

**RICHMOND ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION (RACC)**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, March 24, 2022**  
**7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Zoom Invitation**

Present: Commission Chair Florene Wiley; Vice Chair Melissa Kirk; and Commissioners Lynson Beaulieu, Deb Dyer, Emily Leighton and Phillip Mehas

Absent: Commissioner Tom Herriman, and Council Liaison Melvin Willis

Staff Present: Arts & Culture Manager Winifred Day

**I. WELCOME / CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

The RACC meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. ACTION ITEMS:**

**a. APPROVE March 24, 2022 Meeting Agenda**

Motion by Commissioner Dyer, seconded by Commissioner Mehas to approve the March 24, 2022 meeting agenda, as shown, carried unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

**b. APPROVE February 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Wiley reported she had been unable to read the February 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes and could not vote on them.

Commissioner Beaulieu requested the following revision to the February 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

- To the last sentence of the first paragraph of Page 3: *She [Commissioner Beaulieu] added that she had been unable to reach Doug Harris to learn the status of his documentary film project and was unaware whether or not he and Janet Johnson had been able to connect to discuss Janet's participation in Doug's project.*

Motion by Commissioner Mehas, seconded by Commissioner Dyer to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2022 meeting, as amended, carried by a Roll Call vote with Chair Wiley and Commissioner Leighton's abstention.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

While not a public comment, Commissioner Mehas reported he had attended the RYSE Center Open House at which time three Poet Laureates had spoken. He looked forward to their attendance at the City Council meeting. He understood the event had been videotaped and if so would like to see it posted on the City's website.

Chair Wiley asked Commissioner Mehas to request a copy of the videotape which could be sent to Commissioner Kirk, copied to Ms. Day, and then be posted on the RACC's Facebook page.

Vice Chair Kirk commented that a full length video could not be posted but she would work with Commissioner Mehas to do what could be done.

Abe Finkelstein introduced himself to the RACC and explained he had recently met Commissioner Tom Herriman during a sculpture installation who had recommended he check out the RACC. He was interested in facilitating public art, was a structural engineer licensed in the State of California, and it was his mission to facilitate art installations and design armatures along with different sculptural art anchors for different art installations. He was also a member of a local non-profit, Local Artists Berkeley, and had worked with the City of San Leandro on two sculpture installations. He added he had lived in the East Bay and Berkeley for the past 10 years.

Chair Wiley welcomed Mr. Finkelstein to the RACC meeting.

Arts & Culture Manager Winifred Day read public comments from Cordell Hinder, which had been received on March 18, 2022, into the record as follows: *Hello Winifred, I do have comments for the record. 1. I will inform the Youth Council about possibly filling the vacancies for the Art and Culture Commission. 2. Also, there will be a mixer at Little Louie's on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March hosted by the Point Richmond Business Association, its \$10 for non-members. Sincerely, Cordell.*

#### **IV. ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Select PAAC Chair Person

Chair Wiley thanked Commissioner Dyer for her service to the City of Richmond, the arts and culture community, for her invaluable resources on what goes on and who moves it along, and recognized her complex engineering concepts for public art, keeping it simple. Commissioner Dyer would be moving out of state and would be leaving the RACC.

RACC members expressed appreciation to Commissioner Dyer for all her hard work and editorial skills.

Commissioner Dyer detailed the duties of the Chair of the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC), which included setting the meeting agenda with staff, ensuring needed information was available and distributed to the PAAC prior to the meeting, with the meeting agenda to be focused on PAAC, not RACC, items.

Understanding that it could take up to 10 hours a month to serve as Chair, Commissioner Beaulieu expressed the willingness to serve as the PAAC Chair on an interim basis and commented that if the position became unmanageable, she would inform the RACC Chair after which other arrangements could be considered. In the meantime, she understood the intent was to expand the number of PAAC members to allow the selection of a permanent PAAC Chair.

Commissioner Dyer advised that she could be contacted in the next month or so with any questions.

Commissioner Mehas reported that new PAAC members would not be appointed until the fall.

Chair Wiley offered a motion to nominate Commissioner Beaulieu to Chair the PAAC on an interim basis through the end of 2022, with a probationary period that extended three months. If that did not work out, Plan B could then be considered.

On the discussion and in response to opposition to the use of the term “interim,” Chair Wiley offered a new motion to nominate Commissioner Beaulieu to Chair the PAAC on a short-term basis with a review in three months but with a hoped for duration through the end of 2022.

Motion by Commissioner Leighton, seconded by Commissioner Dyer to nominate Commissioner Beaulieu to Chair the PAAC on a short-term basis with a review in three months but with a hoped for duration through the end of 2022, carried unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

- b. Seeking Ad Hoc Volunteers to serve on:
  - 1. NPA Mini Grant Application Committee 2022-23

Chair Wiley suggested it would be more efficient for two people to work with Ms. Day on the applications, outreach, orientation agenda, grantees agenda, scoring rubric and then present everything to the RACC for a decision and approval. She commented that the prior process had been burdensome whereas this option would afford a more efficient process. She clarified, when asked, that the COVID-19 grants had been a PAAC-generated process and involved a different grant altogether.

Vice Chair Kirk and Commissioner Mehas expressed the willingness to volunteer to work with Ms. Day and report back to the RACC, and Commissioner Mehas also suggested this would be a good opportunity for Mr. Finkelstein to also be involved.

Chair Wiley clarified with Mr. Finkelstein that he had not yet applied to be a RACC Commissioner since he wanted to gauge his level of free time. She described the process for Mr. Finkelstein to work with the RACC, which required registration with the City of Richmond to be a volunteer.

Ms. Day expressed the willingness to provide the link to Mr. Finkelstein so he may register as a volunteer with the City of Richmond.

## 2. Technical Assistance Workshop Committee September 2022

Chair Wiley explained that in 2021 when the RACC had been deciding the finalists for the NPA Mini Grantees, a question had been raised as to what had become of the funds when a grant had not been completed. There had been a difficult situation in the past where funds had gone back to the City and she did not want to see that happen again. If an artist defaulted on their grant, the RACC had discussed whatever was left in the grant would be used for a Technical Assistance Workshop Committee.

Chair Wiley reported she had spoken with Interim City Manager Shasa Curl who had informed her that was something that could be done where the RACC could work with community members to be a part of that committee and the funds could be used to hire professionals to work on the workshops, intended to be offered for free to current and former grantees and the general arts community in the City of Richmond.

The Technical Assistance Workshop Committee would structure how that would work, determine the workshops to be offered, and determine what the community needed, and there could be assistance on what would make a good proposal.

Chair Wiley expressed a desire to serve on the Technical Assistance Workshop Committee. She acknowledged at this time there were no funds since no artist had defaulted on their grant, but a plan needed to be put in place should there be a default in the future.

Ms. Day clarified they were speaking of an event that would happen in September after the start of fiscal year 2023, and if planned now and if approved by June, the timing would work fine. In terms of available funds, it would impact the Public Art Program in terms of the skills desired for grants whether an NPA Mini Grant or a PAAC Mini Grant. Some funds could be set aside to be added to any funds generated in the event an artist defaulted on their grant.

Commissioner Dyer pointed out there were specific things that PAAC grant funds could be spent on and she was uncertain that Ms. Day's suggestion was feasible, although Ms. Day stated she would look at what was possible. There were general funds that could be considered that were not part of the PAAC grant funds and she would verify fund availability.

Commissioner Mehas recommended the item be referred back to Ms. Day and allow her to return to the RACC for further discussion.

Chair Wiley reiterated the intent was to form a program that could be in place should it be needed.

Ms. Day clarified this would be a collaborative effort with the RACC and anything that would solicit the community would require a statement, flyers and social media buzz. She preferred to plan more for something that would be effective in September. She asked the Chair to describe how she saw this effort working since she foresaw it as a skill set/building exercise.

Chair Wiley commented as an example that almost every grant application had numerous questions about the budget, with basic issues that were not well thought out on a significant number of applications. A Technical Assistance Workshop Committee would be helpful in many ways. The Foundation Center had similar workshops all the time. As part of this effort, a professional with the required skill set for budgeting for non-profit art organizations and who could present that information in a way that was actionable could be hired and could use the City's budget template as a teaching tool.

Chair Wiley again clarified this suggestion had come about when the City Council had awarded the RACC funds to give to the community in the form of the NPA Mini Grants. Her intent that once the funds had been issued and if an artist did not comply for whatever reason with the grant requirements, rather than give the money back to the City, it was her preference the funds be paid forward to improve the skill set of the arts community.

Commissioner Leighton questioned the need since no artist had, as yet, defaulted. Unless there were funds from a different source and it was decided to make this a project, it was not worth the effort. If an artist did default, at that point this option could be considered.

Chair Wiley explained that by the time an artist defaulted there was no time to put a plan in place. She suggested that a plan be put in place now to create a template should the need arise to identify how the need would be addressed. She sought something more basic such as what a Technical Assistance Workshop Committee would look like and put that together, and then include a timeline and budget. Ms. Day would then have that in her toolkit if needed.

Chair Wiley stated, for instance, that a former artist had been awarded a grant two years in a row but had failed to comply with the necessary grant requirements. In the first year of non-compliance, the funds had gone back to the City. She was uncertain what happened to the funds at the second year of non-compliance.

Commissioner Beaulieu commented that the RACC had also discussed increasing the capacity in the community to apply for the NPA Mini Grants. It was possible funds could be raised and placed in a Capacity Building or Technical Assistance Workshop Committee Fund. Having a mechanism in place ready to launch should the funds become available was something she could support.

Vice Chair Kirk liked the concept but wanted to see whether other funding sources were available. She suggested moving forward to review available resources and other funding sources.

Chair Wiley asked if the RACC was suggesting rather than a Technical Assistance Workshop Committee, a Fundraising Committee or both should be considered. She understood the RACC could fundraise.

Vice Chair Kirk suggested a Grant Seeking Committee be considered.

Ms. Day stated the first step would be the creation of a short list of objectives and the identification of the professional services and current rates which would be part of research over the next 30 days. Over the next couple of weeks, she recommended that she, the Chair and Commissioner Beaulieu could meet via Zoom to shape a proposal to be presented at the next RACC meeting. She suggested the source of funds should be clarified since it would be easier to then consider what other funds could be pursued.

Chair Wiley again stated her intent was that the Technical Assistance Workshop Committee do the basics and once a funding source was known, that tool could be given to a development committee to begin to raise funds moving forward. She again expressed the desire to serve on the Technical Assistance Workshop Committee.

Commissioner Dyer did not believe it would take long to create topics the grant could cover. She was willing to step in and provide an outline prior to the end of the month, although she cautioned it took time, work and planning to identify the funds and writing a grant, which process was time consuming and not simple. She emphasized there was not a magic pot of money, the City of Richmond had grant writing workshops in the past, and possibly staff could be asked if the City would consider similar workshops again. Identifying goals and how to reach those goals was also important and was lacking in other grant applications.

Chair Wiley suggested the NPA Grant Committee could work on the tools for the application itself. Given the lack of volunteers interested in working on the Technical Assistance Workshop Committee, she would work with Ms. Day to conduct the required research, share ideas and return to the RACC. As soon as Mr. Finkelstein could officially work as a volunteer, his input would also be important.

Commissioner Beaulieu reiterated the need to discuss increasing the capacity in the community to apply for the NPA Mini Grants. She could provide feedback and may participate although she would be starting a new job and was careful not to commit herself to too many things at this time.

Chair Wiley suggested she and Ms. Day could do what needed to be done for now with a report back to the RACC.

## **V. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **a. Outreach to Councilmember Willis for new RACC Members (Mehas)**

Commissioner Mehas reported he had met with Councilmember Melvin Willis, District 1, to discuss the situation with respect to the lack of Mayoral appointments to the RACC and had also spoken with Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin of District 5. He saw no resolution to this situation given the City Council was dealing with numerous issues with little interest in addressing the matter. Councilmember Willis had suggested making an effort for a large volume of input during public comment at City Council meetings and organizing with other Commissioners to implore the City Council not to appoint any new Commissioners to other City Commissions/Boards until appointments had been made to the RACC.

Commissioner Mehas asked whether the Chair was willing to meet with Mayor Tom Butt along with others to work out a compromise.

Chair Wiley reported that every fourth Tuesday the Mayor provided a report on City Commissions and during that meeting RACC members should appear and speak during public comment in support of the appointment of new Commissioners to the RACC. A recruitment campaign for new RACC Commissioners could also be considered and RACC members could attend City Council meetings and advise of the recruitment campaign to get more people to become RACC members since there were currently too few members to get any work done. She understood applications to the RACC had been pending since July 2020. She would like to see numerous people apply to the RACC where it would become a political challenge for the Mayor to ignore. Rather than be seen as taking on the Mayor, she suggested the RACC mount a recruitment campaign and announce that to the City Council in an effort to move forward in the spirit of cooperation.

Commissioner Mehas suggested the Chair's recommendation would likely not sway the Mayor. He understood there were four pending applications to the RACC, was not confident the Mayor would take action to make appointments, and suggested relying on the volunteers in the meantime.

Commissioner Dyer suggested when a new Mayor was elected the applications were in place to consider appointments.

Chair Wiley emphasized applications had been pending since July 2020, she was uncertain those applicants remained interested in serving on the RACC and she wanted to see current applicants interested in serving on the RACC.

Commissioner Leighton acknowledged she had not reached out to interested applicants given the City Council was not making any appointments. She could make an effort to determine interest but they may have to wait a year until appointments could be made. She was uncertain what a recruitment campaign may entail.

Chair Wiley suggested each RACC member reach out to their networks and encourage applications to the RACC. In the absence of that volunteers would have to be considered.

Ms. Day recognized the sense of urgency given all of the items needed to be accomplished. She suggested possibly increased social efforts may be considered to solicit interest such as contacting former member Tom Lyons who owned food trucks.

Chair Wiley advised of the consensus to solicit volunteers, with RACC members to start with their own networks and consider speaking with Tom Lyons about a recruitment option and consider use of social media postings.

Commissioner Leighton expressed the willingness to create a flyer that could be distributed to the RACC for consideration.

b. Adult City of Richmond Poet Laureate vs RYSE Mini Grant Youth Poet Laureate (July RACC Retreat Minutes Strategic Plan)

Chair Wiley clarified that there was no RYSE Poet Laureate funded by the RACC but there were Adult and Youth Poets Laureate. She explained that the RACC had decided this would be the last year RYSE would be allowed to apply for a Mini Grant or fund anyone outside of the RACC to run the Youth Poet Laureate Program, and that it would become a RACC initiative. She wished there was a way that more funds could be allocated to the Adult and Youth Poets Laureate beyond the \$1,000 currently provided each year. She asked whether the City had a discretionary fund for the arts, and again wanted to see the Poets Laureate paid more than they were currently paid.

Commissioner Mehas suggested in some form the RACC had given the authority to choose the Poets Laureate. If there was a desire to increase the budget the discussion should start earlier in the year with a program developed with the Poets Laureate. He suggested the RACC authorize RYSE to select the Youth Poet Laureate.

On the discussion of the size of a potential increase for the City's Poets Laureate, as much as \$5,000 maximum for two years was recommended. It was also noted that at least the budget for the Adult Poet Laureate should be increased.

Ms. Day explained that she had asked the Adult Poet Laureate to plan a budget between now and the end of the year so it would be easier to go out to other sources and request additional funding. She added that a fiscal agent to go through the contract process may be required in order to increase funding for the Youth Poet Laureate.

Chair Wiley recognized RYSE as a stellar institution in the City of Richmond but noted it was not the only youth oriented organization in the City. She wanted both the Adult and Youth Poet Laureate selections to be an RACC initiative and if someone from RYSE wanted to sit on the selection and review committee that would be fantastic. She did not want RYSE to apply for a grant to select and manage the Youth Poet Laureate program since that should be part of the RACC initiative.

Commissioner Mehas did not want to discourage a youth group that had been involved in the program the last two years. He suggested a better way without offending RYSE in the process.

Commissioner Beaulieu suggested prior to any decision to manage the Youth Poet Laureate program the RACC needed to understand what RYSE was doing to make it a successful process to avoid negatively impacting that work.

Chair Wiley explained she should have prefaced her comments in that a meeting had been scheduled with RYSE for March 25 to discuss the transition she would like to make. It was not her intent to eliminate RYSE from the process but to do things differently. A report out after the meeting with RYSE would be provided to the RACC at its next meeting.

## **VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **a. NPA Mini Grant Liaison Report Updates (RACC Commissioners)**

Commissioner Dyer reported she had received an email from Deonta Allen who had built four of the five Little Libraries and who would be reaching out to the elementary schools for volunteers to paint them. She had been unable to contact the mural project artist **Tamara Rogers** but had informed her of the need to know the status of her project.

Vice Chair Kirk reported Fred Franklin had a plan for his art show in May at a health clinic and Anthony Edwards had gotten in touch with Deonta Allen.

Commissioner Mehas reported that Urban Tilth had received a prestigious prize/grant, had been featured on KQED, and was proceeding with the mural and obtaining input from the community via social media. He reminded Urban Tilth to solicit senior input as well. Also, Main Street continued to work on its murals and had selected four merchants.

Commissioner Beaulieu read into the record a written report from Doug Harris, who over the past month had experienced the murder of a close family friend and the passing of his mother and who was now getting into the full production of various interviews for his documentary film.

## **VII. February STAFF REPORT**

Ms. Day advised that the monthly staff report had been distributed to the RACC. She added that a Neighborhood Councils Presidents meeting had been scheduled for Monday, April 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting would be in a virtual format and the agenda would include a 15-minute item scheduled for around 8:00 p.m. for the PAAC to introduce itself and report on the PAAC's potential project that would invite as many neighborhoods to apply for a large scale public art project that would be a substantial project, all-inclusive at \$100,000. Over the next couple of months, a Request for Proposal (RFP) would be developed for the project to go to the Neighborhood Councils that would make the selection.

Commissioner Leighton clarified the discussion would include a request for the neighborhoods to identify a location for the public art project not to select an artist, manage or prepare an RFP, but identify a location to embrace artists, with community members who could provide coordination. She would be willing to attend the meeting to provide any input as a member of the PAAC.

Commissioner Mehas suggested the meeting could be used as a recruiting tool, Chair Wiley expressed the willingness to attend the meeting to pursue volunteer recruitment, and Commissioner Beaulieu asked that any comments at the meeting be respectful of the Neighborhood Councils' leadership.

## **VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT: UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **a. Grantee Events**

- b. Community Partner Events
- c. City of San Jose call for Artist Registry
- d. City of El Cerrito – Utility Boxes Call for Artists
- e. National Poetry Month April City Council Poetry Reading April 28, 2022.

There were no reports.

**IX. ADJOURN until April 28, 2022**

On motion by Commissioner Beaulieu, seconded by Commissioner Dyer, and carried unanimously the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m. to a Regular Meeting of the RACC on April 28, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.