & Placemaking Manager* provided the following update:

- The review committee selected five Historic Kempsville Public Art Sculpture finalists who will each receive a \$1,500 stipend. At the end of January, their proposals are due

and are to include sketches, their budget and community engagement. They are scheduled to give their presentations in February.

- This is the first year that funds were received for public art maintenance. A Conservation and Maintenance Request for Proposals (RFP) for three public art sculptures is in the works to include:
  - “Wings” by Lin Emery: Aluminum kinetic sculpture in front of the Sandler Center in Town Center
  - “Pennant” by Lin Emery: Kinetic sculpture composed of stainless steel and marine aluminum at the Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library
  - “The Wave” by Jeff Laramore: Stainless Steel sculpture at the Laskin Gateway
- Maintenance was completed for five bronze sculptures: Trio of Herons (Town Center), Delight (Atlantic & 33<sup>rd</sup> St.), The Kiss (Town Center) , Children Playing (VB Courthouse) and the Friendship Anchor (Kempe's Landing Park).
- The newest member of the Public Art Committee is Emily Shield who held a position at the Norfolk Chrysler Museum for five years and recently transitioned to become Events and Programs Manager at downtown Norfolk. Her meeting will be on December 15.

## VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- a. **Em Davis:** Busy month supporting Symphonicity, Virginia Musical Theater and Little Theatre of Virginia Beach; important to support the arts and be visible at the performances; made mention of wearing nametags
- b. **Raesah Islam:** Teaching both at Governors School (4<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) for the Arts and at YELLOW and will be curating First Thursdays at Chrysler Museum of Art.
- c. **Ashley McLeod:** Enjoyed the performance, “The Secret Garden” by Virginia Musical Theatre. which was one of her favorite books to teach.
- d. **Sue Grube:** Supported holiday performances by Ballet Virginia/The Nutcracker, Symphonicity/The Messiah Sing-Along, Virginia Symphony/The Messiah and mirrored *Em Davis’* comment to support and be visible at the performances.
- e. **Michael Cloud Butler:** Interested in getting more information about the Special Events Task Force's recommendations for the city festivals after the 90-days.

## VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following organizations were in attendance to share information about their organization and programs to the Commission:

- Kay Burcher (Little Theatre of Virginia Beach)
- Katie Cerqua (Virginia Beach Public Library Foundation)
- ViBe Creative District (Kate Pittman)
- Sharon Cooke (The Underground Performing Arts Collective/The Arts Academy of UPAC)

As a surprise, *Emily S. Labows, Director* presented *Hillary L. Plate, Public Programming & Partnerships Manager* with the City's ruby service pin recognizing her five years with the City of Virginia Beach. It was followed by a warm round of applause. *Hillary Plate* happily accepted the recognition, but not before promoting the Yuletide Wassail & Wonder on December 16-17 at the

Thoroughgood House that's in partnership with the Friends of Virginia Beach History; and secondly, thanking the Virginia Beach Libraries for inviting her on behalf of Cultural Affairs to a Teen Time: Ted Talk.

**IX. NEXT MEETING- Sandler Center for the Performing Arts**

- a. Reminder: No January Meetings
- b. 4 p.m.: Thursday, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>- Executive Committee Meeting- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor/Conference Room
- c. 5 p.m.: Thursday, Feb 1<sup>st</sup>- Business Meeting- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor/Classroom 1

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **6:10 p.m.**

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Called to order by  
Dr. Cynthia Romero, Chair  
Arts & Humanities Commission

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Minutes prepared by  
Mari R. Coronado, Executive Assistant II  
Cultural Affairs Department

**VIX. ATTACHMENT**

December 2023 Agenda Packet