



**Regional Arts Commission
Full Commission Board Minutes
November 20, 2025, 8 a.m. (In Person)**

Chair Gennaria called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Commissioners Present

Commission: Jerry **Gennaria**, chair, yea; Constantino **Ochoa**, vice chair, yea (virtual); Sam **Fiorello**, secretary, yea; John **Russell**, treasurer, yea (virtual); Robert **Arbuthnot**, Gerad **Ewing**, yea; Anita **Hagerman**, yea **9:11**; Beverly **Isom**, yea; Roz **Johnson**, yea; Mont **Levy**, yea; Rudy **Nickens**, yea; Andréa **Purnell**, yea; Cheryl **Walker**, yea; David **Wilson**, yea (virtual)

Commissioners Absent

Rhonda Carter-Adams

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Savannah Babington, Rita Dillard (virtual), Gregory Harris, Ann Haubrich, Tracey Morgan-Harris, Chloe Smith-Higgins, Angie Peters, Mk Sadiq, Jay Scherder, Jason Schipkowski, Leigh Winter, Lea Sutherland

Others in Attendance

KEB - Rick Gratza

Matt Coble, Grants & Programs Committee (non-voting member)

Brianna McIntyre, Public Art Committee (non-voting member)

Tom Stancliffe, Public Art Committee (non-voting member)

Public Guests (Gennaria)

None

Approval of September 11, 2025 Minutes

Chair Gennaria then called for a motion to approve the September 11, 2025 minutes.

Motion made by Levy, seconded by Johnson and unanimously carried to approve the September 11, 2025 minutes. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none



Chair Report (Chair Gennaria)

Gennaria gave the following updates:

HJS Update

Gennaria reported that RAC has responded to the Sunshine Request from the Holy Joe Society. He noted that there has been communication regarding HJS's accuracy of the request, and that RAC will continue to comply accordingly.

Finance Committee Report (Committee Chair Russell, Cooksey & KEB)

Chair Gennaria called for the Finance Committee Report.

FY 2025 Q3 Management Report (KEB)

Gratza presented the FY 2025 Q3 management report with a comparison of receipts and disbursements from the prior year – through September 2025, as follows: (1) total revenues; (2) total expenses; (3) unrestricted and undesignated cash; (4) administrative expenses; (5) comparison of budget; (6) ARPA statement of activity; and (7) cash and investments.

Cooksey add that a robust conversation was held at Finance Committee meeting and resulted in footnotes to the budget covering all activities for the 40th Anniversary, AFTACON – Americans for the Arts conference/convention (for which she encourages staff attendance as AFTA is one of RAC's strongest partners.)

October 2025 Cash Management Update (Cooksey & KEB)

Gratza began the cash management update by presenting the October 2025 cash flow analysis as follows: (1) cash receipts; (2) total expenses; (3) cash balance; (4) anticipated end of year cash balance; and (5) grants.

Cooksey shared her thoughts on the timing of quarterly receipts and the reminder from the Finance Committee to end the year with at least \$2M.

Gratza then reviewed the ARPA Statement of Activity, and the Cash and Investment balance report for September 2025.

FY 2026 Budget

Cooksey presented the FY 2026 Budget as follows: (1) this budget is based on current information, but some revenue projections for Q4 FY25 are still uncertain; (2) historically, revenue forecasts have been exceeded or missed by varying margins, and gave examples in 2020, 2021 and 2022 – with recent years closer to projections; (3) FY25 forecast from Explore St. Louis with caution in FY26 due to anticipated declines in convention business; (4) revenue estimates are conservative; (5) expenses will be reduced across most categories; (6) benefits costs are rising significantly, with increases from 26% to 62%; (7) potential budget increases may be incurred in legal and reputation management, while marketing and communications are projected to be flat; (8) to manage cash flow, grant distributions will be delayed to ensure sufficient funds - similar to measures taken during COVID; and (9) the overall budget, including a minimum reserve of approximately \$2 million, which maintains the organization's ending cash balance.

Brief discussion held regarding potential impact on grantees of delayed grant payments.



Gennaria called for a motion to approve the FY 2026 Budget.

Motion made by Russell, seconded by Walker and unanimously carried to approve the FY 2026 Budget. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Governance Committee Report (Committee Chair Nickens)

Chair Gennaria called for the Governance Committee Report.

Committee chair Nickens reported on the following:

City Appointment & Reappointments

Nickens reported on St. Louis City appointments and reappointments approved by the Governance Committee at its November 6, 2025 meeting.

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the following new appointment for sending to St. Louis City Boards & Commissions:

New appointment - Vin Ko, currently filled by Roz Johnson whose term ends January 2026. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Johnson and unanimously carried to approve the new appointment of Vin Ko. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the following reappointment(s) for sending to St. Louis City Boards & Commissions:

Reappointment of Beverlyly Isom – term ends May 17, 2025 and eligible for a full second 4-year term; and reappointment of Constantino ‘Tino’ Ochoa - term ends May 17, 2025 and eligible for a full second 4-year term. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Fiorello and unanimously carried to approve the reappointment(s) of Beverly Isom and Constantino ‘Tino’ Ochoa. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Growth & Development Committee Dissolution



Nickens shared the following regarding the Growth & Development Committee Dissolution: (1) recommendation to dissolve the Growth and Development Committee; (2) the committee has agreed to disband itself, and although it cannot legally dissolve itself, the full commission agrees with the decision; and (3) this was discussed at the board retreat, and now a formal recommendation is being presented to officially dissolve the committee.

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the dissolution of RAC's Growth & Development Committee.

Motion made by Walker, seconded by Russell and unanimously carried to approve the dissolution of the Growth & Development Committee. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Gennaria remarked that it has been his honor to serve as ex-officio member of the Growth & Development Committee and thanked each board member who has served on the Growth & Development Committee since its inception including Rhonda Carter-Adams, Gerad Ewing, Sam Fiorello, Beverly Isom, Roz Johnson, Andrea Purnell and... non-voting member Kristin Johnson. Gennaria also thanked Mont Levy who served as Chair of this committee for two (2) years and noted that his (Levy's) leadership and sound advice have been invaluable.

Recommendation to Approve Election of 2026 Officers

Nickens reported on the election of 2026 officers, approved by the Governance Committee at its November 6, 2025 meeting.

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the following Slate of Officers for 2026; (1) Constantino 'Tino' Ochoa, Chair; (2) Sam Fiorello, Vice Chair; (3) Rhonda Carter-Adams, Secretary (4) John Russell, Treasurer; and (5) Robert Arbuthnot, and Jerry Gennaria, included on the list as respective members-at-large, and will serve on the Executive Committee.

Motion made by Levy, seconded by Walker and unanimously carried to approve the 2026 Slate of Officers. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Grants & Programs Committee Report (Committee Chair Ochoa & Haubrich)

Chair Gennaria called for the Grants & Programs Committee Report.

Committee Chair Ochoa noted that Haubrich and her team have been doing great work, and asked Haubrich to report.



Haubrich reported on the following: (1) a brief recap of the crisis response efforts and plans for 2026; (2) in the past year, a \$1 million crisis response grant fund was established, with about \$150,000 allocated – to date, \$74,050 has been spent, funding 50 grants for NEA rescission, tornado recovery for organizations, and tornado recovery for individuals - mostly \$2,500 for organizations and \$750 for individuals; (3) specific organizations and artists impacted by the tornado received the grants, with a total of 29 grants to individuals totaling \$21,550; and (4) the grant program would conclude on November 26; (5) kudos to Jason Schipkowski and the Grants Team for quickly creating a simple process and mapping tornado-affected areas to determine eligibility; (6) moving forward to 2026, the partnership with SMU Data Arts will enhance data collection and benchmarking, making the grant process more efficient; (7) 400 applications received in 2025 with funding only for 135 and instead of doing a lottery process, which had been discussed, Charlie Bosco researched funding the next 140 applications that fell under the 135; (8) in 2026, no new grant applications will be accepted, existing grantees will be contacted to confirm eligibility, and grants will be awarded at 80% of the previous year's amount due to budget constraints - this approach aims to fund more applicants, including more diverse and previously unfunded artists, by avoiding a lottery system and ensuring equitable distribution; and (9) the pause allows RAC to analyze and refine its grant-making strategy for 2027, aligning with its strategic roadmap and exploring its role as a grantmaker and arts agency.

Haubrich then discussed the formation of the CAT Institute's own 501(c)(3) organization and highlighted that the task force is working on various administrative and strategic tasks, including IRS filings, alumni engagement, bookkeeping protocols, communication strategies, job descriptions, branding, board development, bylaws, and fundraising plans. Haubrich then asked Cooksey to share her report related to CAT.

FY 2025 Special Grant to the Community Arts Training Institute [CAT] (Cooksey)

Cooksey presented a request for a one-time grant of \$500,000 to support the newly established Community Arts Training (CAT) Institute, and shared the following presentation: (1) highlighted the program's nearly 30-year history and its significant regional impact; (2) RAC's financial support of the transition, recognizing that as an independent entity, and that CAT will face increased expenses; (3) shared details of CAT's historical costs over several cohorts, since 2019, which includes program delivery, alumni engagement, professional development, and administrative expenses; (4) emphasized the importance of ensuring CAT's success post-spinoff, especially given current financial, social, and political challenges; (5) to support CAT's capacity building, proposed a \$500,000 grant as a "send-off" fund to help with branding, communications, fundraising, and administrative needs; and (6) this offer was discussed with the CAT Task Force, which accepted it, and now the proposal is moving forward through the approval process with the approval of the Grants Committee, and the Finance Committee before presentation to this full board.

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the FY 2025 Special Grant in amount of \$500,000 to the Community Arts Training Institute, that includes the allocation proposal outlined in the board packet as part of the grant agreement. Motion made by Wilson, seconded by Walker and unanimously approved. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none



President & CEO Report (Cooksey)

Cooksey shared reflective and celebratory comments marking the fifth anniversary of her leadership role at RAC. She then shared a chart which included, for each of the five years - the respective chair, annual highlights, overall wins, major milestones and overall challenges. Cooksey highlighted key accomplishments including: (1) securing significant funding; (2) upgrading IT infrastructure; (3) launching new programs; (4) fostering collaborations; and (5) increasing visibility and engagement with the community.

Cooksey then noted ongoing challenges such as internal IT issues, funding volatility, and the need for stronger relationships with business and government stakeholders.

Cooksey thanked the board for their ongoing support.

Following Cooksey's report, Isom suggested that the board consider exploring the feasibility of establishing a government relations advisory committee to help address some of the challenges related to government and business stakeholder relationships.

Cooksey noted her appreciation for the suggestion, and acknowledged the ongoing time and effort dedicated to addressing the Holy Joe Society Sunshine Request since September 2024.

Gennaria agreed with Isom and suggested discussing it further at a future Governance Committee meeting.

Levy applauded Cooksey's "great leadership" of RAC and offered a resolution honoring her contributions over the last five years. He (Levy) added that Cooksey has created a vibrant, trusted, exciting organization for this community.

Cooksey expressed her appreciation and emphasized gratitude for the board, team, partners, and supporters, and expressed optimism for the future.

Cooksey then shared the following upcoming events: (1) Todd Stein's (Mid-America Arts Alliance) visit to STL on the day of this meeting [a] the collaboration with Mid-America has been successful, with plans to continue working together and [b] RAC is investing in local artists through the Artist Inc. programs, with 75 graduates since 2022, who develop skills in entrepreneurship and business management; and (2) urged everyone to RSVP for the end-of-year celebration [a] to be hosted at The Sheldon because it's RAC's 40th Anniversary, [b] following last year's gathering at the Foundry it's going to be a fun, family-friendly party for commissioners, staff, and friends of RAC [c] the theme is a classic 80s party [d] Brian Owens will be performing and [e] will be an enjoyable event and will take a moment to honor Chair Gennaria with a special gift for his tenure as RAC's 2025 chair, as well as recognize Johnson for her end of term and outstanding service as a RAC commissioner, and Sue Greenberg for her incredible partnership with VLAA.

Cooksey then shared that she would deliver a town hall or a message from the President and CEO on December 10th, and that the goal is to inform RAC grantees about the upcoming grantmaking process for FY26, allowing them ample time to plan accordingly. She added that the town hall will be conducted via a pre-recorded message or an official town hall, but that the focus is to ensure clear and effective communication so that grantees feel well-informed and connected.



Cooksey noted that last year, and this year, RAC has been revising financial policies, as the last update was in February 2020. She added that with significant time dedicated to this update, it is yet still under legal review, and once finalized, Rita Dillard will send an email for board approval of the new employee handbook.

Purnell left the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

Public Comment

None.

Roll Call & Adjournment

Chair Gennaria thanked everyone for being an “amazing board”, and that it has been a great opportunity and his pleasure to serve.

Chair Gennaria called for a motion to adjourn the November 20, 2025 Full Commission/Annual Board meeting.

Motion made by Levy, seconded by Walker, and unanimously approved to adjourn the November 20, 2025 full Commission meeting at 9:19 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Levy, Nickens, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Submitted by

L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

ATTACHMENTS

- Full Commission Meeting Minutes, 9/11/25
- FY 2025 Q3 Management Report
- October 2025 Cash Management Report
- FY 2026 Budget
- Term Summary & City Appointment
- 2026 Slate of Officers
- Growth & Development Charter
- Growth & Development Committee Minutes, 4/17/25
- Public Art Committee Minutes, 6/5/25
- Executive Committee Minutes, 8/5/25
- Governance Committee Minutes, 8/7/25
- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, 8/28/25
- Finance Committee Minutes, 9/8/25
- Growth & Development Committee Minutes, 10/9/25