



(314) 863 5811  
(314) 863 6932 FAX  
WWW.ART-STL.COM

REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION OF ST. LOUIS



**Regional Arts Commission Staff/Commission Retreat  
September 8 & 9, 2021 via Hybrid**



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

Levy welcomed everyone to the September 8, 2021 retreat at 4:05 p.m.; Lea conducted the Commissioner roll call.

**Commissioners**

Rhonda C. Adams  
Sam Fiorello  
Jerry Gennaria  
Roz Johnson  
Vin Ko  
Lyah LeFlore (confirmation pending)  
Mont Levy  
John Russell  
Kellie Trivers  
Cheryl Walker  
Mary Walsh

**Absent**

Heather Corcoran  
David Wilson

**Staff**

Vanessa Cooksey  
Liz Deichmann  
Rita Dillard  
Rob Goltermann  
Rick Gratza  
Chloe Smith  
Lea Sutherlin



**Commissioners-Virtual**

Andréa Purnell  
Walé Soluade

**Staff/Guest Virtual Attendees**

Eva Frazer  
Tiffany Byndom

**Retreat Housekeeping**

Vanessa shared housekeeping rules; noted that this is a hybrid event – shared Geniecast instructions related to virtual attendees; social distancing – entire retreat held on first floor and online; Finch Photography on site shooting still/candid photographs; introduced Leslie Peters, retreat facilitator.

## **Agenda Overview and Group Activity**

Leslie presented a group activity and called for participant introductions. She then asked Vanessa and Jerry to review the facilities master plan.

Jerry highlighted the pre-read materials sent to participants prior to the retreat; and reviewed the following: (1) Ad Hoc Facilities Committee and facilities guiding principles; (2) RAC's work and understanding mission, roles and core work; (3) supporting RAC's strategy and importance of development and implementation of master facility plan; (4) facilities strategic questions; (5) key data points including financial analysis highlights, appraised value, 2020 gallery survey highlights, and 2021 Campfire community engagement; (6) RAC administrative space needs; (7) RAC place model options and pros; (8) RAC real estate options – rent vs. own; (9) RAC's new property management partner DCM Group; and (10) Wash U partnership opportunity.

Jerry then noted that all viewpoints need to be taken into consideration and there is enough info available for everyone to consider and give feedback toward the more tactical questions.

Leslie then asked Steven Harowitz, Campfire, to present results from the facilities survey. Vanessa thanked Steven for his outstanding work, and thanked Jerry for the introduction to Campfire.

Steven presented on the physical space and RAC and highlighted the following: (1) purpose of research; (2) data collection tools including survey *based on race, gender, zip code*, focus groups, and 1:1 interviews; and (3) research questions – overarching questions posted to stakeholders and community members through, survey, focus groups and interviews.

Q & A and open discussion held regarding survey results.

Staff distributed copies of the Campfire presentation slides to retreat participants; Lea emailed slides to virtual participants.

Leslie asked participants to engage in small group discussions regarding the Campfire presentation, followed by open remarks and recap of small group discussions. She then reviewed the agenda for Day 2 (Sep 9<sup>th</sup>); asked Vanessa to share additional information.

Vanessa thanked Steven and his team for their outstanding work; then provided additional housekeeping rules for Day 2.

Adjourned for Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Mont thanked everyone for their participation; reminded that Day 2 will focus on Strategic Plan Implementation 2022 and Beyond.

**Minutes**  
**Day 2 - September 9, 2021 @ 8 a.m.**

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

Levy welcomed everyone to Day 2 (September 9<sup>th</sup>) of the Staff/Board retreat at 8:44 a.m.; highlighted important conversation during Day 1 surrounding the building; today will look at priorities concerning the strategic plan; Lea conducted roll call.

**Commissioners**

Rhonda C. Adams  
Jerry Gennaria  
Vin Ko  
Lyah LeFlore (confirmation pending)  
Mont Levy  
Andréa Purnell  
John Russell  
Walé Soluade  
Kellie Trivers  
Cheryl Walker  
Mary Walsh

**Absent**

Heather Corcoran  
Sam Fiorello  
Roz Johnson  
David Wilson

**Staff**

Tiffany Byndom  
Vanessa Cooksey  
Liz Deichmann  
Rita Dillard  
Chloe Smith

**Staff/Guest Virtual Attendees**

Eva Frazer  
Rick Gratza  
Lea Sutherlin

**Retreat Housekeeping**

Vanessa shared housekeeping rules; reminded that this is a hybrid event – shared Geniecast instructions related to virtual attendees; HEC-TV will be on site to record scenes for anniversary video; social distancing – entire retreat held on first floor and online; introduced Leslie Peters, retreat facilitator.

**Agenda Overview and Group Activity**

Leslie gave a recap of the Sep 8<sup>th</sup> session; will do small group work for this session (Sep 9<sup>th</sup>); will revisit the strategic plan and how it will form decisions in the short term and five years out; will look closely at sequence of priorities; and will tap into work of the Ad Hoc Facilities committee; asked for any additional feedback from the September 8<sup>th</sup> session. She then asked Vanessa to present her President's Report.

## **President's Report & RAC Business Update**

Vanessa shared her excitement about the good things happening at RAC; great work being done by staff with support of Commission; welcomed Liz Deichmann, Research and Evaluation consultant to the team; Liz will also assist with arts ecosystem mapping project sponsored by Maxine Clark; will put together data to help capture and implement strategic plan; asked Liz to comment.

Liz shared she is very excited to work with RAC; research and evaluation plays a critical role right now as important decisions are being made.

Vanessa then presented the following: (1) August 2021 financial update - noted that August was a good month in terms of Hotel/Motel sales tax revenue; shared comparisons from 2020; (2) fund development update including American Rescue Plan Fund Sources and grants submitted to date; (3) August 27<sup>th</sup> grantmaking update/brainstorming session with Grants Committee chair Andréa Purnell, hosted by Jerry Gennaria at Toky – and, Blackbaud training and implementation led by Chloe Smith; (4) upcoming Board and Staff events including Requiem of Light @ Forest Park, Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>, full commission meeting October 14<sup>th</sup>, and Virtual Town Hall, October 20<sup>th</sup>; (5) upcoming President/CEO community engagement; (6) for discussion – (a) Arts & Sector Collective Efforts including RAC's position on COVID-19 vaccination and (b) Arts and Culture sector advocacy letter – asked commission their thoughts/feedback regarding retreat pre-reads.

Open discussion held regarding RAC's position on vaccination: (1) RAC as a leader in the arts community; (2) statistics from the American Medical Association regarding the vaccine; (3) public dollars and how RAC's position should be well thought out; (4) taking a stance as a leader in the region for arts and culture and coming from an education perspective/facts on how the public can get info to make an informed decision; (5) safety related to internal/external stakeholder access of the RAC building; (6) reminders that arts and culture leads change and the possibility of being proactive via the RAC website; (7) responsibility of commissioners; (8) need for a policy statement; and (9) propriety of communicating information about the vaccine.

Mont called for a motion to adopt a RAC policy regarding access of the RAC building that aligns with vaccination or proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours.

Vanessa called for discussion.

Discussion continued: (1) importance of vaccine non-supporter opinions; (2) HR and legal review and potential health exceptions; (3) additional discussion regarding public dollars; (4) scientific facts, the RAC viewpoint and education to help people get those facts; (5) consideration of legislative opinions; (6) importance of continuation of the arts and being vigilant in the midst of the pandemic; and (7) decision needed about the keeping building closed part or all of 2022 if keep the building - as part two of the mini-retreat is the only hybrid (in-person/virtual) event scheduled for the remainder of 2021.

**A motion was made by Mont, seconded by Mary, and unanimously approved to develop internal and external RAC statements regarding COVID-19 and the vaccination.**

Vanessa continued her President's report; highlighted arts advocacy letter drafted in support of American Rescue Plan Funds and the arts sector importance to the region's recovery; she shared a copy of the letter.

Discussion held regarding origin, content and vetting of the arts advocacy letter, and communicating with City and County leadership.

Vanessa noted that she and Mont would meet with the Mayor of the City of St. Louis as an introductory meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Discussion continued regarding the relief funds, importance of not piecemealing the asks, researching guidelines, the collective approach of the letter and referring to other art organizations, and research on how people are accessing funds to fill gaps in their budget.

Leslie noted that it is important to separate process from outcome and to look at big picture.

Vanessa concluded her report and noted that she is clear on next steps related to COVID-19 and will circle back on advocacy letter.

### **Strategic Plan Implementation 2022 and Beyond (Leslie Peters)**

Following break, Leslie explained the process for the strategic plan priorities small group breakout sessions - Strengthen Key Organizational Infrastructure, Grow & Develop Capacity of Artists & Arts Organizations, Advance Education of Young People in and through the Arts, and Increase Equity in the Arts through Leadership and Collaboration - based on the following three questions:

1. What does the (strategic plan priority) look like in our current environment and what it will look like in five years?
2. What is the opportunity fit in DEI work through these efforts?
3. What is important about facility/space to support the priorities?

She asked Vanessa to comment on why this activity would be important to the groups.

Vanessa: Will begin process with KEB to establish goals and work on 2022 budget for approval at December meeting; this session will provide direction and guidance toward that effort.

Group One addressed the following strategic plan priorities: Strengthen Key Organizational Infrastructure and, Grow & Develop Capacity of Artists & Arts Organizations.

Group Two addressed the following strategic plan priorities: Advance Education of Young People in and through the Arts and, Increase Equity in the Arts through Leadership and Collaboration.

Leslie asked each group to report out their deliberations. Following group presentations, she noted that great work had been done and that this will help "bucket" information for staff. She added that she would combine/harvest all presentation notes from the group activity into a priority guidance for staff to utilize when looking at staffing, governance, work plans, sequencing, budgets and overall feedback.

## **Wrap Up**

Leslie asked each participant for closing thoughts.

Mont thanked everyone for their participation; reminded about the Fall Town Hall in October.

Vanessa also expressed her appreciation.

Leslie asked participants to complete evaluation.

Adjourned 12:40 p.m. followed by lunch.

Submitted by Lea Sutherlin  
Executive Assistant & Commission Administrator

### **Retreat Packet Contents:**

**Agenda, RAC Staff/Commission Retreat, September 8 & 9, 2021**

**Retreat Small Group Worksheets**

**2020-2024 Strategic Plan Framework, Executive Summary & Priorities**

**2020-2024 Strategic Plan Updated Implementation Schedule**