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REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION OF ST. LOUIS

SERVING ART DAILY



**Regional Arts Commission  
Commission Meeting Minutes  
March 11, 2021 @ 8:00AM via ZOOM**

**Attendees**

→ Commission: Mont Levy, Cheryl Walker, John Russell, Vin Ko, Jerry Gennaria, Roz Johnson, Walé Soluade, Kellie Trivers, Andrea Purnell, David Wilson, Rhonda Carter Adams, Sam Fiorello

Absent: Mary Walsh

Staff: Vanessa Cooksey, Sherry Sissac, Erika Fiola, Rita Dillard, Chloe Smith

Other: Cindy Kohlbry, Rick Gratza (KEB), Janet Ramey (Brown, Smith, Wallace), Courtney Hampton (Brown, Smith, Wallace)

**Welcome and Call to Order – Mont Levy, Chair**

Levy: Called the March 11, 2021 meeting to order at 8:02am. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Carter Adams, and unanimously carried to hold the March 11, 2021 RAC Commission Meeting.

Levy: Welcomed Sam Fiorello to his first meeting and invited his comments.

Fiorello: Thrilled to be part of this team/organization that is so important for this region.

→ Levy: Welcomed Lea Sutherlin as administrative consultant; and extended special welcome to former Commissioner Cindy Kohlbry as a guest. Officially thanked Kohlbry for her major contributions during her term, particularly in the area of finance and during strategic planning; truly appreciated her guidance and insight; always an energetic exchange; thanked her for dedicated service to RAC over the years; invited her remarks as a guest.

Kohlbry: Expressed thanks with no additional comments.

**Approval of November 12, 2020 and February 11, 2021 Minutes – Mont Levy**

November 12, 2020 Minutes – redrafted to include details/proposal from Governance

Committee, which will meet immediately following this meeting. Motion made by Walker, seconded by Wilson, and unanimously carried to approve the November 12, 2020 minutes.

February 11, 2021 Minutes – Motion made by Walker, seconded by Johnson and carried unanimously to approve the February 11, 2021 minutes.

### **Chair Report – Mont Levy**

Financial situation no surprise; per Cooksey - things will be challenging before becoming better; new reality developing in midst of pandemic situation; Fiorello is jumping right in – he along with Gennaria will co-chair the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee regarding what to do with RAC Cultural Resource Center – stay or move elsewhere; he (Levy), Fiorello, Gennaria and Cooksey will put together the rest of the committee to make recommendation for presentation at summer Commission meeting.

Fiorello: Another scenario could be to stay but don't own.

Walker: Suggested Frazier be on the committee as she was around when building was originally purchased; also suggested Purnell serve on committee from a working artist perspective.

Levy: Agreed it is important to find that institutional voice and the artist perspective; conversations have only just begun and will give due consideration to all names; if someone is interested let him know.

Levy: Addressed issue of grants – lots of work to do while adjusting to this new reality; coming weeks will be focused on getting reoriented; April 2021 meeting will not be held - focus will be on committee business; Cooksey will mention staff transition and farewell during her report; several staff off-boarded last month; next week is farewell to Sherry Sissac and Erika Fiola; this challenging “change of course” took RAC into an unexpected tragedy as of one year ago; great sense of loss in saying “goodbye” to these two valuable teammates, and their impact on RAC; both willingness to step-in during this crisis has been extremely valuable and RAC is grateful; wished Sissac and Fiola the very best on behalf of the Commission, and thanked them for their contributions.

### **Finance Committee Presentation – Comm John Russell, Treasurer and Rick Gratza, KEB**

Russell asked Rick Gratza, KEB to present the RAC cash flow update.

#### ***2021 Cash Flow Update Presented by KEB***

Rick Gratza: Presented fiscal report for January – February 2021; hotel/motel revenue came in \$200K less; \$1.9M in cash reserves; budgeting low point in cash at approximately \$700K; budgeted revenue is from Explore St. Louis forecast.

#### ***FY20 Audit Presented by Brown, Smith, Wallace***

Janet Ramey – asked Cooksey to pull up the presentation; she thanked Cooksey, Sherry Sissac and the team for their support during the audit which was totally conducted remotely and takes extra effort on behalf of the team; KEB provided information timely and accurately; and Ramey noted that this presentation had been reviewed, in detail, with the Finance Committee earlier

this week. She then reviewed the audit in detail including financial analysis and opinion, and recommended review of opinion footnote G regarding the Covid pandemic. Need to correct and re-send financial analysis grant slide.

Russell: Thanked everyone for their great work on the audit.

Motion made by Russell, seconded by Fiorello and unanimously carried to approve the audit presented by Brown, Smith Wallace.

Fiorello: Recently attended meeting regarding implications of recent relief package of \$2.8B in direct aid to Missouri, \$184M to STL County and \$550M to the city; asked if there is any effort in place for RAC to get a piece of that relief.

Cooksey: Will share later during this meeting about working on strategy from cultural tourism and art perspective to make RAC's case.

Fiorello: Offered his assistance if needed.

### **Governance Committee – Levy, and Comm Kellie Trivers**

#### ***Update on Potential Appointments***

Trivers – Recommendation has been sent to the Mayor regarding Heather Corcoran, vice provost and interim dean of University College and the Halsey C. Ives Professor in the Sam Fox School; served on steering committee for the Wash U strategic plan, graphic designer, joint appointment in the Brown School; excited and interested in serving as a RAC commissioner; one opening remains in the county – Steve Knight remains as a possibility.

Levy: Excited about the possibility of Heather Corcoran as a commissioner; Corcoran was recommended by Cooksey based on her time at Washington University; Levy and Trivers met with Corcoran whom he believes would bring an “artist to artist” voice to the Commission.

#### ***New Commissioner Orientation (April 8, 2021 @ 8:00AM)***

Trivers: New commissioner orientation will be held April 8, 2020 at 8 a.m.; all commissioners are invited to attend; digital handbook is under development and will be sent to everyone in the near future.

#### ***Commissioner Sunshine Law Training (March 29, 2021 @ 1:00PM)***

Levy: Thanked Cindy Kohlbry for encouraging a closer look at Sunshine Law compliance; will do it right moving forward; Cooksey totally committed to it; Lea Sutherlin has background with Sunshine Law; urge everyone to attend the training on March 29<sup>th</sup> but it will be recorded for viewing later.

#### ***House Bill No. 1366***

Levy: Proposal in front of the House, HB 1366 that will impact RAC; HB 1365 impacts Explore St. Louis; HB 1366 would require the RAC Commission make-up to align with population counts in the City and County; if so, RAC would end up with 11 commissioners from STL County and four (4) from STL City; he has requested additional insight from his state representative; he asked Cooksey to comment.

Cooksey: She and Kitty Ratcliff, Explore STL, are working with respective government affairs teams to develop a strategy and response.

Johnson: HB 1366 runs the risk of changing makeup/diversity of the commission in terms of racial and ethnic balance; important to make our voices heard; a lot at stake.

Trivers: Possible that HB 1366 is result of STL County review of all commissions and making changes to duplicates.

### **President and CEO Report – Vanessa Cooksey**

#### ***2021 Organization Goals***

Forego background as everyone aware of challenges in 2020; navigating challenges ahead; important message is while RAC is challenged now, its work is vitally important - and over the next five years, will have a transformative, positive impact on the STL region and carry out core work. RAC will continue to engage the community; during 2021 will strengthen internal infrastructure - efficient and effective - and identify new sources of revenue; will continue her onboarding; will continue to reach out to community stakeholders and strengthen cross sector collaboration; budget has been aligned with achievement of these goals; presented detailed overview of organization goals aligned with 15% rule; presented 2022 new artists grant process and payment schedule including CAT, Gyo Obata and other key initiatives; waiting for rebound from revenue source; by 2024 back on track; 2025 will be a banner year; actuals projected in appendix of presentation; and impacts on cash flow budget will be presented each month.

#### ***Staff Acknowledgement & Staffing Model Update***

Transition underway toward a lean organization; pandemic challenges during past year required displacement of all staff roles within the organization; kudos to Levy and the entire team for a stellar job in ensuring the survival of RAC; acknowledged each team member Marcus, Yvonne, Emily and Sarah who have already transitioned from RAC; Sherry and Erika who will offboard on March 19; and Rita and Chloe are scheduled to offboard on July 2; welcomed Lea Sutherland as admin consultant for next five months; 2021 hires – executive assistant, and grants and programs manager; 2022 hires - research and data specialist, and communications/marketing specialist; and current outsource vendors - finance and accounting, HR, IT and facilities, and marketing and communications. Kudos to KEB for stellar job/excellent partnership; provides gold standard when engaging vendors.

#### ***Town Hall (March 31, 2021 @ 10:00AM)***

Will be a one-hour program to share with the broader community what's happening with RAC and a commitment to maintain transparent communication by inviting all stakeholders to participate; partnering with O'Malley Hansen to coordinate the event; she and Levy will be speakers, Purnell facilitator; Q&A will be held; welcomed Commissioners' presence at this important event.

Levy: Thanked Cooksey; action item for May - \$250K for relief grant program; Grants Committee needs to work with Cooksey to ensure clarity on expectation for use of these dollars; bring to commission for final approval at May meeting.

Cooksey: Will maintain payment schedule for grants; budgeted to maintain 25% and 40% but with revenue being volatile, adjustments may be made; implementing new grants management and system; will share further at Town Hall on March 31.

Wilson: Kudos to Cooksey who could not have come at more difficult time and done a better job, while being sensitive to the human situations as well; thanked the Commission and staff for their support.

**Public Comment - Levy**

Kohlby –Cooksey doing a great job.

Wilson: Mentioned proposed statutory change; strongly agree with Johnson comments; there are a couple of ways to think about this argument of proportionality as citizens of a democracy; his view is consistent with Johnson - equality of entity.

Levy: Important to remember that cultural tourism is one of the mandates for RAC in the STL region; continue to fight the good fight to maintain that directive.

Motion made by Wilson, seconded by Walker and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 11, 2021 Commission meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Lea Sutherlin  
Administrative Consultant

**Board Packet ATTACHMENTS:**

- March 11, 2021 Meeting Agenda
- DRAFT – November 12, 2020 Minutes
- DRAFT – February 11, 2021 Minutes
- 2021 Cash Flow Budget
- FY20 Audit
- House Bill 1366
- 2021 Organization Goals