



MEETING MINUTES

Evanston Arts Council

Tuesday, April 16, 2013

6:30 p.m.

Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes Street Studio 106

Members Present: Anne Berkeley, co-chair; Heidi Bloom, co-chair; Greg Allen; Helen Axelrod; Carol Bass; Lisa Degliantoni; Rina Gitlin; Steven Guenther; Fran Joy; Rebeca Mendoza; Dino Robinson; Nan Stein.

Members Absent: Manuel Aleman, Jacqueline Williams.

Others Present: Ciara McCarthy – Daily Northwestern; Valarie Schiff – Noyes Individual Artist; Gary Geiger – Noyes Artist, Evanston Children’s Choir; Michael Montenegro – Noyes Artist, Theatre Zarko; Emily Guthrie – First Night Evanston; Sarah Kaiser – Noyes Individual Artist; Joanna Pinsky – Noyes Artist, Art Encounter; Liza Steman – Evanston Children’s Choir; Joann Rea – Noyes Individual Artist; Sheila Ganch – Noyes Individual Artist; Maggie Weiss – Noyes Individual Artist, Evanston Art Center faculty.

Staff Present: Douglas J. Gaynor, Director, Parks Recreation and Community Services; Jeff Cory, Cultural Arts/Arts Council Director, Jill Silverman, Secretary II Cultural Arts Division.

Declaration of Quorum

With a quorum present, co-chair Anne Berkeley called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Ms. Berkeley welcomed new member Steven Guenther to the Arts Council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

First Night Evanston – Ms. Guthrie announced plans for the resurrection of a revamped First Night Evanston. Ms. Guthrie estimated a project budget of \$70,000. The event will be centered at Raymond Park on Chicago Avenue. First Night Evanston is seeking to sell copies of the Evanstopoly game at the discounted price of \$15 to help offset some of the event costs. The button for this year’s event will be a design taken from the top of the game board. She said they are seeking opportunities that would enable the buttons to be used for discounts at participating retailers for an extended period, possibly three months. She asked the Arts Council for any support it can provide, financial or otherwise. Ms. Berkeley suggested that the topic be discussed further at the May 1 Community Relations Committee meeting.

Proposed Noyes Cultural Arts Center Transition – Ms. Weiss recapped the discussions over the past two years that have led to the proposal by the Piven Theatre Workshop for an expanded footprint at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center. Ms. Weiss expressed disappointment that assurances by the City Manager that artists would not be displaced or forced to move to the basement have not been honored. She said the announced plan that she would be relocated to the basement effectively would force her

to leave the building, since the basement space is unsuitable for textile work. Ms. Sarah Kaiser added that none of the basement leaseholders will be able to occupy their studios during construction. Evanston Children's Choir has also been informed that they would have to leave the building; the proposal calls for Piven to occupy the current office space of Actors Gymnasium, which would be relocated to the space currently occupied by Evanston Children's Choir. Two other artists who are currently occupying studios on a month-to-month basis – Ms. Naomi Sondak and Ms. Enid Baron – would also have to move without expectation of being relocated. The It Figures Group would also lose its lease to studio 216 to accommodate another artist being displaced by Piven. Ms. Pinsky said that while Art Encounter is happy that they don't have to move from their space, she is distraught that ECC and Ms. Weiss will have to move. She expressed concern that numerous Noyes tenants have been lost over the last 18 months as a result of the ongoing upheaval. Ms. Weiss recalled that early in the process Piven had indicated that it would accommodate the needs of Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre as part of their proposal, but that ultimately Piven failed to fulfill that pledge, necessitating that a tenant be displaced so that that City could set aside a space for FJT outside of the Piven footprint. Mr. Geiger spoke on behalf of the Evanston Children's Choir, which recently was informed that they would have to vacate the building in 2014. He acknowledged Piven Theatre's name recognition, but added that he feels the name recognition and community esteem that the ECC enjoys is second to none, including Piven. He pointed out that the ECC provides Community Service in an amount each year that far exceeds his organization's 15-percent requirement. The ECC currently serves 100 children from families of a wide variety of ethnicities. Mr. Geiger urged the City to consider creating additional space at Noyes, either by building up or building out. He expressed disappointed that this option has not been explored further as a means of accommodating tenants that would cost much less than the proposal at hand. Ms. Kaiser asked if Piven Theatre is currently paying rent for studio space at Noyes. Mr. Cory responded that Piven has not paid rent to the City since December, and that Piven's 2013 rent terms are being negotiated as part of the renovation proposal. Ms. Kaiser asked how it could be considered fair that other tenants have to pay rent while Piven receives rent-free space. She suggested that all Noyes tenants should consider withholding rent until Piven pays its share. Ms. Berkeley mentioned that that the City Manager has removed the Arts Council from its traditional role of providing oversight at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center. Ms. Berkeley acknowledged that there are many valid questions to be asked of the City regarding the proposed agreement with Piven. She said that in her opinion, it is important for the Arts Council to try not to take sides. She feels it does not serve the mission of the Arts Council, which strives to promote and support all artists in Evanston. Mr. Allen said he agrees with the notion that the Arts Council should approach the proposal from an impartial perspective, but he also believes it is important to stand up for arts organization or artists who are being oppressed. Under those circumstances, it's hard not to take sides and advocate for artists and organizations that do not have a voice in the process. Ms. Berkeley said that after reading the one-page term sheet for the proposal that the City posted online, she developed a preliminary list of questions, which she distributed to the Arts Council. Some questions include: 1) How does this project fit into the City's overall vision for the arts and arts facilities planning? 2) What is

the mission of Piven Theatre and how will this project support that mission? 3) What programmatic changes does Piven envision through the expansion and how many additional audience members, artists, and students are expected to be served? 4) What would the renovated space look like? 5) How many weeks per year would the space be available for rental by outside organizations? 6) How will the proposal impact the other Noyes tenants and management of the building? 7) When will more detailed financial information be available for the project budget and Piven Theatre Workshop's most recently completed fiscal year? 8) How will this project provide economic benefits to the community? The City Manager has pledged that the complete proposed agreement will be available online for review at least two weeks prior to the Human Services Committee meeting on Monday, May 6, when members of City Council will formally consider the Piven proposal for the first time. Ms. Bass said she would like to see how this proposed support by the City of Evanston for Piven compares to the support received from the City by other arts organizations. She said there are many arts organizations doing great things. Ms. Degliantoni observed that the amount allocated by the City for this year's Cultural Fund Grant program is just \$11,300, which is divided among more than a dozen local arts organizations. Ms. Axelrod asked how Piven could afford such an expansion proposal, given that Piven's tax reports from 2008 to 2011 show a four-year operating deficit in excess of \$300,000. Ms. Weiss said she expressed similar concern to the City Manager, who responded that the worst-case scenario would be for the City to have a renovated south wing of the building. Mr. Allen expressed concern for the ability of artists to use their studios during the construction. He also asked if there would be an expectation for other tenants to pay a higher rent rate to offset the significant amount of revenue that would be lost through the Piven plan. Mr. Guenther asked why the City would underwrite a loan that no bank would touch. He described the proposal as a credit risk and a shaky investment. He noted that no one in the room is saying that the City should not invest this money in the arts; the question is whether this proposal is the most prudent investment of the City's limited cultural funds. Ms. Berkeley asked that Arts Council members review the draft list of questions and send her comments and additional questions. Ms. Schiff invited Arts Council members to take a tour of the building. Ms. Berkeley said the Arts Council would schedule a visit in the near future.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2013

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the February 2013 meeting be approved. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved as written. Ms. Berkeley requested that the March minutes be edited to reflect the following change: The first sentence in the Communications section should be changed to: "Ms. Berkeley initiated a discussion about distinguishing between personal opinion and Arts Council consensus opinion when making public comments." A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 2013 meeting minutes as amended. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously (12-0).

STAFF REPORT

No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Arts & Business – Ms. Joy reported Ms. Gitlin and Ms. Rotheiser are working on the management of Backstage Evanston, since Piven is unable to serve in an administrative role this year. Other BSE participants were invited to submit a proposal for management of the event, but none have responded. Last year the Arts Council allocated \$2,000 in support of the event, and the committee is seeking a similar commitment from the Arts Council in 2013. Ms. Bloom asked if there would still be money in the budget to provide any support for First Night Evanston. Mr. Cory said that \$1,000 that had been allocated for Arts & Humanities Month could be targeted to First Night if the Arts Council desires. Ms. Bass made a motion to allocate \$2,000 in support of Backstage Evanston; the motion was seconded by Ms. Degliantoni. Motion carried unanimously (11-0); Ms. Gitlin had left the meeting prior to presentation of the Arts & Business Committee report. Backstage Evanston will take place on Sunday, September 29, at the Ethel M. Barber Theater on the Northwestern campus. Ms. Berkeley asked that members considering volunteering time to help support the event. Mr. Cory added that there will be volunteer opportunities at the summer festivals as well.

Upcoming local arts events of note include:

YEA! Festival – Saturday May 18, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Custer's Last Stand – Saturday & Sunday, June 15-16, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Fountain Square Art Festival – Saturday & Sunday, July 6-7, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Ethnic Arts Festival – Saturday & Sunday, July 20-21, noon to 7 p.m.

Lakeshore Arts Festival – Saturday & Sunday, August 3-4, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Backstage Evanston – Sunday, September 29, 3-6 p.m.

Ms. Joy mentioned that Mr. Harvey Pranian of YEA! recently asked her for a mailing list for Arts Council members. She asked if it is okay to provide home addresses of Arts Council members. Mr. Cory responded that the Cultural Arts Division office offers to distribute invitations to Arts Council members rather than sharing personal information with outside group. Ms. Bloom suggested that Ms. Joy also encourage YEA! to upload event information onto evanstonartsbuzz.com. Mr. Cory mentioned that information on gallery and museum exhibits will no longer be included on the evanstonartsbuzz calendar, but will instead be listed under a special Exhibitions link on the site. Gallery and museum openings, lectures, and special events will still be listed on the calendar.

Community Relations – Mr. Cory reported the 'Seed by Seed' exhibit of student artwork will be displayed in the second floor Noyes Gallery in May. Ms. Silverman mentioned the need to rotate new student artwork into the second-floor meeting rooms at the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center. Ms. Stein said she will provide new work in the coming weeks. The next meeting of the committee will take place at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 1, in studio 106 at Noyes. Fundraising will be among the topics of discussion.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Two-Year Work Plan – Mr. Cory reported that the originally scheduled March presentation to the Rules Committee was postponed to Monday, May 6, giving Arts Council members additional time to consider the content of the plan. The Work Plan is intended to serve as a guide for prioritizing Arts Council initiatives in the months ahead. The plan can be adapted or amended as needed.

evanstARTs – Ms. Bloom reported that the Working Group has taken a bit of a break while the final report is being written. The next planning meeting will take place from noon to 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 9, at The Mather. Ms. Berkeley said the next step is to establish an expanded Working Group.

Cultural Fund Grant Program – Ms. Bloom reported the Cultural Fund review panel met in March, with Mr. Allen and Ms. Joy in attendance. A list of recommended grant awards based on the panel scores was distributed to Arts Council members. Ms. Bloom mentioned that the funding recommendation provides some support to each applicant, with grants ranging from \$650 to \$900. Mr. Allen made a motion to approve the funding recommendation listed on the report as Scenario D, seconded by Ms. Stein. The motion carried unanimously (11-0). Mr. Allen asked about the time frame for reviewing the application for possible changes to the process for next year. Ms. Bloom said the discussion can occur at a Community Relations Committee meeting prior to distribution of applications in the fall.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Berkeley is still planning to provide Arts Council members with a template for providing liaison reports. Mr. Cory suggested that Arts Council members submit liaison reports to Ms. Silverman prior to each Arts Council meeting so that the reports can be distributed electronically along with the agenda and other meeting materials.

Ms. Degliantoni mentioned that a cycling organization is planning a bike tour of Buddha heads on display through the Ten Thousand Ripples public art and peace project by artist Indira Johnson. Mr. Cory added that upcoming Ten Thousand Ripples community events are planned at Grey Park on Sunday, April 21, at Family Focus on Thursday, April 25, and at Twiggs Park on Saturday, May 4. Each will be a unique participatory event. Mr. Cory mentioned that an impressive lineup of keynote speakers has been assembled for the upcoming Midwest Urban District Forum to be hosted by Downtown Evanston. Speakers at the May 20-21 event will include Jason Schupbach of the National Endowment for the Arts, Randy Cohen of Americans for the Arts, and Lyz Crane of ArtPlace.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Silverman
Secretary II, Parks, Recreation and Community Services