

MINUTES

City of Aurora

CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION (CAC)

Wednesday, January 30, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

Aurora Central Library, 2nd Floor Board Room

14949 E. Alameda Parkway

Aurora, CO 80012

Commissioners Present	Mary Mollicone (Chair), Auset Maryam Ali, Kimberly Bauer, donnie I. betts, Amy Cheslin, Diane Rothers, Sethe Tucker (by phone), Dionne Williams
Commissioners Absent	Maureen Maycheco
Staff	Gary Margolis
Guests	Ree Varcoe

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mary Mollicone at 6:35 p.m.

Action Item: Approve Agenda for January 30, 2019

The agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Old Business

Volunteer Hours Forms – Forms were collected.

Volunteer Agreement Forms – Forms were collected from members who did not complete theirs in December.

Action Item: Approve Minutes for December 12, 2018

A motion was made by Dionne Williams and seconded by donnie I. betts to approve the Minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Discussion: 2019 Northwest Aurora Arts Grant Program Panels

Following are some of the comments made by the commissioners:

- Several commissioners stated that they enjoyed the process.
- One commissioner stated that he/she especially enjoyed the opportunity to provide on-the-spot technical assistance. Another commissioner on a different panel commented that he/she didn't realize they were allowed to do that and would have welcomed the opportunity to participate in that way, too. This is an issue (the role of panelists) that needs to be clarified.
- It was noted how the application was able to reveal experienced from inexperienced grantwriters.

- At least one commissioner thought it was helpful and a good thing when members of the public not directly affiliated with an applicant were able to help defend the application. Another commissioner thought it should be a requirement for an applicant to have a representative at the panel.
- Multiple commissioners expressed a need to provide grantwriting workshops for applicants. There was discussion about creating a committee to explore that idea and make recommendations. One commissioner suggested peer-to-peer mentoring as a helpful strategy. Commissioner Rothers noted that Development Services has a contract with Purpose Aligned Consulting to provide technical assistance to groups in the arts district and that new grantees would most likely be able to access that assistance.
- There was general agreement that the decision to open up the process was a good one. For one thing, applications increased from five (5) in 2018 to nineteen (19) in 2019 thereby greatly increasing the possibility of new programming in the arts district. The diversity of applications greatly improved as well. In addition, it was noted that providing a “gateway” grant such as these will help to open doors to larger funders who are looking for applicants with track records of managing grants.
- It was noted that all of the panelists seemed to have done their homework. They came to their respective panels with their scoresheets completed, and they were prepared with insightful questions.
- Commissioner Ali spoke about other organizations that had expressed an interest in the Commission’s new process.
- Commissioner Mollicone inquired how the commission would get feedback regarding what the applicants actually accomplished and suggested that might be another task for the “grants planning committee” to address if the Commission creates such a committee.
- There was general agreement that while the Commission should be proud of the improvements it has made to the grant program, that should be only one piece of the Commission’s overall responsibility and that work needs to be done identifying other ways the Commission can become a resource for the entire city - not just the arts district.

Action Item: Consideration of 2019 grant amounts for General Operating Support and Project Support applicants to the Northwest Aurora Arts Grant Program

Cultural Services Division Manager Gary Margolis presented the following methodology to the Commissioners for determining **Project Grant Awards**:

1. The total amount to be awarded would be \$35,000 (almost 20% of the total).
2. To be eligible for any award, an applicant had to have earned a score or index (see definition below) of .50 or better from the panel.
3. The **MAXIMUM** possible project grant award would be \$10,000.
4. Awards would be calculated by multiplying the applicant’s index by \$10,000.
5. If the total amount to be awarded using the method just described exceeded the total amount available (\$35,000), there would be an across-the-board adjustment by the percentage difference.
6. Awards would be rounded to the nearest hundred dollars.

7. Index is defined as the sum of the averages of all the panelists' scores for all of the criteria converted to a percentage.

Margolis next provided a methodology for determining General Operating Grant Awards:

1. The total amount to be awarded would be \$150,000 (about 80% of the total).
2. Applicants would be placed into one of three Tiers as follows:
 - a. Tier I applicants must have an annual operating income greater than \$100,000 and year-round operations in a "home" in the arts district. These applicants would be eligible for a maximum grant of \$50,000.
 - b. Tier II applicants must have an annual operating income greater than \$50,000 and provide at least occasional programming in a "home" in the arts district. These applicants would be eligible for a maximum grant of \$25,000.
 - c. Tier III applicants are everyone else.
3. Awards would be calculated by multiplying the applicant's index (see definition at #7 above) by the maximum award for their tier.
4. If the total amount to be awarded using the method just described exceeded the total amount available (\$150,000), there would be an across-the-board adjustment by the percentage difference.
5. Awards would be rounded to the nearest hundred dollars.

Margolis distributed handouts to the commissioners which set forth the amounts applicants to both programs would receive using these methodologies.

The discussion produced the following changes to the spreadsheets:

1. The Commission accepted the use of projected budgets (as opposed to actuals) for determining annual operating income.
2. The Commission was unable to determine that Kim Robards Dance, Inc. was a Tier I or Tier II applicant due to an inability to determine if they had a "home" in the arts district, so they were re-assigned to Tier III.
3. There was a discussion about whether or not it was appropriate to go back to applicants for additional information for the purpose of calculating awards.
4. Commissioners and staff discussed the possible outcome from decreasing amounts to "legacy" organizations by 50% or even more. While at least one commissioner expressed concern about the destabilizing effect, staff expressed the possibility that the decrease in funding from one source might incentivize organizations to improve their development efforts and ultimately strengthen them by diversifying their contributed revenue sources.

A motion was made by Dionne Williams and seconded by donnie l. betts to approve the methodologies as adjusted. The motion passed unanimously with Commissioners Ali and Rothers abstaining due to conflicts of interest.

Action Item: Election of Officers

A motion was made by Diane Rothers and seconded by Amy Cheslin to elect the following slate of officers:

- Chairperson – Dionne Williams
- Vice-Chairperson – Auset Maryam Ali
- Secretary – Kimberly Bauer

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion about “field trip” to see “Hooded or being Black for dummies” at the Aurora Fox Arts Center.


There were mixed reactions among the commissioners who saw the play in terms of its ability to further a discussion about race. Some thought it was a good starting place. At least one commissioner was extremely offended by its representations of black people.

The consensus of commissioners was that it would be a good idea to hold meetings in various locations and try to schedule more opportunities for the commission to experience Aurora’s arts and culture programming as a group.

Reports were tabled due to a lack of time.

There were no public comments.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.



Mary Mollicone, Chair



Gary Margolis, Staff

The purpose of the Cultural Affairs Commission is to provide ongoing systematic planning for the development of Cultural Arts activities within the city of Aurora; to implement the Cultural Arts Plan; to assist the many community cultural groups by providing needed overall resources; to stimulate community involvement; and to enhance current cultural activities.