

Virginia Commission for the Arts
October 14, 2008
Minutes
Sander Center for the Performing Arts, Virginia Beach

Present: Dr. Lucius Ellsworth, Chair; Nick Covatta; Susan Hirschbiel; Maria Laqueur; Evelia Gonzalez Porto; Ann Rust;, Jackie Stone; Will Trinkle; Deborah Valentine; and Vaughan Webb

Members Absent: David Briggs

Staff Present: Peggy Baggett, Foster Billingsley, Elizabeth Cantile, and Cathy Welborn

Introduction

Lu Ellsworth called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. He thanked Susan Hirschbiel for making the local meeting arrangements, including the chamber music performance in the main hall prior to the meeting. He welcomed Evelia Gonzalez Porto to the board of the Commission. He introduced Elizabeth Cantile, new Arts in Education Coordinator/Webmaster on the Commission staff.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the minutes of the June meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Discussion of 2008-09 Grants Budget

Peggy Baggett reviewed the 2008-09 grants budget, following the announcement by the Governor on October 9 of the 15% reduction in state funding for the Commission and the announcement that Special Fund revenues have been frozen.

After discussion of the various options, the Commissioners agreed by consensus to hold the \$35,000 budgeted for the Tourism & the Arts grants until the Virginia Tourism Corporation has made a decision about going ahead with the program in 2008-09. If the Virginia Tourism Corporation decides not to participate in the program this year, those funds will be used to fund the pending Technology Enhancement Grants. If the Virginia Tourism Corporation decides to go forward with the program this year, the Technology Enhancement Grants will be put on hold. If the Special Fund revenues are released, this funding will be used for the pending Technology Enhancement Grants.

Will Trinkle commended the Commission staff for developing a fair and balanced plan for the budget reductions. He made a motion to endorse the 2008-09 amended grants budget. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Requests for Reconsideration of Grant Decisions

Peggy Baggett reviewed the Commission policy on appeals of grant decisions and presented the two requests for reconsideration of grant decisions made at the June meeting. There was discussion of whether the Commission should continue reviewing requests to reconsider grant decisions if the requests do not fall with the criteria of the formal appeals process. Susan Hirschbiel recommended that, as long as there are so few such requests, the Commission should take the time to look at the requests and respond. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to do so.

Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association. It was noted that point 2 of the letter showed that the panelists had made one factual inaccuracy in reviewing the application in the spring. Ann Rust, who had attended and observed the advisory panel meeting, noted that the panelists had many other concerns. Even though it appears that the board of directors has made progress in stabilizing the organization, the grant decision was based upon the situation in the spring of 2008. No action was taken on the request for reconsideration of the grant decision.

Prince William Symphony Orchestra. The Commissioners noted that this organization appears to have made progress in addressing the panel concerns. It was pointed out that this organization has been through several periods of turmoil in its history. The grant decision was based upon the situation in the spring of 2008. No action was taken on the request for reconsideration of the grant decision.

Susan Hirschbiel stated that the Commissioners should take the responsibility of visiting these organizations in the coming months so that the Commission has first hand knowledge of the progress of the organizations by the time of the next grant review. Ann Rust volunteered to do so.

2008-09 Artist Fellowships

Peggy Baggett presented the panel recommendations for the fellowships in crafts and playwriting. She noted that the playwriting panelists had expressed concern about the overall status of playwriting in the country and had wondered if individual artist fellowships are the best means of encouraging playwrights. She recommended that the Commission review the fellowship program as a whole in the coming year and decide if there are artistic disciplines that would be better served with a different approach.

Ann Rust asked if the Commission should reduce the amount of the fellowships, given the cuts in other grant categories. Will Trinkle noted that artists in each discipline are eligible for funding only every third year. Lu Ellsworth pointed out that in 2002-03 budget cuts the Commission cancelled the fellowships after the application had already been received. He also noted that the Commission is not cutting grants in every category in the current year.

Will Trinkle made a motion to approve the fellowships in crafts as recommended by the advisory panel. The motion was seconded and approved, 9-Yes, 1-No.

Nick Covatta made a motion to approve the fellowships in playwriting as recommended by the advisory panel. The motion was seconded and approved, 9-Yes, 1-No.

Technology Enhancement Grants

Nick Covatta made a motion to approve the Technology Enhancement Grants as recommended by the advisory panel, contingent upon funds becoming available either from a cancellation of the Tourism & the Arts Grants or release of the Special Fund revenue. The motion was seconded. A question was raised of what would happen if funding in some amount less than recommended by the advisory panel for the grants becomes available. The motion was amended to approve grants to the first time applicants for Technology Enhancement Grants if funds become available. The amended motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Report on the NASAA Meeting

Lu Ellsworth, Cathy Welborn, and Foster Billingsley reported on the recent meeting of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Lu Ellsworth urged that, as the membership of the Virginia Commission for the Arts board changes, the Commission continue to make participation in the national association a high priority for both the board members and the Commission staff.

Updates

Peggy Baggett reported on the 2008 Governor=s Awards for the Arts. The presentation of the Awards was a success, and the regional celebrations to recognize all of the nominees for the Awards will continue through mid-December.

Susan Hirschbiel reported on MINDS WIDE OPEN: Virginia Celebrates Women in the Arts. Evelia Porto stated that it is an important opportunity to recognize the contributions of Hispanic women to the arts.

Peggy Baggett and Vaughan Webb reported on the Heritage Awards scheduled for 2009. The plans are to present the Awards on the opening night of the Richmond Folk Festival.

Peggy Baggett reported on the professional development initiative. Although the funding for the professional development workshops in 2008-09 was lost in the budget cuts, the long-planned workshop on career building for visual artists took place in Sweet Briar in early September and the last of the strategic planning workshops led by Nello McDaniel took place in Danville in early October. In addition, the Commission is working with the Young Lawyers for the Arts committee on workshops on legal and business issues for artists.

Old and New Business

Will Trinkle asked for clarification about the decision made in June to adjust funding for the major arts institutions. The decision on the 2008-09 funding was an exception to the normal funding formula, not a change in policy.

Lu Ellsworth brought to the attention of the Commissioners the recent audit of the Commission finances. He commended the staff for the continued series of clean audits.

Peggy Baggett reminded the Commissioners that the Performing Arts Exchange would take place in Norfolk in September of 2009 and that plans are underway for a showcase of

Virginia performers.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.