

**Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
Council Meeting
Thursday, February 15, 2007
4:30 PM
Firehouse 13
Providence, Rhode Island**

Council members present: Christopher McMahan, *Chairman*; Carrie Zaslow, *Vice Chairman*; Ann Clanton; Stu Giannini; Azim Mazagonwalla; Regina Partridge; Andrea Valentini

Council members unable to attend: Mary K. Talbot, *Secretary*; Suzanne Augenstein; Nancy Chapman; Peggy Melozzi; Anne Quintero; Michael Watson

Staff members present: Randall Rosenbaum, *Executive Director*; Sherilyn Brown, *Education Director*; Cristina Di Chiera, *Individual Artists/Public Art Program Director*; Carol Conley, *Assistant, Film Office*; Steven Feinberg, *Director, RI Film & TV Office*; Dan Kahn, *Assistant, Education Program*; Winnie Lambrecht, *Traditional & Community Arts Program Director*; Diane Pertuso, *Fiscal & Office Manager*; Estelle Verte, *Grants Coordinator*

Public present: Michael Sivatolo, RI State House of Representatives

Chairman McMahan called the meeting to order at 4:42 PM.

Chairman McMahan introduced Anna Shapiro, director of Firehouse 13, who welcomed the Council and gave a short introduction to this new Providence art space.

Review and Approval of the Minutes of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts' December 7, 2006 Council Meeting

After review, a motion was made to accept the minutes of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts' October 15, 2005 Council meeting as presented.

(Motion: Stu Giannini; seconded by Regina Partridge, Passed: Unanimously)

Financial Report – 2nd Quarter FY07

Chairman McMahan asked Diane Pertuso to report on the latest Council financials. Ms. Pertuso said that things are moving along as expected, with expenditures on track with projections. Mr. Rosenbaum reported that this is the first financial report where the expenditures of the Film & TV Office can be clearly tracked. This will be the case in all

future financial reports. There was some discussion about ways in which the state's new financial system, RI-FANS, has both helped and hindered the timely processing of invoices and other payments. As we adjust to the new system things seem to be working better.

After discussion, a motion was made to accept the financial reports for the 2nd Quarter of FY07 and place the report on file for audit review.

(Motion: Carrie Zaslow; seconded by Ann Clanton Passed: Unanimously)

Promotions Committee

In the absence of committee chair Peggy Melozzi, Mr. Rosenbaum reported that the committee, which includes Andrea Valentini and Mary K. Talbot, has met with three candidates for the job of designing a new logo and 'brand' for the State Arts Council. The committee chose Tom Roskelly from Portsmouth, RI. Since then the committee, with Estelle Verte and Cristina Di Chiera representing the staff, has met with the designer. Mr. Rosenbaum has responded to a survey that gets basic information out on the Council, and an electronic survey will soon go out to the arts community and others to ascertain their views on RISCA, its strengths and weaknesses. The committee will continue to meet with the designer and report back on its progress to the full Council. At some point the Council will be asked to approve a design that has been fully vetted by the Promotions Committee. Chairman McMahan said this will help us as we address our 'visibility' in the community.

Chairman's Report

Chairman McMahan asked Ms. Zaslow to report on the housing initiative. There is still significant funding available for the next year or so, and we have accomplished many of our major goals. A survey has taken place which gives us a great deal of information and insight into the artist housing situation. A new web site will soon debut with a great deal of valuable information to help artists and developers with affordable housing issues. The next question is where do we go from here?

Chairman McMahan expressed his sense that it was good to see this level of progress, and Mr. Mazagonwalla said that it was good that RISCA was put in the center of this important issue. Ms. Zaslow suggested that policy and policy development was the next logical step. The web site can take over a good bit of the "technical assistance" that has been provided, and may also provide a small revenue stream for the project (not for the Arts Council) that can help to sustain and grow this effort.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Rosenbaum had Sherilyn Brown, RISCA's Education Director, report on a meeting that had just taken place with Commissioner McWalters and Board of Regents Chairman Jim DiPrete to discuss arts education. We are happy to convey the strong support of

the Dept. of Education leadership, including four members of the Board of Regents, and their planned continuation of the arts in the revised regulations that advise and direct school departments throughout the state.

Ms. Brown also reported that we had a meeting with the principal of the Jacqueline Walsh School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Pawtucket, along with Council member Stu Giannini, following the issues raised at the December Council meeting. We talked about using federal Challenge America funding to support a collaboration with the Gamm Theatre (located next door to the school) dealing with literacy in the arts for kids. Mr. Giannini contributed to the discussion by offering to help with video documentation of the project.

Ms. Brown also discussed the upcoming Poetry Out Loud event, to be held on March 13 at Rhode Island College.

Mr. Rosenbaum reported that RISCA has been working with Rep. Joanne Giannini on plans for the Mt. Pleasant Community Arts Center project, which has now received the support of Mayor Cicilline.

Steven Feinberg, director of the RI Film & TV Office, reported that Brotherhood would begin filming shortly. He also reported on efforts to develop film industry infrastructure, in particular a studio sound stage and production facility. These efforts are in their early stages, but very exciting.

Mr. Rosenbaum reported that the Encore Awards were coming up on March 6th, and that RISCA will once again participate in this event. The honorees include Opera Providence, Festival Ballet and the Steelyard. More information to come.

Old Business

Strategic Planning Process

Mr. Rosenbaum reported that the staff has begun to flesh out the material that the Council had approved in two previous meetings. The material submitted for Council review included some of this, including a breakdown of goals and objectives. As the Council application deadline approaches it is becoming harder to work on this, but new material was made available for Council review.

There was no comment at the meeting, but members were encouraged to review and communicate their thoughts and suggestions to Mr. Rosenbaum

Public Art Approvals

Chairman McMahan introduced Cristina Di Chiera, who took the Council through a review of two public art projects up for Council approval:

Dunkin' Donuts Center

The details of this project were included in the Council book. The selection panel recommended commissioning Seattle artist Lorna Jordan for a public art project that would "transform the plaza between the Hilton Hotel and the west entrance of the Dunkin' Donuts Arena" into an urban park, including awnings, benches, lighting and green spaces within a "cohesive design."

The Council was enthusiastic about this project, and felt that it would be worth using the announcement of this as a way to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of the role of public art.

After discussion, a motion was made to accept the recommendation of the Dunkin' Donuts Center selection panel and commission a work by artist Lorna Jordan for the Dunkin' Donuts Arena.

(Motion: Azim Mazagonwalla; seconded by Stu Giannini Passed: Unanimously)

Kent County Courthouse

Ms. Di Chiera reminded the Council that the last time this project was reviewed, the Kent County Courthouse selection panel was unanimous in its support of one project, the sound installation by artist Bill Fontana. The panel was divided about the video proposal by artist Fernanda D'Agostino and had requested revisions from sculptor Michael Davis and glass artist Paul Housberg.

Since that time the Courts indicated their lack of support for a video installation. The selection panel was "enthralled" with Paul Housberg's revised proposal, and the panel once again indicated its unanimous support for the Bill Fontana audio installation. So, the selection panel's recommendation was to commission work by Paul Housberg and Bill Fontana.

The Council strongly supported the glass sculpture by Paul Housberg.

There was a significant amount of discussion regarding the Bill Fontana piece. There was no disagreement about the value of supporting an audio installation, even though that was an unusual -- and for some a new -- form of public art. Bill Fontana is an acknowledged master artist in this discipline, and his works have been featured in temporary and long-term installations throughout the world. The Council felt it would be an honor to have a work by an artist with his reputation. They even felt it might be useful to have Mr. Fontana participate in some kind of forum or event that would help educate the public about this type of work.

The Chairman raised concern that the technology involved in Fontana's work might not stand the test of time. He pointed out that electronic installations -- like most "device-

based" work – can fail, and repair/replacement can be costly. Several members remarked that the digital disc technology proposed for this project was extremely reliable, but agreed with the Chairman that it would be prudent to seek assurances that this work would function well for a minimum of ten years. The Council asked that the Chairman ensure that the contract with the artist provide a guarantee that the work would maintain its integrity for at least a ten year period.

After discussion, a motion was made to accept the recommendation of the Kent County Courthouse selection panel and commission a series of glassworks by artist Paul Housberg and a sound installation by artist Bill Fontana for the Kent County Courthouse. The Council chairman will ensure that the contract with artist Bill Fontana reflect sufficient guarantees that the work will maintain its integrity for at least an initial ten year period.

(Motion: Regina Partridge; seconded by Azim Mazagonwalla Passed: Unanimously)

Update on upcoming projects

Ms. Di Chiera reported on upcoming projects at URI, Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island Airport Corporation and the Rhode Island Training School.

New Business

Approval of additional public art panelists

Ms. Di Chiera passed out a series of recommendations for people who could serve as selection panel members for the public art program. The Council expressed their support for those individuals on the list, but were not ready to approve those where no biographical material was provided.

After discussion, a motion was made to accept the list of recommendations for additional selection panel member for the public art program, with the exception of those listed where no biographical information was provided.

(Motion: Stu Giannini; seconded by Azim Mazagonwalla Passed: Unanimously)

Report on Governor's Proposed FY08 Budget for RISCA

Mr. Rosenbaum reported that Governor Carcieri presented his FY08 budget proposal to the General Assembly at the beginning of this month, and that the Governor proposed a hold even budget for our discretionary grants – the category of funding that supports all the grants approved by the Council throughout the year. This was a pleasant surprise, given the serious financial challenge the State was facing with the FY08 budget.

Mr. Rosenbaum reported that the Governor's budget holds the line on community service grants (meaning no cuts in that category), and there are small increases in

operating costs to reflect salary and benefit adjustments, and increased funding for public art projects.

Request for approval for the Education Program to approach the Ford Foundation for support of the Arts Learning Network activities.

Ms. Brown reported on her recent trip to Dallas, Texas to attend the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) meeting. At that meeting she became aware of funding opportunities from major foundations, in particular the Ford Foundation, which might help support the work we are doing with the Rhode Island Arts Learning Network. Ms. Brown asked permission to approach the Ford Foundation to seek support for this Rhode Island arts education project.

After discussion, a motion was made to endorse an initial approach by RISCA to the Ford Foundation for support of the Rhode Island Arts Learning Network.

(Motion: Regina Partridge; seconded by Andrea Valentini Passed: Unanimously)

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

(Motion: Azim Mazagonwalla; seconded by Stu Giannini; Passed: Unanimously)