



**REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION**  
OF ST. LOUIS

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**Regional Arts Commission  
Public Art Committee Minutes  
March 6, 2025 via ZOOM  
9:00 a.m.**

**Call to Order & Committee Members in Attendance**

Purnell called the March 6, 2025, meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and asked Lea to conduct the Committee roll call. Members in attendance: Andréa Purnell, Cheryl Walker, Jerry Gennaria, ex-officio, \*Meridith McKinley, \*Mallory Rukhsana Nezam, \*Tom Stancliffe, \*Brianna McIntyre (*\*Non-Voting Committee Member*)

**Motion made by Gennaria, seconded by Walker, and unanimously approved to convene the March 6, 2025 Public Art Committee meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.**

**Votes were as follows:**

**Yea – Purnell, Walker, Gennaria (acknowledged – McIntyre, McKinley, Nezam, Stancliffe)**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain - none**

**Staff Attendees**

Vanessa Cooksey, Ann Haubrich, Tracey Morgan, Chloe Smith, Lea Sutherlin

Purnell noted that there were no minutes for approval as this was the first meeting of the Public Art Committee (PAC).

**Welcome & Introductions**

Purnell welcomed and thanked everyone for serving on this committee. She asked Smith to begin introductions.

Smith expressed her excitement, noting that it had been a lot of work to bring it all together. Attendees then introduced themselves.

**Review of 2025 Meeting Dates**

Smith reviewed the remaining PAC 2025 meeting dates as follows: March 6, June 5, August 28 (a joint meeting with Grants & Programs) and November 24.

**Public Art Reports**

Smith provided an overview of the Public Art reports included in the meeting packet, highlighting several key points: (1) significant work completed in 2023; (2) a reference to the PAC charter (found on page 60 of the meeting packet), emphasizing that the primary role of the PAC is to oversee the RAC's responsibilities as both a communicator and a funder of public art projects, a role defined through critical work completed in 2023 in collaboration with Justice and Joy; (3) the first report outlines RAC's history in public art; (4) the second report focuses on the RAC's strategy and





outlines potential future actions; and (5) these reports are now available to the public on the RAC's website and serve as foundational documents to guide the work of the Public Art Committee moving forward.

Stancliffe asked about the Public Art Committee's progress and noted that this was his first time seeing the report. He asked whether the committee had already reviewed or discussed it.

Smith clarified that this was the committee's first meeting and that the report was shared online, serving as a foundation for future work, including the 2025 work plan.

Stancliffe shared that after reviewing the reports, he observed the following: (1) possible identity crisis regarding PAC's ability to meet high goals set by the Public Art Ordinance without sufficient staff or infrastructure; (2) acknowledged the impressive St. Louis Murals Project but unsure how it fits into this committee's overall goals; and (3) possible disconnect between PAC's top-down aspirations and grassroots projects like the murals.

Cooksey noted the following: (1) offered to provide a "RAC 101" session for non-RAC committee members to explain PAC's broader role; (2) clarification that the report was part of a strategic plan to define RAC's position as both a funder and communicator of public art; and (3) the murals project, funded by federal ARPA funds, was designed to meet community demands for art and safety, especially within St. Louis city wards.

Smith confirmed that the goal of the report was to clarify RAC's role in the community and ensure it aligned with its stated mission of funding and communicating public art initiatives.

#### **Public Art Committee Roles & Responsibilities**

Smith reviewed in detail, the roles and responsibilities of the Public Art Committee, and noted that PAC includes regional public art experts and RAC commissioners. She also noted that the committee's duties are outlined in the PAC charter (included in the packet for this meeting). Smith added that she will work with Sutherlin on collecting Conflict of Interest forms from non-RAC PAC members.

Smith then asked Cooksey to present the FY 2025 Work Plan.

#### **FY 2025 Work Plan**

Cooksey noted that RAC's FY 2025 Work Plan could be found on page 62 of the packet for this meeting, and highlighted the following: (1) for each of the past five years, she has presented the committee goals to the commissioners for the fiscal year, which runs from January 1 to December 31; (2) this year, RAC is focusing on several key deliverables, divided into two categories: general administrative tasks, which are essential for running the organization, and RAC's mission-oriented work, which involves grants and programs; (3) each team member contributes to the deliverables; (4) general administrative tasks - [a] how committees' efforts fit into the categories, [b] public art budget and its significance as it relates to celebrating RAC's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, [c] aim to enhance RAC's meetings' efficiency (kudos to Sutherlin in her role), [d] commitment to building strong relationships with RAC stakeholders, including elected officials; and (5) grants and programs - [a] plan to distribute \$4 million in various grants, including support for artists and arts organizations, [b] recently closed the application process for organizational and program support grants - will be opening up artist support grants by the end of March, and these grants will be available for public art initiatives, with the \$25,000 specifically earmarked for such projects this year.



Cooksey encouraged everyone to visit St. Louis Arts' website, where RAC features a comprehensive section on the St. Louis Mural project. Cooksey added that the RAC Team has observed that the public is particularly interested in the public art and mural sections on the website, so additional information about the Public Art Committee and related efforts to RAC's digital platforms will be added. Cooksey then noted that RAC will continue compliance and partnership work with the City of St. Louis CDA, which has been instrumental in guiding through the ARPA process. She further noted that public art is integral to RAC's overall initiatives this year, and that she looks forward to collaborating with this committee, receive input, and improve RAC's efforts.

#### **RACSTL Theory of Change (TOC)**

Smith introduced this agenda item regarding the Theory of Change (TOC) and its connection to the public art strategic report.

Cooksey shared that the TOC could be found on page 63 of the packet for this meeting and highlighted the following: (1) excitement about the potential impact of RAC over the next decade as the organization celebrates its 40th anniversary; (2) challenges faced during COVID-19, particularly the significant revenue loss due to a reliance on hotel/motel tax revenue; (3) overview of a five-year strategic plan launched in March 2020 and its focused key priorities; (4) focus is on meaningful regional impact in a sustainable way, aiming for a framework supported by staff, community input, and board approval; (5) key components of Theory of Change; and (6) aspiration for St. Louis to be recognized as a top arts and culture destination, fostering joy and prosperity for its residents and visitors.

Nezam asked if there is any major change from a previous theory of change to this one.

Cooksey noted that the emphasis is on the need for focused strategic decisions, including the ability to say no to certain initiatives and being intentional about doing that in a way that is professional and humane, and experimenting with funding structures.

Stancliffe asked about measuring the impact of public art investments on community development.

Cooksey stated that this is why PAC exists and that this committee will be engaged in recognizing the need for collaboration on metrics and exploring ripple effects of public art.

McIntyre shared the following: (1) expressed appreciation for RAC's funding approach; and (2) suggested the possibility of integrating larger, impactful projects alongside smaller grants to elevate St. Louis artists and narratives.

Cooksey thanked McIntyre for her comments and noted that the emphasis will be on the necessity to secure more funding to meet community demands and support larger projects while maintaining operational sustainability.

Smith noted that while much information had been shared during this meeting, committee members could send additional questions to her attention.

Gennaria shared that in the interest of time, his comments (as follows) could be found in the chat for this meeting: "It was interesting to do some joint-venture type projects. A couple of thoughts. One would be match-making partnerships between a St. Louis artist/org and an artist from outside St. Louis to do projects together. Creates an opportunity for publicity, for learning from the outside artist, etc. Second would be to borrow an idea from



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Columbus, Indiana and the Cummins Engine companies' architecture program. If you're not familiar, Cummins established a fund many years ago that pays the architect fee for any public use building if the organization selects an architect from their list of architects (major nationally recognized architects). What's interesting is that they weren't paying for the building but critically influencing the design. Maybe there is a lesson to be learned there."

Purnell thanked Gennaria and expressed her appreciation for his insights feedback. She noted that it is evident that Cooksey, the team, and the Commission have approached RAC's planning with great intention, and having the Public Art Committee in this process will undeniably enhance RAC's efforts. Purnell then expressed appreciation for this committee's contributions so far and looks forward to the collaboration ahead.

Gennaria added that it is his belief this committee has the potential to set a standard for other committees within the Commission.

**Adjournment (Purnell)**

**Motion made by Gennaria, seconded by Walker, and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 6, 2025 Public Art Committee meeting at 10:04 a.m.**

**Votes were as follows:**

**Yea – Purnell, Walker, Gennaria (acknowledged – McIntyre, McKinley, Nezam, Standcliffe)**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain - none**

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

**Attachments**

- List of 2025 Meeting Dates
- Public Art Reports
- Public Art Committee Charter
- FY 2025 Work Plan
- RACSTL Theory of Change

