



**REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION**
OF ST. LOUIS

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**Regional Arts Commission
Growth & Development Committee Minutes
April 17, 2025 via ZOOM
10 a.m.**

Call to Order & Committee Members in Attendance

Levy called the April 17, 2025, Growth & Development Committee meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and asked Lea to conduct the Committee roll call. Members in attendance: Mont Levy, chair, Rhonda Carter-Adams 10:06a, Gerad Ewing, Beverly Isom, *Kristin Johnson (*Non-Voting Committee Member)

Motion made by Levy, seconded by Isom, and unanimously approved to convene the April 17, 2025 Growth & Development Committee meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Votes were as follows:

Yea – Levy, Carter-Adams 10:05, Ewing, Isom (acknowledged – Johnson)

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Committee Members Absent

Sam Fiorello

Jerry Gennaria, ex-officio

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Angie Peters, Savannah Babington, Jay Scherder, Jason Schipkowski, Mk Sadiq, Tracey Morgan, Lea Sutherlin

Approval of Minutes (Levy)

Levy called for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2025 Growth & Development (G&D) Committee meeting.

Motion made by Levy seconded by Isom and unanimously carried to approve the January 27, 2025 Growth & Development Committee minutes. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Levy, Carter-Adams, 10:05, Ewing, Isom, (acknowledged – Johnson)

Nay – none

Abstain - none





Levy reported on the following: (1) recent conversations with Peters regarding the direction and priorities of RAC, particularly within the Growth and Development Department which is led by Peters; (2) as Chair of this committee, his eagerness to gain insight on the department's goals/objectives and the initiatives currently in progress; (3) emphasis on the importance of using RAC's limited resources efficiently and acknowledged the need for further discussion - inclusive of the two G&D committee members who were unable to attend this meeting; (4) reconsider the idea of possibly fundraising for a mural while considering RAC's overall financial situation and capabilities in developing additional funds; and (5) crucial discussions needed for aligning efforts and resource allocation with the G&D department's activities and the community's needs.

Levy then asked Peters to call for the following reports.

Growth & Development Updates

Peters acknowledged/concurred with Levy's insights and reported the following: (1) emphasized the importance of positioning and messaging in current context, particularly considering challenges and potential funding opportunities related to RAC; and (2) G&D team member Babington prepared a PowerPoint presentation for this meeting which included [a] President & CEO Sharing, [b] Positioning and Messaging, [c] Arts & Culture Investor Data, and [d] Revenue Diversification/Raise \$1M in 2025. Peters noted that those upcoming reports would focus on revenue diversification, particularly how they present themselves and their work to stakeholders.

Peters then asked Cooksey to share the following:

Cooksey gave the following two (2) updates:

St. Louis Sports Commission: (1) recently completed her 1:1 with Board Chair Gennaria and indicated that an email update would be sent to all Commissioners, as follow-up regarding RAC's phone call from the STL Sports Commission - and that organization's desire to boost amateur sporting events in St. Louis [as mentioned in her/Cooksey's report at the full March Board meeting]; (2) the STL Sports Commission's belief that by taking a portion of RAC's funds, STL Sports Commission impact could grow; (3) the STL Sports Commission is a private nonprofit organization composed of a diverse board of corporate leaders; and (4) while the STL Sports Commission is pursuing a portion of RAC's resources, it is essential to ensure that this does not come at the expense of the arts sector, which could face negative consequences similar to those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holy Joe Society: (1) a recent open records/Sunshine Request from the Holy Joe Society [HJS], a conservative group, which investigates financial matters; (2) HJS's intentions are seen as unhelpful to the organizations being scrutinized; (3) assurance that RAC staff is prepared to respond to this request under legal guidance; (4) emphasized the need for growth, clear messaging about RAC's contributions to the region, and the importance of organizational sustainability; and (5) noted that more detailed information would be provided in the near future.

Peters highlighted the structure of the Growth and Development Department, which includes team members specializing in creative services, marketing communications, partnerships, research and evaluation, and events. She (Peters) emphasized the department's goal of expanding and diversifying revenue and encouraged questions



throughout the presentation and mentioned that there will be a significant portion of time dedicated to open discussion afterward to explore future directions. Peters then called for the following reports:

Marketing

Jason Schipkowski, Creative Services Manager reported the following: (1) emphasized the importance of refining RAC's core messaging, especially considering its 40th anniversary; (2) highlighted the need for a clear articulation of RAC's impact and value to the region; (3) following a brainstorming session led by Jerry Gennaria, the organization is working collaboratively to develop concise messaging [expressed thanks to Gennaria for hosting/leading that session at TOKY]; and (4) the main message states that RAC is the leading public investor in arts and culture in the St. Louis area with supporting messages focused on four key points: [a] Invest, [b] Amplify, [c] Lead, and [d] Inform. Schipkowski then mentioned ongoing efforts to refine this messaging by creating audience-specific communications, with an aim to ensure consistency and cohesiveness across all communications, enhancing RAC's role as a regional leader. Schipkowski noted that the finalized messaging will be shared with commissioners and staff to maintain continuity.

Johnson asked if there were any considerations for connecting RAC's efforts to regional economic development and growth.

Schipkowski confirmed and emphasized that this would be a key focus area and explained that the team is developing supporting points under the "we invest" pillar, which will be informed by specific data and investment examples, and noted that the team will use case studies, anecdotes, and quotes from various stakeholders to demonstrate impact and build support for their initiatives in a tangible way.

Cooksey added the significance of sharing specific details as RAC celebrates its 40th anniversary, and noted the following: (1) over the past four decades, RAC has invested over \$115 million into a sector that now contributes \$1 billion in economic activity to the region; and (2) notably, RAC has invested more than \$13 million in the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, which is the second largest and oldest symphony in the country, and this consistent investment has fostered growth in the sector. Cooksey noted that she aims to highlight these specifics to effectively communicate RAC's achievements and future commitments.

Research & Evaluation

Mk Sadiq, Manager for Research and Evaluation presented the following: (1) two graphs illustrating funding patterns within the region's arts organizations - one graph focused on organizations with annual expenditures under \$500,000, while the other examined those spending over \$500,000; (2) data from the Zoo Museum District was excluded, as it is publicly funded; (3) organizations spending less than \$500,000 usually operate as single-program entities, often reliant on grants from the commission to maintain their activities, such as youth camps or fairs; (4) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident, as over 650 organizations faced significant declines between 2020 and 2022, although some showed signs of recovery; (5) the trend remained downward heading into 2023, raising concerns about the sustainability of these arts organizations; (6) larger organizations, which typically have more robust fundraising capabilities, are experiencing tightening financial conditions, marking a critical moment for the arts sector's future; and (7) the upcoming 2024 data is anticipated to shed more light on these trends.



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Levy asked if these organizations are receiving PPP funds.

Sadiq noted that while many organizations received assistance, the challenge remains in accurately understanding how these entities generate their revenue, and that data that is sometimes limited or unavailable, especially for smaller organizations that do not disclose enough information through the 990-tax form. Additional discussion was held.

Communications & Partnership

Jay Scherder, Communications and Partnerships Director reported on the following: (1) shared information about an upcoming RAC 40th Anniversary documentary trailer, which will air on Channel 11 in August; (2) RAC partnership with the STL Battlehawks to launch a 50/50 raffle starting April 26, aimed at generating revenue and enhancing fan experience during games, with potential for playoffs; (3) successful events with City Museum, like the "Paint the Spindles" event, and plans for a November event featuring local artists; (4) RAC partnership with 4 Hands Brewing Company – RAC will receive annual donations from that company's citywide beer sales, featuring unique packaging that showcases local mural artists; (5) collaborations with The Factory in Chesterfield for pre-show parties aimed at highlighting local artists, along with a fundraising program where special drinks benefit RAC; and (6) the importance of partnerships with local hotels to enhance guest experiences and attract more traffic to area arts and sports events.

Cooksey added the importance of increasing awareness of the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) among the broader St. Louis community, beyond those already engaged in the arts sector. She (Cooksey) commended the efforts of Schipkowski and Stallings and noted that RAC plays a crucial role in funding activities that benefit the public, even those who may not directly participate in arts events. Cooksey then stressed that familiarizing the general population with RAC is vital.

40th Birthday Bash

Tracey Morgan-Harris, ARPA for the Arts Lead outlined the following: (1) initiatives that have allocated \$10.6 million back to the St. Louis community, including income replacement for artists affected by COVID, the St. Louis Mural Project with 28 murals across 14 wards, and a film project supporting local filmmakers; (2) invited everyone to RAC's upcoming 40th birthday bash on August 28th at Union Station Midway, noting the majority of proceeds will come from \$19.85 tickets, symbolizing the organization's founding year; and (3) emphasized the event will celebrate St. Louis's cultural vibrancy with performances and food.

Peters added details about sponsorships for the event and reaffirmed it is meant as a celebration rather than a traditional fundraiser, aiming to secure various sponsorships to enhance the budget.

Additional discussion held regarding financial overview, highlighting anticipated revenue from ticket sales and grants, and emphasizing a goal for increased funding for the organization.

Peters then reviewed the revenue diversification chart included in the packet for this meeting as follows: (1) overview of the projected revenue based on recent discussions; (2) RAC's applications for grants; (3) highlighted generous support from Edward Jones; (4) overall, RAC is seeking approximately half a million dollars this year from





various sources beyond the hotel-motel tax; and (5) cautioned that these projections are uncertain, as they depend on securing grants and sponsorships as she clarified the total financial picture.

Open Discussion (Levy)

Levy opened the discussion by thanking the staff for providing detailed activity reports and specific numbers related to the expected outcomes of those activities. He invited committee members to share their reactions to the presented information and encouraged them to consider how these activities could influence RAC's ability to secure additional funding beyond the hotel-motel tax.

Committee members shared their thoughts on the necessity of finding funding sources beyond the hotel-motel tax.

Additional discussion held regarding the STL Sports Commission and the need for additional conversation on diversifying revenue.

Peters noted that an additional meeting of this committee might need to be held prior to its next scheduled meeting on 7/10.

Adjournment

Motion made by Ewing, seconded by Carter-Adams and unanimously approved to adjourn the April 17, 2025 Growth & Development Committee meeting at 11:01 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Levy, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Isom (acknowledged – Johnson)

Nay – none

Abstain - none

ATTACHMENTS

- Growth & Development Committee Meeting Minutes, January 27, 2025
- Revenue Diversification 2020-2025 Chart
- 40th Birthday Bash Possible Sponsors

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