

Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
Council Meeting
Thursday, October 8, 2009
4:30 PM
Youth Development Facility
Administrative Conference Room
Cranston RI

Council Members Present: Bill Bracket, Chairman; Carrie Zaslow, Vice Chairman; Mary K. Talbot, Secretary; Ann Clanton; Dana Neugent; Regina Partridge; Carolyn Peck; Jean Rondeau

Council Members Unable to Attend: Beverly Blais; Nancy Chapman; Andrea Valentini; David Wax

Staff Members Present: Randall Rosenbaum, Executive Director; Steven Feinberg, Director RI Film and Television Office; Sherilyn Brown, Education Director; Cristina DiChiera, Director Individual Artists & Public Art Program; Elizabeth Keithline, Project Grants for Organizations/Public Art; Donna Fiske, Fiscal & Office Manager; Daniel Kahn, Assistant, Education Program; Shea'la Finch, Assistant, Individual Artists & Public Art Program; Carol Conley, Assistant to the Director of Film and Television; Lew Place, Webmaster

Public Present: Adriana Thomas, Policy Analyst, House of Representatives

Chairman Bill Bracket called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

The school principal, Sheila DiRaimo, spoke about the Youth Development Facility, their school, and how they have benefited from the public art display as well as their part in helping to create the ceramic tiles.

Approval of Minutes – June 25, 2009 Council meeting:

(Motion: Jean Rondeau, seconded by Carolyn Peck)

Announcements from Council Members (events, activities, issues of note)

Cristina DiChiera informed the Council that RISCA grant recipients Steve Job and Chris Turner will be performing on October 8th and 9th as part of the FirstWorks festival.

Financial Report – 1st Quarter – FY10

Executive Director Mr. Rosenbaum reported that our first quarter finances for FY10 are right where they should be. We have spent about 30% of our budget in the first quarter, with a higher percentage of spending reflecting the grant awards from the June Council meeting.

After discussion, a motion was made to accept the financial report for the 1st Quarter of FY10 and place the report on file for audit review.

(Motion: Mary K. Talbot; seconded by Carrie Zaslow Passed: Unanimously)

Chairman's Report:

Film Industry: Chairman Brackett spoke to the issue of making the case for support of the film and TV industry in Rhode Island, and indicated that some research needs to take place regarding the economic importance of this sector, and the value of establishing a film production studio in Rhode Island.

Executive Director's Report:

Craig Dreeszen's Report: Mr. Rosenbaum announced the staff has been working very hard all summer to develop action plans for the strategic plan. Although a lot has been accomplished, all areas have not been completed. Mr. Rosenbaum would like to review all the plans with the Council at the next Council meeting.

Budget Challenges: Mr Rosenbaum reported the hiring freeze has caused a delay in filling the new Community Arts Program Director position. Since this position would be paid with all federal money, he is hopeful it will only be a short delay. Mr. Rosenbaum also reported that the state employees union agreed to give up 8 days pay in FY10 and 4 days in FY11 in exchange for a no lay offs provision.

Governor's Portrait: There was a very good response for people applying to paint the official Governor's Portrait. The deadline for the application is October 15th.

New England Foundation for the Arts: Elizabeth Keithline reported on her recent visit to a meeting in Boston for NEFA. NEFA is working on rewriting their guidelines, and Liz hopes this will make them more accessible to Rhode Island organizations.

Film and Television: Mr. Feinberg reported on the possibility that the pilot House Rules might be picked up for broadcast, which would be good for the local film sector. His office should hear something in the next few weeks.

The Film & TV Office is also working to help the Columbus Theater in Providence, which was closed because of code violations.

Mr. Feinberg reported on efforts to fund a research study on the economic benefits of the film industry in RI. The Film & TV office is currently doing all the work but they are hopefully to get additional support from others. Chairman Brackett expressed the need to do this in order to build political support for tax incentives to attract film/TV business.

Old Business:

Public Art: Elizabeth Keithline updated the Council on the status of all public art projects in progress. Regina Partridge spoke about plans for a public art panel discussion scheduled to take place in the spring of 2010. Ms. Partridge will send more information to the Council when it is available.

Artist Peter Geisser showed his appreciation to the Council for its efforts in getting approval to install public art in the Youth Development Facility, which falls in a gray area since "prisons" are not technically part of the public art program in accordance with state law. Peter spoke briefly about the work of art he created with the help of the students and some of the stories behind the art pieces. Peter also asked for help in raising funds from the private sector to support extending this art project so they can fill the entire hall where the public art is displayed. There is 1200 square feet of wall, and the project paid for 80 square feet. Peter and artist Mika Seeger put up 100 square feet of tiles. They are hoping to get funding for the remainder of the 1100 square feet. The theme of this project is "where did we come from, who are we, where are we going".

Federal Stimulus Money: The federal stimulus grant money process is moving along smoothly. Payments will be going out very shortly. Mr. Rosenbaum reported on the significant amount of work that has gone into the awarding of funds and the monitoring of all grantees, under terms of the federal stimulus program that seem to change frequently. He praised the state office of

Economic Recovery and Reinvestment for the work they have done in coordinating all state agency prime and subrecipients, and reported to the Council that things are moving along according to plan.

Online Application and 'Customer Satisfaction': Mr. Rosenbaum reported on the results of a recent customer satisfaction survey from the users of RISCA's new online application process. All responses were very positive, and Council staff recognized that the weakest part of the new system involved some problems with applicants uploading their support materials online. We will be working with the online application technical staff to improve the process of uploading material. This online system will save staff several hours of work. Since this was the first time it was used, a lot more time was required helping people through the process which we expect to improve.

New Business:

Appointment of Standing Committees: Chairman Bill Brackett requested the approval of the Council to set up a series of standing committees, making the case that there is much that needs to be done, and committees would be the most efficient way to manage the work of the Council.

The recommended committees are:

Film & TV: Dana Nugent has agreed to chair and Beverly Blais has agreed to serve.

Oversight: Nancy Chapman has agreed to chair this committee

Finance: Jean Rondeau has agreed to chair and David Wax has agreed to serve.

After discussion a motion was made to establish the new set of committees.

(Motion: Carrie Zaslou, seconded by Regina Partridge)

Providence Black Repertory: Discussions took place about the financial challenges facing the Providence Black Repertory Company. After consulting with the DOA legal office it is clear that RISCA cannot process payments on Black Rep grants because they are currently in receivership. Under those circumstances the grant funds would go to past creditors rather than future arts programs. We are still waiting to hear from the General Assembly regarding their legislative grant. Providence Black Rep has raised the question of whether they could receive their grant support once the organization had emerged from receivership. Mr. Rosenbaum reported that he and Chairman Brackett would be meeting with representatives from the organization shortly to explore these questions. Mr. Rosenbaum said that a lot would depend on what a new Black Rep looked like, and what programming it would do following a reorganization, and that it might be more appropriate to support them on a project-by-project basis. After discussion it was decided that the Council should be provided with an update at its next meeting.

Folk Art Consultant: Mr. Rosenbaum reported that, even with the impending hire of a Community Arts Program Director it was still important to have qualified help in supporting the folk and traditional arts community. Mr. Rosenbaum reported on conversations with the Massachusetts Cultural Council about a shared arrangement that would bring Maggie Holzberg, their nationally recognized folk arts program person, to work here in Rhode Island with our community. There was a possibility that Maggie might not herself be available, but that she could help us locate a qualified individual. There is \$15,000 in funding from the National Endowment for the Arts folk arts program that could help support this arrangement. Mr. Rosenbaum asked the Council for its permission to move forward with this arrangement.

A motion was made to authorize the Executive Director to engage a qualified consultant to support Rhode Island's folk arts program.

(Motion: Jean Rondeau; seconded by Mary K. Talbot)

School Buses: Mr. Rosenbaum reported that the cost of buses was a major factor preventing school groups from attending arts and cultural events. In discussions with arts groups, including a recent meeting of the GOS organizations, many felt that RISCA would be providing a great

service by helping to support some of the cost of transportation to cultural events. One Council member mentioned that she understood there was some support through a little-known program that redirects funds from drug busts to be used for programs like busing kids to programs. In any case, this is an important issue, and Mr. Rosenbaum reported that he would be looking into finding resources to support this effort. There was general consensus among Council members that this would be worth developing.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM

(Motion: Carrie Zaslou; seconded by Jean Rondeau)