



**Regional Arts Commission
Full Commission Board Minutes
March 12, 2026 8:30 a.m. (In-person/Hybrid)**

Meeting was called to order @ 8:47a to accommodate the Missouri State Auditor's Office ("SAO") Team. Sutherlin was notified by SAO Team that they were delayed in traffic. Meeting agenda adjusted as follows:

Closed Session 1 – SAO Entrance Meeting [Privileged & Confidential RSMO 610.021.(18)] - VOTE **changed to** Update on Government & Legal Affairs – Closed Session [Privileged & Confidential - Legal Matter RSMO 610.021(1)] – VOTE

Closed Session 2 – Update on Government & Legal Affairs – Closed Session [Privileged & Confidential - Legal Matter RSMO 610.021(1)] – VOTE **changed to** SAO Entrance Meeting [Privileged & Confidential RSMO 610.021.(18)] - VOTE

Commissioners Present

Commission: Constantino **Ochoa**, chair, yea; Sam **Fiorello**, vice chair, yea; Rhonda **Carter-Adams**, secretary; John **Russell**, treasurer; yea; Robert **Arbuthnot** (virtual), yea; Gerad **Ewing**, yea; Jerry **Gennaria**, yea; Anita **Hagerman**, yea; Beverly **Isom**, yea; Vin **Ko**, yea; Mont **Levy** (virtual), yea; Rudy **Nickens**, yea; Andréa **Purnell**, yea; Cheryl **Walker**, yea; David **Wilson**, yea

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Savannah Babington, Charlie Bosco, Gregory Harris, Ann Haubrich, Tracey Morgan-Harris, Angie Peters, Jason Schipkowski, Chloe Smith-Higgins, Leigh Winter, Lea Sutherlin

Others in Attendance

Rick Gratza, KEB
Trish Donovan, KEB (virtual)
Maggie Donnelly, Standing Partnership Marketing Firm
Mihaela Grad, Standing Partnership Marketing Firm
Atty. Travis Kearbey, Legal Counsel
Atty. Rich Finneran, BCLP, Legal Counsel
Molly Cooke, BCLP, Legal Counsel
Alex Prenger, Missouri State Auditor's Office (SAO)
Grayson Pursell, Missouri State Auditor's Office (SAO)

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Recognition of Public Guests

Jim Drew, Business Journal
Dillup Vishwanat, Business Journal (photographer)
Austin Huguelet, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Christian Gooden, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Closed Session 1 – Update on Government & Legal Affairs – Closed Session [Privileged & Confidential - Legal Matter RSMO 610.021(1)]

Chair Ochoa called for a motion to close the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting for an update on government and legal affairs with RAC’s legal representation, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1).

Motion made by Walker, seconded by Fiorello and unanimously carried to approve to close the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting for an update on government and legal affairs with RAC’s legal representation, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1). Votes were as follows:

Yea – Ochoa, Fiorello, Carter-Adams, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Gennaria, Isom, Ko, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson
Nay – none
Abstain - none

Ochoa asked public guests to excuse themselves from the meeting for closed session 1.

CLOSED SESSION 1 HELD/Privileged and Confidential

Cooksey asked Atty. Travis Kearbey to introduce Atty. Rich Finneran who gave an update on government and legal affairs.

Upon arrival of the SAO Team, Chair Ochoa called for a motion to adjourn Closed Session 1, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1), and to convene Closed Session 2 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting for the SAO Entrance Meeting pursuant to RSMO 610.021 (18).

Motion made by Walker, seconded by Nickens and unanimously carried to approve to Closed Session 1 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1), and to convene Closed Session 2 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting for the SAO Entrance Meeting pursuant to RSMO 610.021(18). Votes were as follows:

Yea – Ochoa, Fiorello, Carter-Adams, Russell, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Hagerman, Gennaria, Isom, Ko, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson
Nay – none
Abstain - none

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CLOSED SESSION 2 HELD/Privileged and Confidential

SAO entrance meeting held.

Chair Ochoa called for a motion to adjourn Closed Session 2, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(18), and to reconvene Closed Session 1 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting to continue updates on government and legal affairs with RAC's legal representation, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1).

Motion made by Walker, seconded by Ko and unanimously approved to adjourn Closed Session 2, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(18), and to reconvene Closed Session 1 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting to continue updates on government and legal affairs with RAC's legal representation, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1). Votes were as follows:

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

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Chair Ochoa asked SAO Team, to excuse themselves from the meeting to continue Closed Session 1.

CLOSED SESSION 1 CONTINUED/Privileged and Confidential

Legal Issue/Discussion

Arbuthnot and Hagerman left the meeting @ 9:45a.

Ochoa called for a motion to adjourn continued Closed Session 1 of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting and to reconvene the open session of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting.

Motion made by Walker, seconded by Purnell and unanimously approved to adjourn continued closed session 1, pursuant to RSMO 610.021(1), and to reconvene open session of the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting at 9:52 a.m.

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

Nay – none

Abstain – none

Chair Ochoa called for public guests to be invited to return to open session.

Approval of November 20, 2025 Minutes

Chair Ochoa called for a motion to approve the November 20, 2025 minutes.

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Motion made by Ewing, seconded by Walker, and unanimously carried to approve the November 20, 2025 minutes. Votes were as follows:

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

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Chair Report

Ochoa emphasized the following: (1) the importance of relationships, transparency, accountability, and trust within RAC; (2) reflected on RAC’s history of supporting arts in the region, highlighting over \$100 million in grants since 1985; (3) addressed recent media reports and the upcoming state audit, stressing the importance of responsible management and public confidence; (4) reiterated RAC’s commitment to maintaining arts funding and regional vibrancy amid potential future funding challenges.

Chair Ochoa called for the Finance Committee Report from Committee Chair Russell, Gratza (KEB) and Cooksey.

Finance Committee Report

Status on FY 2025 Audit

Cooksey shared, in detail, a written statement from the audit team at Armanino which announced that due to national auditing standards, Armanino would conduct a formal investigation into allegations brought against RAC by the Missouri State Auditor. Cooksey noted the following: (1) that this report was also shared during the March 9 Finance Committee meeting, and that committee agreed to reconvene in early April for final review of the FY 2025 Audit; (2) this would impact the audit timeline; and (3) while additional procedures are required by Armanino, Missouri statute dictates that the final internal audit report is due to the Governor, Mayor, County Executive, and the Board of Aldermen, no later than the second Monday in April.

FY 2025 Q4 Management Report

Gratza highlighted the FY 2025 Q4 Management Report as compared to the prior year as follows: (1) total revenue; (2) total expenses; (3) statement of receipts and disbursements; (4) Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue; (5) interest income; (6) expenses; (7) ending cash balances; (8) unrestricted/undesignated cash balances; (9) administrative expenses; and (10) actuals for 2025 compared to the budget including revenue, expenses and net income.

Gratza then highlighted the following two documents: (1) ARPA [American Rescue Plan Act] supplemental schedule which included revenue, expenses and net operating revenue and net revenue; and (2) RAC interest earned summary schedule.

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February 2026 Cash Management Update

Gratza presented the February 2026 cash management update which included: (1) actual cash received during the first two months of the year, with projections for March through December; (2) Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue – with no payments during February, and December 2025 payment received in January 2026; (3) end of month cash balance; (4) end-of-year projected cash balance; and (5) budgeted expenditures, which fell within RAC’s internal policy range.

Cooksey discussed (1) patterns of Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue, noting delays starting in 2024; (2) impact of delayed payments on cash flow and operational planning; (3) RAC’s conservative financial practices enable ongoing commitments despite fluctuations; and (4) no immediate changes to FY26 grant payments - plan remains to disburse in the fourth quarter.

Brief discussion was held regarding (1) payments to grantees, specifically whether RAC has heard from organizations about the change in the payment schedule implemented last year; (2) Grants Team has been meeting with grantees and has learned that some organizations may experience hardships due to receiving their grants later than usual; (3) possibility of awarding grants earlier to mitigate potential issues.

Accounting Policy & Procedures Manual Update: Life Event Donation Policy

Cooksey introduced a formal policy to recognize staff life events as follows: (1) the Accounting Policy & Procedures Manual Update: Life Event Donation Policy – could be found in the packet for this meeting; (2) includes modest expenses up to \$300; and (3) focuses on formalizing existing practices, limited to employees, and excludes commissioners.

Chair Ochoa called for the Governance Committee Report from Committee Chair Purnell and staff lead Peters.

Governance Committee Report

Committee Chair Purnell and Peters presented the following: (1) City and County Appointments Updates - [a] review of board terms, and [b] invited nominations for RAC Board Treasurer City/County; (2) Annual Board/Staff Retreat – upcoming Annual Board & Staff Retreat scheduled for June 26th will focus on strategic topics such as grantmaking and community engagement; and (3) Annual Board & Governance Training/Professional Development - call for additional topic suggestions for upcoming governance training/development.

Chair Ochoa called for the Grants & Programs Committee Report from Committee Chair Fiorello and staff lead Haubrich.

Grants & Programs (G&P) Committee Report

Committee Chair Fiorello and Haubrich presented a summary of the following topics presented at the March 5 G&P Committee meeting: (1) no new applications for 2026; (2) existing grantees will receive 80% of previous awards; (3) due diligence meetings ongoing with select organizations; (4) focus on governance, funding, and succession planning; (5) partnership with SMU Data Arts to collect financial and programmatic data; (6) planning

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for 2027 grant framework; (7) a special committee meeting scheduled for late April; and (8) overall goal to ensure transparent, accountable, and equitable grant processes.

Fiorello extended his appreciation to Ann Haubrich for her years of experience, and how she understands the landscape and has the trust of the arts community. Fiorello added that there's constant alignment with RAC's mission of supporting the citizens of the region, to enrich lives with mission impact, and advocating for the arts.

Chair Ochoa called for the Public Arts Committee Report from Committee Chair Wilson and staff lead Higgins.

Fiorello left the meeting @ 10:32a.

Public Arts Committee (PAC) (Chair Wilson & Smith)

Chair Wilson noted the following: (1) that the Public Arts Committee is fairly new and in its second year; (2) represents an exciting new frontier for RAC; (3) fostering of its mission of advancing the arts and culture in the region which is important, given that St. Louis is a city that has one of the two most recognizable and famous and beautiful pieces of public art in the world [the other city being Paris]; (4) fostering of its mission of advancing the arts and culture in the region; and (5) extended appreciation for outstanding committee members and staff lead Chloe Higgins.

Higgins shared a brief update on topics presented at the March 5 PAC meeting: (1) the committee's focus on public art; (2) the 15-year-old ordinance "Percent for Art" program requiring 1% of the budget for eligible city-funded capital projects to be allocated to public art; and (3) discussions held around supporting existing artists and potential workshops.

Russell left the meeting @ 10:35a.

President & CEO Report (Cooksey)

Moment of Gratitude

Cooksey gave 'special recognition' and expressed appreciation to Angie Peters and Jason Schipkowski for their outstanding contributions, RAC relationships, dedication to arts support, and wished them well on upcoming departures. She presented both Peters and Schipkowski with a framed photo commemorating the 2025 Annual Board & Staff Retreat, as a token of appreciation.

FY26 Work Plan

Cooksey shared the following update on RAC's FY26 Work Plan: (1) approved by the Executive Committee at its January 22 meeting, (2) aligns with RAC's strategic roadmap; (3) due to staffing and external challenges, a prioritized approach will be taken; and (4) regular updates to the Board on progress and adjustments.

Public Comment

None.

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Roll Call & Adjournment

Chair Ochoa called for a motion to adjourn the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting.

Motion made by Carter-Adams, seconded by Walker, and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 12, 2026 Full Commission meeting at 10:39 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Ochoa, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Gennaria, Isom, Ko, Levy, Nickens, Purnell, Walker, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Submitted by

L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

ATTACHMENTS

- Full Commission Meeting Minutes, 11/20/25
- FY 2025 Audit (Draft)
- FY 2025 Q4 Management Report
- ARPA for the Arts Statement of Activities
- February 2026 Cash Management Update
- Accounting Policies & Procedures Manual – Life Events Donation Policy
- City/County Board Term Summary
- FY 2025 Work Plan
- Executive Committee Minutes, 1/22/26
- Governance Committee Minutes, 11/6/25
- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, 11/6/25
- Finance Committee Minutes, 11/17/25

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