



**Regional Arts Commission  
Finance Committee Minutes  
Monday, November 17, 2025 via ZOOM  
8 a.m.**

Click [here](#) to view the meeting.  
Click [here](#) to access the meeting packet.

Gennaria chaired the November 17 meeting in the absence of committee Chair Russell.

**Call to Order & Roll Call – Gennaria & Sutherlin**

Board Chair Gennaria called the November 17, 2025 meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

**Committee Members in Attendance**

Rob Arbuthnot, Sam Fiorello, Mont Levy, Cheryl Walker Jerry Gennaria, ex-officio

**Yea – Gennaria, Arbuthnot, Fiorello, Levy, Walker**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain – none**

**Absent**

John Russell, Chair

**Staff Attendees**

Vanessa Cooksey, Savannah Babington, Rita Dillard, Tracey Morgan, Angie Peters, Chloe Smith-Higgins, Leigh Winter, Lea Sutherlin

**Others in Attendance**

KEB - Rick Gratza, Trish Donovan

**Approval of September 8, 2025 Minutes**

Gennaria called for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 8, 2025, Finance Committee meeting.

**Motion made by Levy seconded by Fiorello and unanimously carried to approve the September 8, 2025 Finance Committee minutes. Votes were as follows:**

**Yea – Gennaria, Arbuthnot, Fiorello, Levy, Walker**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain – none**

Gennaria called for the following reports:





### **FY 2025 Q3 Management Report (KEB)**

Rick Gratza presented the Q3 Management Report comparison of the prior year as of September 30, 2025, as follows: (1) revenues; (2) expenses and grant distributions; (3) unrestricted and undesignated net position; (4) cash flow patterns; (5) administrative expenses; (6) total revenues; (7) total expenses; (8) ARPA funds – statement; and (9) RAC Cash and investments

Levy asked “for the record” for comments on the additional expenses for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and consulting and net for the 50/50 raffle.

Cooksey and Peters reported as follows: Budget and Expenditures: (1) costs included fees paid to Ascend for technology, seller commissions, and bank fees, and despite expenses, net profit was approximately \$33,700; (2) additional expense involved sharing proceeds with other nonprofits for the Battle Hawks partnership, which is expected to be revised going forward; (3) current costs such as bank fees and seller commissions are recurring and considered sunk costs; (4) negotiations aim to expand the number of games involved to increase revenue and all costs incurred are to be evaluated against potential benefits; and (5) emphasized the importance of clear financial benchmarks, and proposed a goal of at least 15% profit above costs before proceeding.

Discussion held as follows: (1) the need for guardrails to guide ongoing decisions was highlighted; (2) partnership with the Battle Hawks provides visibility and demonstrates collaboration between arts and sports sectors; (3) strategies to enhance the Battle Hawks’ promotional presence are under discussion; (4) next steps – [a] conduct detailed cost-benefit analysis; [b] establish clear profit thresholds; and [c] develop plans to increase partnership visibility and engagement.

Cooksey then clarified 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary expenses as follows: (1) used the \$100,000 gift from Edward Jones, allocated in 2024, which covered much of the costs for the anniversary events, including the documentary premiere and celebration; (2) she emphasized that, in terms of actual spending, the RAC was responsible and documented the context of any perceived overspending; and (3) she also highlighted that the team secured sponsorships for the event without relying on hotel-motel funds, demonstrating responsible financial management.

Levy expressed his appreciation for the reports and emphasized the importance of transparency and thorough documentation in reporting, to ensure that stakeholders fully understand the context and the story behind the numbers.

### **October 2025 Cash Management Report (Cooksey & KEB)**

Gratza presented the October 2025 cash management update as follows: (1) the cash flow analysis including Hotel/Motel Tax Revenue, end of month cash balance budget shortfalls, variances, salaries and benefits, building and facilities, business admin and operations, grants and anticipated end of year cash position; (2) ARPA for the Arts Statement of Activities including total revenue and interest income, total expenses, and net income; and (3) Investment of ARPA funds – ARPA sweep account, Midwest sweep account and Building Proceeds investment accumulation.





Cooksey noted that the November payout from Explore STL had not yet been received, the October payment came in late and thusly she is not sure where RAC will land with the end of year balance. Cooksey then noted that per Levy's suggestion, she already added the 40th Anniversary notes to the CFA. Cooksey then highlighted the restoration of AFTACON participation; partnerships and sponsorships; a special grant for the CAT institute; and ensured that the end of year cash balance would be at least \$2M as per the requirement from the last meeting of this Committee.

Levy asked about the importance of having multiple staff attend AFTACON.

Cooksey noted the following: (1) the convention hasn't been held in the past six years; (2) AFTA, or Americans for the Arts, is one of RAC's key partners; (3) RAC collaborates with AFTA on initiatives like AEP6, which includes various advocacy, lobbying, and programming efforts, and AFTA provides opportunities to meet with peers and representatives from numerous local arts agencies across the country, as well as grantmaking activities; and (4) she strongly recommended attending AFTACON to the team, as it offers the most value, being the largest industry conference and conveniently held in Cincinnati, Ohio this year – and, is the primary professional development and industry trade organization for arts organizations.

Levy then suggested adding a sentence footnote "we did it because" to the AFTACON budget line item.

#### **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 as follows: (1) this initiative is a strategic move aligned with the organization's shift toward invest, amplify, and lead, emphasizing grantmaking and capacity building rather than direct program execution; (2) context on this recommendation could be found on page 14 of the packet for this meeting; (3) the team – under Haubrich's leadership - has worked diligently over the last year to determine the future of CAT including discussions on whether it should operate as an independent 501(c)(3) organization; (4) CAT alum and faculty gathered to discuss the future of CAT; (5) the full board voted and approved, in September, transitioning CAT to independence, with the guidance of a task force; (6) while closing out the FY 2025 budget she [Cooksey] realized all of CAT's operating needs; (7) she started the conversation with the Grants & Programs Committee and also discussed with Chair Gennaria; and (8) this special grant will support capacity building for CAT along with technical operations.

Committee discussion held as follows: (1) since CAT has historically been a program of RAC, there are operational and branding gaps that need to be addressed, including management, communications, branding, and fundraising infrastructure; (2) the requested grant is over \$50,000, and requires approval from the Finance Committee; (3) RAC expects to end the fiscal year with approximately \$2M in reserves, ensuring financial stability; (4) the grant is viewed as an investment in ensuring CAT's successful transition and long-term viability; (5) emphasis that this is a one-time grant, with no expectation of similar funding in the near future; (6) the funds will help CAT develop operational infrastructure, including branding, staffing, and planning for future cohorts; (7) challenges of fundraising for new nonprofit initiatives, especially given current economic and funding climate concerns; (8) the importance of demonstrating financial viability [e.g., a solid balance sheet] to attract donors; and (9) emphasis on



accountability, including requiring a proposal from CAT detailing how the funds will be used and a grant agreement.

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

**Yea – Gennaria, Arbuthnot, Fiorello, Levy, Walker**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain – none**

#### **FY 2026 Budget (Cooksey)**

Cooksey presented the FY 2026 Budget, and covered the following key points: (1) a comparison of monthly revenue trends from 2019 to 2025; (2) revised forecasts for Explore STL; (3) deposit and growth patterns; (4) a detailed overview of the FY 2026 budget, and noted that it could be found on page 15 of the packet for this meeting; (5) she [Cooksey] indicated that after gaining a full understanding and review of the Explore STL forecast, she will return to this committee and the full board with a finalized FY 2026 budget; and (6) due to market volatility, grants will be disbursed in November, aligning with RAC's fiscal year.

Levy commended Cooksey for proactively extending the grant deadline to November and inquired whether there would be any potential repercussions for grantees as a result.

Cooksey noted that a town hall would be held early in 2026 to give grantees time to prepare.

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

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

**Yea – Gennaria, Arbuthnot, Fiorello, Levy, Walker**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain – none**

#### **Adjournment**

Chair Gennaria called for a motion to adjourn.

**Motion made by Walker, seconded by Levy, and unanimously approved to adjourn the November 17, 2025 Finance Committee meeting at 9:03 a.m. Votes were as follows:**





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COMMISSION**  
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**Yea –Gennaria, Arbuthnot, Fiorello left @ 9:01, Levy, Walker**  
**Nay – none**  
**Abstain - none**

Submitted by  
L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

**Attachments**

- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes, September 8, 2025
- FY 2025 Q3 Management Report
- October 2025 Cash Flow Analysis
- FY 2026 Budget

