

**Virginia Commission for the Arts
October 2, 2003, Minutes
Jefferson Library at Monticello
Charlottesville**

Commission Members Present: Dr. Lucius F. Ellsworth, Barney Annas, Marilyn Gould, Gary Grant, Bonita Lestina, Roddy Moore, Alice Starr, Rod Taylor, Beth Temple, Will Trinkle, and Bessida White

Commission Members Absent: Ron Carrington and E. A. McMath

Staff Present: Peggy Baggett, Donna Banks, Foster Billingsley, and Sharon Wilson

Guest: Dr. Stephanie Micas, Arts Council of Richmond

Introduction

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Commission Chair Lu Ellsworth. He welcomed the Commission members to Monticello and introduced Bryan Craig of the Monticello staff, who gave a brief history of the Jefferson Library.

Dr. Ellsworth then welcomed the new appointees to the Commission - Bonita Lestina, Beth Temple, and Rod Taylor.

Peggy Baggett, Executive Director of the Commission, reviewed the meeting materials and agenda.

Alice Starr made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 11-12th meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Dr. Ellsworth noted that on occasion the Commission meetings include an opportunity for public comment and invited Stephanie Micas of the Arts Council of Richmond to address the board. Dr. Micas asked that the Commission reevaluate its partnership with the local arts agencies of the state. She said that she is working with other local arts agency directors to develop and present specific proposals for consideration by the Commission at its March, 2004, meeting.

Report of the Advocacy Committee

Marilyn Gould reported on the work of the advocacy committee, making the following points.

As the Commission discussed at the board planning meeting last March, advocacy is the number one priority for this year. Although there are signs of improvement in the economy, the state is still facing enormous financial challenges, including the cost of clean-up from Isabel, the latest problem.

The advocacy goal is to avoid further cuts in the Commission grants budget and to begin restoring some of the funds lost in the last 18 months.

So far the Virginians for the Arts search committee has been unsuccessful in finding a replacement for its director, Roger Neathawk. Mr. Neathawk has, however, agreed to stay on the job through March 1.

Virginians for the Arts has distributed a survey to all of the candidates for the General Assembly, asking

for their support of funding for the arts. The surveys are still being returned, but the results to date are posted on the Virginians for the Arts web site and will appear in the upcoming newsletter.

Plans for Arts Advocacy Day are underway. Each member of the Commission should actively promote Arts Advocacy Day in his or her own community by urging people to attend.

Virginians for the Arts is organizing a series of meetings with key legislators to make the case for arts funding. Delegate Vince Callahan of Fairfax County has volunteered to introduce a budget amendment for additional funding for the Commission.

Virginians for the Arts will publish a flyer on the educational impact of the Virginia artists and arts organizations. This flyer is intended to be a companion piece to the economic impact study report from 2000.

The Commission and the Virginia Association of Museums cooperated in distributing a survey to arts and cultural organizations on the impact of the budget cuts and will be writing a report on "the health of Virginia cultural organizations" for use in the upcoming General Assembly.

Every member of the Commission is expected to contact the candidates for House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate in his or her community to talk about the value of state support of the arts. In addition, each member of the Commission should be a member of Virginians for the Arts and be an active part of the statewide advocacy effort.

Requests for Reconsideration of the Grant Decisions Made at the June Meeting

Peggy Baggett gave an overview of the formal process for appeals of grant decisions. She noted that, because the Commission receives so few written requests for reconsideration of grant decisions, the Commission staff brings all such requests to the attention of the board.

Community Alliance for the Performing Arts Fund. Alice Starr noted that the information in the letter from Mr. Boucher was helpful but that most of the information should have been included in the original application. She made a motion to affirm the decision made in June about this applicant. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Shenandoah Valley Arts Center. Marilyn Gould stated that the panelists had appropriately reviewed the application by the published criteria. While the Commissioners are sympathetic about the challenges facing small, all volunteer arts organizations, it is also important for all arts organizations to have high standards for artistic quality and management of their operations. She made a motion to affirm the decision made in June about this applicant. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

A discussion then followed of whether the Commission staff should continue to bring requests for reconsideration of grant decisions to the attention of the Commission board, if the requests do not meet the standards for an appeal. In recent years the Commission has changed two grant decisions and one request to be listed in the Tour Directory, even though there were no factual or procedural errors in the three original application reviews. The Commissioners agreed that reviewing such requests does not take much time and that it is good to be open to the concerns of applicants who make the effort to write. The Commissioners agreed by consensus that for the immediate future they should continue to review any written requests for reconsideration of grant decisions.

Report of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee

Will Trinkle reviewed the work of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee over the summer. He pointed out the comments about the Commission programs and services that had been received in response to a

survey. He presented the following recommendations of the committee on a variety of issues. The background information on these issues was included in the Commission meeting books.

Membership in the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. The Commission has been concerned about its return on investment of the annual dues to the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. In 2002-2003 Virginia received \$129,000 in grants in return for about \$25,000 in dues. The Policy Committee recommends that the Commission continue its membership in the Mid Atlantic while continuing to monitor the return on investment each year.

Local Government Challenge Grants. A question had been raised of whether this program could better serve northern Virginia. The Policy Committee does not recommend any changes in the Local Government Challenge Grants. This grant program works well for the state as a whole although it is certainly true that Area IVA benefits least from it. The Commission should always pay attention to the statewide impact of each of its programs but not every program will serve each area equally.

Special Recognition Awards. The Policy Committee recommends that for 2004-2005 the Commission invite the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College to apply for a Special Recognition Award. The Policy Committee also recommended the addition of the following language to the Commission Policy Manual. "In rare instances the Commission may choose to give Special Recognition Awards in lieu of General Operating Support grants. These Special Recognition Awards may be given to (1) organizations that have grown in budget size beyond the ability of the Commission to assist them in any meaningful way or (2) organizations that are rated high by the panelists on artistic quality but that have unique characteristics which make the panelists reluctant to recommend General Operating Support funding. Each year the Commission will decide which organizations that have received Special Recognition Awards in the past will be invited to apply for such Awards in the coming year. The Commission staff will identify any other organizations with the primary purpose of the arts that should be considered for Special Recognition Awards. If time permits, the Policy Committee will discuss the recommendations of the Commission staff. If there is not time to convene a meeting of the Policy Committee, the Executive Committee will discuss the recommendations of the Commission staff." Discussion of this draft language followed. The Commissioners agreed by consensus that the word "meaningful" should be replaced with "significant."

Audit Requirement. Some of the Commission constituents had pointed out that the budget minimum for the audit requirement had not been changed in many years. The Policy Committee thinks that outside audits are a sign of fiscal responsibility and good management and that the requirement should continue. However, the Committee recommends that the Commission raise the minimum budget size to \$300,000 in two consecutive years. Organizations that have one year spikes in their budgets will not be affected. Also, the Committee recommends that organizations that have just reached the budget minimum should have a one year grace period before filing the audit with the Commission.

Professional Development. Last year the board of the Commission asked the Commission staff to collect information on how much professional development is provided to the staffs and boards of the General Operating Support grantees by adding a question to the application form. The Policy Committee members recommend that the question remain on the application form, which helps to set the standard that the Commission wants to see ongoing staff and board training within arts organizations. The Policy Committee also recommends that more can be done to publicize the availability of the Commission Technical Assistance grants.

Richmond Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium. The Area V advisory panel asked the Commission to consider the question of whether the money given by local governments to the Arts Council for the purpose of grants to other Richmond area cultural organizations should be considered as Arts Council income when computing the Arts Council operating support grant. The Policy Committee recommends the following. "Since the Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium includes organizations whose primary purpose is not the arts, the Commission should match only that portion of funding that is awarded to arts organizations. The Commission should not match the funds designated by the local governments as the administrative fee for the Arts Council to coordinate the grants program. In the future when 50% or more

of the income of any General Operating Support applicant is money that is passed through the organization to other arts organizations, the amount of operating support from the Commission to that organization will be determined on a case-by-case basis rather than through the usual General Operating Support funding formula."

Selection of Performers for the Tour Directory. The Policy Committee proposes that the Commission follow a similar procedure in reviewing the performers as in reviewing the operating support grantees - having the advisory panel review the applications every other or every third year. By having fewer applicants to be considered by the panel, the panel can spend more time in discussing each applicant. The Commission staff will also recruit more site evaluators who can attend live performances.

Statewide Cultural Trust. At the March planning meeting the Commissioners agreed that exploration of the possibility of a statewide cultural trust in Virginia would be a high priority for the year. After seeing the experiences of cultural trusts in other states in these difficult budget times, the Policy Committee does not recommend that the Commission create such a trust, which would then be under the control of state government. The Commission will ask Virginians for the Arts, which has recently created a nonprofit companion foundation, to consider this issue.

Literature. It is important for the Commission to provide support for literature every year. There are few literary organizations in the state that apply for General Operating Support or Project Grants. Although the Commission suspended the Writers in Virginia program for 2003-2004, the program should be restored in FY 05. The Commission should award fellowships in fiction, poetry, or playwriting each year.

Racial and ethnic diversity. The current language in the guidelines about diversity is fine. The Commission should do more to focus the attention of arts organizations on this important issue. In encouraging arts organizations to become more racially and ethnically diverse, the Commission should be consistent and fair. In the short term the Commission should concentrate on the major arts institutions. The question about racial/ethnic diversity should be on the short as well as the long GOS application forms for FY 05. The Commission staff should reword the question to tie it to the language in the guidelines. The Commission staff should send a letter to the major arts institutions after the October 2nd Commission meeting to alert them to the importance of the application question on racial/ethnic diversity.

Eligibility for Project Grants. For FY 04 arts organizations could apply for either General Operating Support or a Project Grant but not both. Having fewer applications was helpful for the Commission staff and panelists. Until the level of General Operating Support funding is higher, it is extra paperwork to have arts organizations preparing two separate applications a year. The guidelines will not be changed to restrict organizations to applying for either General Operating Support or Project Grants. Each year the Commission will make a decision on this issue based on funds available and notify the potential applicants.

Visibility of the Commission. With the severe state budget cuts it is more important than ever for the Commission to have as much visibility as possible around the state. There is a need for more documentation of the educational impact of artists and arts organizations and of the role of the arts in building stronger neighborhoods. The Commission should hold a series of technical assistance workshops around the state, possibly on stabilization.

Draft Guidelines for Funding for 2004-2006

Will Trinkle continued the report of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee by presenting the draft guidelines for funding for 2004-2006. The Policy Committee did not see a need for major changes in the guidelines, and the responses to the survey of Commission constituents showed a high level of satisfaction with the grant programs. The following changes in the guidelines are recommended by the Policy Committee.

The sections in the front of the guidelines on evaluation and information/advisory services will be deleted. This information is about overall operation of the Commission and does not apply to the specific grant programs.

There will be no change in the eligibility for Project Grants from the current guidelines. The Commission will decide from year to year whether to limit arts organizations to applying for either General Operating Support or Project Grants but not both.

The language describing the application process for performers who wish to be listed in the *Tour Directory* will be changed to conform to the recommendation of the Policy Committee as described in the previous section of these minutes.

The guidelines for the artist fellowships will not list the arts disciplines for each year. A decision will be made each year on the disciplines to be supported, based on available funds.

The Writers in Virginia program, which was suspended for 2003-2004, will be included in the draft guidelines.

The current guidelines have information about other resources in the back of the booklet. There are links from the Commission web site to these other resources. By deleting the information from the guidelines, which are circulated for two years, there will not be problems with changes in the addresses and programs named.

The following grant programs have been suspended as a result of the state budget cuts - the Community College Artist Residency Grants, the Arts Education Technical Assistance Grants, and the Residency Artist Study Grants. The Catch a Star program is suspended as well.

Lu Ellsworth announced that a vote would be taken upon the entire report of the Policy Committee, including the draft guidelines for funding, later in the meeting.

Advisory Panels

A discussion followed on the application review by the advisory panels. Several Commissioners expressed concern about the number of applicants whose work has not been seen first hand by the panelists. Lu Ellsworth reminded the Commissioners that they should identify as many potential panelists as possible and make suggestions to the Commission staff. The Commissioners agreed by consensus that the job description for the panelists should be rewritten to put more emphasis on the need to attend a wide variety of arts events. The Commission will also assign specific applicants to each panelist for a more intensive review.

Recognition

Lu Ellsworth presented a certificate of appreciation to the Commission from the Virginia Highlands Festival. Representatives of the Festival had presented a plaque to Dr. Ellsworth on behalf of the Commission at his office in Grundy.

Barney Annas and Lu Ellsworth then presented a gift to Marilyn Gould in recognition of her service as Chair of the Commission for the past two years.

Tour of Monticello

Dr. Ellsworth called a recess from the meeting for lunch and a tour of Monticello.

Action on the Report of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee

The Commission reconvened at 2:20 p.m. Alice Starr made a motion to approve the recommendations of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee on the various issues, including the changes resulting from Commission discussion. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously with Roddy Moore abstaining because of his relationship with the Blue Ridge Institute.

Marilyn Gould made a motion to approve the draft guidelines for funding and to circulate the draft for public comment. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Artist Fellowships

Donna Banks presented the panel recommendations on fellowships in fiction and choreography. She pointed out that each of the three panels had recommended two artists for fellowships, two artists as first and second alternates, and two additional artists to be named finalists. The Commission had budgeted for eight fellowships, so two additional artists could be chosen for fellowships.

Gary Grant made a motion to approve the recommendations of the three panels on six artists to be awarded \$5,000 fellowships. The panels had recommended that Sue Corbett, Caroline Jarboe, Lisa Norris, R. T. Smith, Boris Willis, and Maida Withers be awarded fellowships. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

After discussion about the allocation of the funding between the categories of fiction and choreography, Marilyn Gould made a motion to award one additional fellowship in fiction and one in choreography. The motion was seconded. The vote was 5-Yes and 5-No. The Commission Chair then voted no, and the motion was defeated.

Bessida White made a motion to award two additional fellowships in choreography, a discipline in which the Commission has not made grants since 1990, to the first and second alternates recommended by the panel, Sharon Mansur and Rob Petres. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

The Commissioners agreed by consensus that the following artists will be named finalists for the awards - Irene Ziegler Aston, Chris Burnside, Elizabeth Denton, Robert Foster, Rebecca Mushko, Shane O'Hara, Emily Pease, Erika Raskin, Al Sim, and Chris Stuck.

Old and New Business

Lu Ellsworth reminded the Commissioners that, while the Commission staff is prohibited from advocacy with the General Assembly, the Commissioners as private citizens may lobby on any issue.

The next Commission meeting will be on December 10th in Roanoke at Center in the Square.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.