



**REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION**
OF ST. LOUIS

314.863.5811
info@racstl.org
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**Regional Arts Commission
Full Commission Board Minutes
September 11, 2025, 8 a.m. (In Person)**

Meeting convened 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); Rhonda **Carter-Adams**, yea 8:10a; Gerad **Ewing**, yea; Anita **Hagerman**, yea; Beverly **Isom**, yea 8:15; Roz **Johnson**, yea; Rudy **Nickens**, yea; Andréa **Purnell**, yea 8:15; Cheryl **Walker**, yea; David **Wilson**, yea (virtual)

Commissioners Absent

Robert Arbuthnot
Mont Levy

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Savannah Babington, Charlie Bosco, Rita Dillard (virtual), Gregory Harris, Ann Haubrich (virtual), Tracey Morgan Harris; Angie Peters, Jay Scherder, Jason Schipkowski, Leigh Winter, Lea Sutherlin

Others in Attendance

KEB - Rick Gratza, Trish Donovan

Public Guests (Gennaria)

Chair Gennaria welcomed Mike Sabatino and Matt Coble to the meeting. Coble shared that he looks forward to serving as a non-board member of the Grants & Programs Committee.

Approval of June 12, 2025 Minutes

Gennaria then called for a motion to approve the June 12, 2025 minutes. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Johnson and unanimously carried to approve the June 12, 2025 minutes. Votes were as follows:

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

Nay – none

Abstain – none





Chair Gennaria called for the Finance Committee Report.

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

Russell asked Cooksey and KEB to present the following reports:

FY 2025 Q2 Management Report (KEB)

Gratza presented the FY 2025 Q2 management report with a comparison of receipts and disbursements from the prior year – January through June 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.

Cash Management Update (Cooksey & KEB)

Gratza began the cash management update by presenting the July 2025 cash flow analysis as follows: (1) cash receipts; (2) total expenses; and (3) current cash balance.

Cooksey continued the cash management update by presenting the following in detail: (1) FY 2025 Cash Projection – found on page 18 of the packet for this meeting – and she highlighted cash flow analysis projections, differences in Explore STL Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue distribution, savings in various areas of business operations, and current budget trends; (2) Beginning Cash Balance Analysis – allocation accounting practice since 1999, 15% statute, how Explore STL forecast informs RAC's budget, and estimates if revenues are flat; (3) Month-by-Month Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue Comparison; and (4) 2025 Hotel/Motel Tax Receipt Tracker. Cooksey noted that she wanted to ensure that Commissioners are aware that RAC's year-over-year revenue growth has slowed significantly.

Cooksey then highlighted, in detail, possible FY 2026 budget: Scenario 1 High/Flat, and Scenario 2 Low/Reduced.

Discussion held as follows: (1) encouraged conversation with Explore STL on how their financial communication practices impact RAC; (2) three key areas for Explore STL are forecast, remittance, and RAC revenue to ensure compliance with statutory expectations; and (3) brief update on efforts to find additional sources of revenue.

Cooksey explained the statute as it relates to annual revenue and carryover funds.

Chair Report (Chair Gennaria)

Gennaria gave the following updates:

Sunshine Requests Update

Holy Joe Society (HJS): (1) RAC staff are currently working on a third Sunshine Request from the Holy Joe Society; (2) the request requires RAC's external IT firm to conduct specific searches; (3) while the exact details of what HJS is seeking are not fully clear, two primary issues have emerged – [a] Individual Artist Grants and [b] the 15% administrative rule; (4) based on legal advice, general accounting principles, and input from financial experts, RAC has consistently operated with transparency; and (5) will keep Commissioners informed of any updates.



Fiorello noted that as a member of both the full board and the Finance Committee, he has full confidence that RAC is entirely compliant.

40th Birthday Bash Recap: (1) held at Union Station on August 28 - “magnificent”; and (2) a word of thanks including a link with photos from the event have been emailed to commissioners and team members – encouraged taking time to review it.

Babington reported over 600 in attendance.

Update on Special Grant – SLSO: In recognition of RAC’s special gift, The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra is offering (1) “presenting sponsorship” for the Chuck Berry concert series in October, and (2) an elevator plaque recognizing the partnership between The Symphony and RAC.

Advancing RAC’s Strategic Direction 2026-2030 (Chair Gennaria, Cooksey & Dr. Robert Harvey)

Gennaria noted the following: (1) RAC has traditionally conducted annual board governance training and is currently well-positioned in that area; and (2) this year, RAC is leveraging this opportunity to build on the strategic discussions initiated during the June Board Retreat, focusing on advancing RAC’s strategic vision for 2026-2030. He (Gennaria) then asked Cooksey and Dr. Harvey to proceed.

Cooksey reiterated that this session served as a continuation from the June retreat, and presented (via PPT) the following: (1) reviewed RAC’s 2026-2028 Strategic Direction and emphasized that this work has been ongoing for two years, beginning as a Theory of Change and gradually evolving into a comprehensive strategic direction; (2) re-stated the core questions and highlighted key steps; (3) noted that the aim is to be more targeted, deep in the organization’s efforts, ensuring measurable progress toward RAC’s 2030 vision of making St. Louis a national model for arts-driven placemaking; (4) overall, the retreat acknowledged the progress achieved and emphasized the importance of refining RAC’s strategic direction moving forward, which led to the Strategic Roadmap 2026-2030 – highlighting RAC’s assets, work, goals, outcomes and impact; and (5) how the strategic direction will be accomplished – highlighting eight [8] key areas based on RAC’s role to invest, amplify and lead.

Dr. Harvey highlighted the importance of continuously refining the work plan, language, and concepts to reach the best possible version. He encouraged Commissioners to share ideas, questions, or suggestions for strengthening or clarifying the roadmap, then facilitated the following group discussion: (1) difference between the St. Louis Arts brand and the RAC brand; (2) how this will expand the perception of the arts community and the reality of the arts community in the city and the region; (3) importance of questions related to amplifying the story of the arts ecosystem and how people perceive their fit within it; (4) expressed appreciation for the clarity; and (5) questions about where growth and revenue fit into the short-term plan.

Dr. Harvey then explained that financial aspects were intentionally not included in the initial roadmap, as the focus was on impact rather than operational finances, and the financial considerations will be addressed later to determine what revenue is needed to achieve the desired impact. He then called for any additional ideas, questions or suggestions. Continued group discussion held as follows: (1) suggestion to revisit the strategic road map at future full commission meetings; (2) aim to make the strategic map accessible to the public; (3) suggestion



to be more descriptive in the strategic road map about creatives/individual artists; and (5) suggestion to clarify 'placemaking' on the strategic road map.

Dr. Harvey then recapped the June retreat activity called 'the walking gallery,' where participants responded to a strategic direction. He mentioned revisiting questions from that session for approval and affirmation and outlined four (4) rules of engagement for this session: (1) prioritize clarifying questions, (2) accept non-closure as sufficient, (3) take and make space for contributions, and (4) focus on the goal to approve, adopt, and advance.

Wilson left the meeting @ 9:30a.

Dr. Harvey and Cooksey then reviewed in detail, answers to key questions based on 'invest', 'amplify' and 'lead' as part of the June retreat 'walking gallery', and encouraged Commissioners to share any additional ideas, questions, or suggestions.

Brief group discussions held regarding (1) convening; (2) the proposed pause in the grantmaking process and development of a new grantmaking approach for FY 2026; (3) additional conversations with the art organizations/anchor institutions who participated in the June retreat; (4) qualify what "need" means as it relates to grantmaking; (5) research being done on the health of the sector; (6) value of institutional knowledge and capacity building; and (7) telling the story of the impact art has on the community as a whole.

Chair Gennaria called for a motion to amend the September 11, 2025 Full Commission agenda to include a vote. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Nickens and unanimously approved. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Chair Gennaria called for a motion to approve the Strategic Roadmap that will guide RAC's work from 2026-2030 and the complimentary work plan. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Nickens and unanimously approved. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Public Comment

None.

Roll Call & Adjournment



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Chair Gennaria called for a motion to adjourn the September 11, 2025 Full Commission meeting. Motion made by Carter-Adams, seconded by Walker, and unanimously approved to adjourn the September 11, 2025 Full Commission meeting at 9:58 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Gennaria, Ochoa, Fiorello, Russell, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Hagerman, Isom, Johnson, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Submitted by

L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

ATTACHMENTS

- Full Commission Meeting Minutes, 6/12/25
- FY 2025 Q2 Management Report
- Cash Management Report
- Strategic Roadmap 2026 - 2030
- Governance Committee Minutes, 5/8/25
- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, 5/22/25
- Finance Committee Minutes, 6/9/25
- Finance Committee Minutes, 3/10/25

