

**Minutes
Special Council Meeting
August 24, 2021
9:00 a.m.**

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: Chair Parks, Mr. Alaquiva, Mr. Astorino, Representative Ciresi, Ms. Colón, Mr. Gabel, Ms. Goldberg, Representative Labs, Mr. Lehr, Judge Morgan, Mr. Stull, Mr. West, Ms. Zaborney

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Ms. Vilayphonh, Mr. Warfield

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT VIA SKYPE: Karl Blischke, Executive Director; Heather Doughty, Deputy Executive Director; Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning; Amy Gabriele, Chief of Finance & Administration; Norah Johnson, Director of Public Awareness & External Affairs; Laura Kline, Executive Assistant; Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities; Dana Payne, Director of DEI Initiatives, Diverse Cultures & Heritage; Seth Poppy, Director of Data Systems & Creative Services; and, Ian Rosario, Grants Liaison.

GUESTS PRESENT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: Rodney Akers, Chief Counsel.

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Karl Blischke, Executive Director, welcomed those in attendance and informed them that the meeting would be recorded for the administrative purpose of minute taking. Mr. Blischke then turned the meeting over to Chair Parks.

Chair Parks welcomed those in attendance and provided Council with instructions regarding the meeting proceedings and requests for public comment.

ROLL CALL:

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke called the roll. A quorum was established

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Jeff Parks, Chair

Chair Parks reminded the Council of the PCA's Conflict of Interest Policy.

ITEM 2 REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Parks asked if the PCA had received any requests for public comments. There were no requests for public comments.

**ITEM 3 ACTION: Recommendations for the Creative Communities Initiative
Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Funding and New Communities**

Sarah Merritt, Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities

Ms. Merritt stated that there was a typo in the Council Book memo with respect to the referenced fiscal year and explained to Council that this recommendation is for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 funding for the Creative Communities program. Merritt reminded Council that the Creative Communities program supports arts based, creative economic development projects in communities across Pennsylvania and aligns with Goal 1 of PCA's strategic plan, to strengthen Pennsylvania communities through the arts.

Ms. Merritt reported that at the July meeting, Council approved funding of \$25,000 for each of the existing creative communities and also approved the addition of two new communities. Ms. Merritt reminded Council that Creative Communities is a multi-year program and explained that once a community enters the program, it is essentially for up to four years.

Ms. Merritt stated that currently, the six existing communities in the program are Sharon, in Mercer County; Meadville in Crawford County; the Spanish American Civic Association (SACA) and Millersville University in Lancaster County; Mifflin Square Park/7th Street Corridor in Philadelphia; Cultural Coalition of Allentown; and the Indiana Office of Planning & Development in Indiana County.

Ms. Merritt reported that PCA staff is also recommending funding for two new communities. Ms. Merritt stated that the PCA published an open call for letters of interest and received 57 letters from organizations across the state. Merritt added that since March, panelists convened three times in order to review the letters of interest, site visit reports, and final applications.

Ms. Merritt reported that initially, the panelists selected ten communities for a virtual site visit. Merritt stated that after reviewing the site visit reports, panelists selected seven communities to complete a full application. Merritt explained that the panelists reviewed the final applications and convened virtually on August 2, 2021, and selected two communities for the Creative Communities initiative.

Ms. Merritt stated that the first community for recommendation is for the City of Corry, which is a project led by Impact Corry, the local community and economic development entity that works in partnership with the city, the development district, and the school district. Ms. Merritt explained that Impact Corry will work with local artists and partners to plan and implement community-driven public art projects that celebrate Corry's industrial heritage and resilience.

Ms. Merritt reported that the second new community being recommended is the Hill District in Pittsburgh, a project that is built upon the rich African American legacy of the district and weaves African American culture into the building environment, providing a clear economic future for the neighborhood. Merritt explained that the Hill District is working very closely with local artists and creative entrepreneurs in the community.

Ms. Merritt reported that PCA staff recommends the six existing communities for funding as well as the two new communities, the City of Corry, and Hill District in Pittsburgh.

Emmai Alaquiva asked Ms. Merritt to let him know if there are any relationships in the Hill District area that he needs to cultivate. Mr. Alaquiva offered to work or attend meetings on behalf of the PCA. Ms. Merritt stated that she would contact Mr. Alaquiva to discuss what that area's Creative Communities projects will involve.

Chair Parks asked for any questions from the Council. Hearing none, Chair Parks asked for a motion to approve the recommendations as presented.

Mr. Stull made a motion to approve the recommendation. Ms. Colón seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 4 ACTION: Recommendations for PA Council on the Arts Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan

Dana Payne, Director of DEI Initiatives, Diverse Cultures & Heritage

Ms. Payne reported that in March 2019, Council adopted the PCA's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan including the overarching value of diversity, equity, and inclusion ("DEI").

Ms. Payne explained that a key component of implementing the PCA's strategic plan is the development of an agency DEI plan, direct DEI activities and measure DEI progress. Ms. Payne stated that to that end, PCA staff engaged the services of Daria Torres of the Walls Torres Group to help guide the agency through information gathering, targeted assessment, and the initial development of a DEI strategy and action plan.

Mr. Payne explained that staff and Council participated in the Equity Maturity Model survey that helped to establish a collective understanding of PCA's DEI baseline. Ms. Payne stated that based upon that and additional feedback from staff and Council, objectives were prioritized into areas for near term focus segmented into Tier 1, which means ready to act upon and complete within the next three months, and Tier 2 which requires a bit more time and definition. Payne added that this can be acted upon within the next six months to one year.

Ms. Payne shared her screen with Council and the first slide in the presentation outlined the objectives of the DEI Strategy & Action Plan. Payne stated that the objectives are categorized into three focus areas and that there are a set of goals within each area.

Ms. Payne explained that the first focus area is programing, and the goal is to ensure equity of opportunity and that PCA's overarching value is reflected across PCA programs. Payne added that current programs were examined to makes sure they currently serve diverse constituencies and have accessible program information with the goal of increased participation of diverse constituencies.

Ms. Payne reported that the third focus area is marketing, and the goal is to ensure that PCA's values, goals, and progress are accurately communicated internally and are reflected in all external-facing marketing and communications activities.

The next slide in Ms. Payne's presentation provided an update on the progress, thus far, of the DEI Strategy and Action Plan. Payne stated that PCA staff engaged in a facilitated discussion about how PCA's overarching values could be reflected across its respective programs and how PCA's overarching values should be reflected in the review criteria and in the review process.

Ms. Payne stated that the application processes were also discussed as well as how to reach new constituents. Payne added that PCA is beginning to include language about PCA's overarching values into the program guidelines. She stated that the overarching value is embedded in the new creative entrepreneur accelerator program guidelines. Ms. Payne explained that a living DEI action plan has been created and an internal inclusion strategy has been identified and a work strategy has been established that includes protocols and assignments.

Ms. Payne added that with regard to marketing, DEI planning updates have been provided to PCA's marketing consultants and marketing goals with PCA's DEI action plan objectives have been identified.

Ms. Payne stated that by advancing its DEI strategies, PCA has created opportunities for artists, organizations, and historically under-resourced communities which in turn contribute to the vitality of all communities in Pennsylvania.

Payne stated that PCA staff recommends that Council establish a committee to work with staff on some of the more significant objectives related to the policy choices. Ms. Payne explained that this will be accomplished through the review of existing PCA policies, data, and processes, the review of research and best practices from within and outside of the Commonwealth. Payne added that this will help in developing recommendations for Council.

Ms. Colón asked Ms. Payne about the anticipated size and time frame of the committee.

Ms. Payne replied that she thinks the time frame will be at least one year, because the second-tier objectives are items that will be tackled within six months to one year. Ms. Payne explained that at the beginning, the first six months are the most important because those are first tier items including the development of PCA's Council DEI statement.

Mr. Blischke stated that he anticipated a committee consisting of up to six or seven Council members and added that a couple of Council members have already expressed interest. Blischke explained that this work is anticipated to be completed virtually to help ease the interaction. Blischke added that similar to PCA's funding strategy committee that met to create PCA's new funding strategy, this could be done over three or four sessions over a year and will result in recommendations for the full Council.

Chair Parks asked for any questions from the council. Hearing none, Chair Parks asked for a motion to approve the recommendations as presented.

Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Colón seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 5 ACTION: Recommendation for Creative Catalysts

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap reported that she had three recommendations for the Creative Catalyst grant, and she explained that this is the second time she has brought recommendations for this category before Council.

Dunlap stated that the first recommendation for Council approval is the Lehigh Valley Arts Council (LVAC), and the name of their project is the PA Creative Economy Workshops. Dunlap explained that the LVAC would like to design, produce, and host a series of live streaming video workshops about creative business entrepreneurs and business owners in order to help them develop business strategies to grow revenue, attract customers, and provide effective customer service concepts. Ms. Dunlap stated that LVAC is seeking funds to develop the series which will be promoted virtually across the entire commonwealth.

Ms. Dunlap explained that this project aligns with the work that the PCA is currently pursuing through the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program and the Creative Communities program.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the request from LVAC is for \$10,000 and the recommendation is for \$10,000.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the second recommendation is from a group called I'm Fine, an organization that applied for a project called I'm Fine, which is a series of community workshops and exhibits.

Dunlap stated that this organization has already launched this program in collaboration with Governor Wolf's program, Reach Out PA, which focuses on mental health. Ms. Dunlap explained that the goal of the project is to reduce stigmas related to mental health.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the I'm Fine Project consists of a series of community workshops, about five days in length. Dunlap explained that the organization I'm Fine will be partnering with different organizations and PCA Arts in Education partners to host workshops focused on creating masks as a way to discuss mental health. Ms. Dunlap explained that after the series of five workshops, there will be an exhibition of the masks within the two communities. Additionally, Dunlap explained that the group's intention, in alignment with Governor Wolf's initiative, is to have a couple of public exhibits throughout the capitol region.

Dunlap reported that the request for this project is \$10,000 and the PCA staff is recommending \$10,000.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the third recommendation is for the ArtVolution Cultural Innovation Project - Sights, Sounds, and Spirit: The Soul of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Dunlap stated that this is a multi-disciplinary live performance project rooted in the Authentic Stories Journey created from stories told through the lens of the African American experience in Pennsylvania.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the focus of this project is rooted in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia because that is where their audiences will come from and added that they are anticipating 1,200 audience members. Dunlap stated there will also be virtual opportunities that will be shared as well as live-stream performances. Ms. Dunlap added that this organization is planning on working with 20 professional artists whose work is rooted in black heritage arts, specifically in Pennsylvania.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the request is for \$10,000 and PCA staff is recommending \$10,000.

Ms. Colón asked for clarification about the I'm Fine project and wondered how many workshops will be conducted to do across the state.

Ms. Dunlap responded that they are hoping to do as many as they can and that their goal is at least in the double digits. Dunlap stated that they have already completed two and that they currently have a \$70,000 budget. She added that as they bring in more funding, they are hoping to expand and bring in more communities and are hoping to hold at least 15 to 20 workshops and that it could be even more than that, depending on if they receive more funds.

Chair Parks asked for any questions from the Council. Hearing none, Chair Parks asked for a motion to approve the recommendations as presented.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Ms. Colón seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 6 INFORMATION: PCA Updates

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke stated that he wanted to give Council an update on PCA's teleworking / remote work status. Blischke reported that as the commonwealth has progressed through the pandemic, it has offered different types of working arrangements. Some commonwealth employees are full-time in person, some part-time in person, and some are full time teleworking.

Blischke explained that PCA as an agency is exploring this for the staff. Ms. Blischke stated that PCA has been able to effectively work under a remote work situation. Blischke reported that PCA staff has not only administered the normal programs but also extra relief programs that came in as well as new initiatives and has been effective in that regard.

Blischke explained that going forward, the intention is for PCA staff to maintain the capacity to telework and make that a standard part of PCA's work profile. Blischke added that PCA staff does anticipate that at times, there will be good reasons to work in person, whether it's because of meetings occurring around the Capitol Complex, meetings with external people or with internal employees from other agencies, or the potential to work on special projects.

Blischke reported that moving forward, a formalized policy will be created and the framework for that will be teleworking with in-person work as it advances our productivity.

Blischke also reported that PCA will be having webinar on September 14. Mr. Blischke explained that this will be a noon lunch and learn webinar hosted by the Local Government Academy and The Fourth Economy. Blischke explained that the purpose of the webinar is to share high-level recommendations from the Fourth Economy's report on the creative sector and the impact of the pandemic. The presentation will feature three communities and will spark conversation with local government, staff, and officials about using creative sector strategies in their recovery short term, and their resilience long term. Blischke added that a big focus for PCA this year is to have extensive outreach to local governments in community and economic development organizations. Blischke stated that this lunch and learn is a step toward that direction and supports the idea that this Council has produced initiatives that are increasingly attractive and relevant to communities as they assess their path for the changing economy.

Blischke stated that Council members will all receive an invitation to this webinar and are welcome to join.

Mr. Blischke reported that PCA staff has been working on bringing in a new position to the Council and anticipates that a new staff member will be brought in this coming September. Blischke hopes that Council will have a chance to get the new staff member at the October Council Meeting. He stated that he will hold off on specifics about the new staff member until everything is in place.

Mr. Blischke stated that PCA staff has been tracking the creative sector and PCA grantees throughout the pandemic. He explained that this is an important time, specifically as organizations are looking to roll out their fall programming. Blischke stated that PCA has been seeing messages about organizations and presenters in performing arts organizations enhancing their protocols and directives with respect to live, indoor events. Blischke explained that PCA staff has been seeing requirements for proof of vaccination or negative tests.

Blischke reported that on the flip side, from the artist's standpoint, Blischke stated that there have been reports of big-name artists postponing or canceling their performances because of the uncertainty of protocols related to vaccinations. Blischke stated that PCA staff will be collecting data from PCA grantees this fall through PCA's American Rescue Plan application process and added that it will be interesting to see through this survey where organizations are. If they are staffed up or having any issues. Leading up to pandemic, Pennsylvania had an upswing in creative employment in 2019 and PCA will monitor this trajectory.

ITEM 7: Chair's Report

Chair Parks reported that he and three additional Council members, which included Vice Chair Gabel, Ms. Colón, and Mr. Astorino participated in the evaluation process of the executive director. Parks also stated that two PCA staff members were also interviewed, and Mr. Blischke was extensively interviewed.

Chair Parks reported that Mr. Blischke's review was very positive, and it will be filed with the Governor's Office of Personnel.

Chair Parks stated that if anyone would like to review the documentation, they can contact him, and he will share it on a Zoom call.

Chair Parks shared three goals that Mr. Blischke agreed upon this year which impact both Council and staff, including the successful implementation of a Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator program. Parks explained that this is a very unusual program for the PCA and is a very significant outreach. Parks added that PCA will be going to rely extensively on its external regional partners and external organizations, meaning small business development, as well. This program will demonstrate the Council engagement with business, communities and artists which is vital to community revitalization.

Chair Parks also stated that PCA is at a point where it is working on its brand and that is also a major goal for this year, which is to work with the external resources that have been brought in and look at ways to enhance the PCA's brand and get our message out there.

Chair Parks reported that finally, Mr. Blischke will be looking at more access to resources that can be used to support community development and the arts. Parks explained that this includes things like the American Rescue Plans as well as state, federal and other resources, some of which are already in process.

Chair Parks congratulated Mr. Blischke on the great work that he has been doing and also wanted to also congratulate the staff on the great work they are doing.

Chair Parks stated that he has watched a lot of streaming television during the pandemic. He mentioned that he watched two quality programs. The first was The Mayor of Eastown which was filmed in Delaware County. Parks added that this also involved Pennsylvania writers and crew. Parks also mentioned that the program The Chair which was filmed in the Pittsburgh area. Parks stated that both of those programs highlight the high-quality work that can be done in Pennsylvania and will hopefully lead to other things happening in the commonwealth.

Chair Parks stated that the Census numbers are not going to be great for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and added that certain parts of the state are doing better than others. Parks explained that he keeps track on one demographic track that is important to the future of the Commonwealth and that is the number of 25 - 34-year-olds who are settling in Pennsylvania communities and particularly those who have college degrees. Parks recognized Pittsburgh, which has 63% of the 25–34-year-olds that have a college degree. Parks added that Pittsburgh is on par with Austin, TX and Denver, CO in terms of that cohort that is settling there and in comparison, Philadelphia is 44% and Bucks County is 46%.

Chair Parks reported that the October Council meeting will not be in person due to the Delta Variant.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:48 am.