

Virginia Commission for the Arts
June 16-17, 2010
Minutes
Chestnut Creek School of the Arts, Galax

Members Present: Nicholas J. Covatta, Chair; Lisa Alderman, Willie Dell, Gwen Everett, Tina Lea (June 16 only); Sharron Kitchen Miller, Evelia Gonzalez Porto, Ann Edwards Rust, Marcia Neuhaus Speck, Marcia Thalhimer, Ann Bondurant Trinkle, Vaughan Webb, and Deborah Wyld

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

Introduction

Nick Covatta, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Chris Shackelford, Director of the Chestnut Creek School of the Arts, welcomed the Commissioners to Galax and to the School. She gave a brief history of the School and its role in the community.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2009, and April 8, 2010, Commission meetings. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Peggy Baggett reviewed the Commission meeting materials and the grants budget.

Area I General Operating Support Grants

Ann Bondurant Trinkle, who had attended the Area I panel meeting, stated that she was impressed with the panelists who were thoughtful and well organized.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Birthplace of Country Music Alliance. The Commissioners commented that it is commendable that the organization has made such progress to date on its capital campaign. However, several Commissioners expressed concern about the lack of staff at this critical point in the capital campaign. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to set aside Priority 2 funding but make the funding contingent upon the organization providing by September 1, 2010, a report to the Commission. This report should include plans for staffing the organization, plans for moving forward on the capital campaign, and the status of the pledges for the capital campaign. This report will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Commission before the grant notification letter is sent to the organization.

Chestnut Creek School of the Arts. There was agreement among the Commissioners that the new school is impressive and that it is clearly having an impact on the community. However, the School is not yet independent of the city government and is, therefore, not eligible for General Operating Support at this time. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to give a Special Recognition Award. Gwen Everett made a motion to award \$5,000. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Willie Dell then made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area I. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area II General Operating Support Grants

No Commissioner had attended the Area II panel meeting. Peggy Baggett commented that several Area II panelists did not attend the meeting for various reasons and that, as a result, the panel had limited geographic diversity.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Lynchburg Symphony. Peggy Baggett reported that the administrative staff of the Symphony has been laid off and that some board members have resigned. The question was raised of whether the Symphony will present a season in 2010-11. After discussion of several options the motion was made to award Priority 3 funding if the Symphony provides an updated status report no later than September 1, 2010, on its staffing and plans for the coming year. The first payment on the grant will be made in late summer or early fall when it is clear that there will be a 2010-11 season. The motion was seconded and approved, 8-Yes, 3-no.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining Area II General Operating Support applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area II Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

After discussion Willie Dell made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Area II Project Grants. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area III General Operating Support Grants

Vaughan Webb, who had observed the Area III panel, stated that the panelists were well prepared for the discussion of most of the applications but less prepared for the applications at the end of the list. He recommended that the Commission staff rearrange the order of the applications so that the applicants at the end of the alphabet get as much consideration as those at the beginning of the list.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Area III General Operating Support applications. Ann Bondurant Trinkle recused herself from the vote on the Jefferson Center Foundation. The motion was seconded and approved.

Area III Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Area III Project Grants. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVA General Operating Support Grants

Marcia Neuhaus Speck, who had observed the panel meeting, stated that it was an excellent panel and the panelists had a wide diversity of experiences and knowledge. Willie Dell, who also observed the panel meeting, stated that it was good to have someone with financial expertise on the panel.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Alexandria Choral Society. Marcia Speck asked if the Commission staff knew if the children=s choir had been spun off from the Choral Society. Since no one on the Commission or on the staff knew the status of the children=s choir, the Commissioners agreed by consensus that the funding decision of Priority 2, 3, or no funding should be left to the Executive Committee after the organization provides a status report.

Lorton Arts Foundation. There was a lengthy discussion about the Lorton Arts Foundation. The potential for this organization is great, but it is experiencing some growing pains. One member of the Commission reported two separate visits in which the galleries were locked during published hours of operation. The Commission staff has received conflicting information from the Lorton staff members. There was consensus to award Priority 1 funding in 2010-11 with the organization being reviewed by the panel again in the spring of 2011.

Mount Vernon Community Children=s Theatre. Gwen Everett noted that the organization had received Priority 1 funding in the current year and does not appear to have changed substantially in the past year. Other Commissioners stated that the panelists had significant concerns about the organization. Nick Covatta asked for a vote on the Priority ranking with three voting for Priority 1 and five voting for Priority 2.

Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association. There was a discussion of the free admission policy of this organization. The Commission guidelines encourage arts organizations to earn as much income from ticket sales/admission fees as possible. In the discussion it was noted that many museums have found that free admission to the galleries has led to an increase in memberships and donations. This applicant did not, however, explain the reason for free admission in the grant application. The Commissioners agreed with the panel and staff recommendation of Priority 2 funding but asked that the organization provide an explanation of its decision not to sell tickets.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area IVA. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVA Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on these applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVB General Operating Support Grants

Ann Edwards Rust, who had observed the panel meeting, described the panelists as well prepared with a diverse range of views.

Chateauville Foundation. There was a lengthy discussion about this application with the Commissioners stating that the artistic quality is impeccable and that the organization has the potential to be a cultural treasure for the state. There was concern, however, about the accessibility of the performances to all segments of the community, given the location of the theatre on private property, and the amount of outreach into the schools. Nick Covatta asked the Commissioners to vote for Priority 1, Priority 2, or Special Recognition funding. The vote was Priority 1 - 1, Priority 2 - 8, and Special Recognition - 2.

Wayside Theatre. The Commissioners reviewed the supplemental materials provided since the advisory panel meeting. There was agreement that this organization qualifies for Priority 1 funding on all criteria but is in serious financial jeopardy. A motion was made to award Priority 1 funding for 2010-11 but to pay 50% of the grant by August 1, 35% in January after the Commission receives an updated status report on the financial condition of the organization, and the final 15% after receipt of the final report at the end of the year. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Willie Dell made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining General Operating Support applications from Area IVB. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area IVB Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Area IVB Project Grants. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area V General Operating Support Grants

Willie Dell, who had observed the panel meeting, commented that the panelists were knowledgeable but that she would have liked to see a more positive approach to the applications.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

After discussion of these applications Deborah Wyld made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the General Operating Support applications from Area V. Evelia Gonzalez Porto recused herself from voting on CultureWorks. The motion was seconded and approved.

Area V Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Ann Bondurant Trinkle made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Project Grants from Area V. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area VI General Operating Support Grants

Sharron Kitchen Miller, who had observed the panel meeting, described it as a stellar, well prepared panel. Deborah Wyld, who also observed the meeting, agreed and expressed regret that some of the panelists had served three years and could not sit on the panel again next year.

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Norfolk Chamber Consort. It was noted that this organization has not changed substantially since last spring but that the panel had recommended a lower level of funding. Deborah Wyld made a motion to award Priority 1 funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Southeastern Virginia Arts Association. Concern was expressed about recent articles in the newspaper about the future of this organizations, its outstanding bills, and a possible lawsuit. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to fund the organization for another year at the Priority 3 level but to monitor its situation.

Virginia Musical Theatre. Several Commissioners expressed concern about this organization. It was noted that the organization had not addressed the concerns of the reviewers last year, that the organization appears to be in serious financial jeopardy, and that the artistic quality is uneven. After discussion there was agreement that the organization should submit a plan addressing financial stability for review by the Executive Committee of the Commission. If the Executive Committee approves the plan, the organization will receive Priority 3 funding with 50% after the plan is approved, 35% in January contingent upon the Commission receiving a status report, and 15% upon submission to the Commission of the year-end financial report. Nick Covatta called for a vote on Priority 3 funding with these conditions or no funding. The vote was Priority 3 with conditions - 8, No Funding - 3.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the General Operating Support applications from Area VI. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Area VI Project Grants

Cathy Welborn presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the Project Grants from Area VI.

General Operating Support for Major Arts Institutions

Deborah Wyld, who had observed the panel meeting, described the discussion as in-depth and informative. Willie Dell, who also observed the meeting, agreed.

Contemporary Art Center of Virginia. There was a lengthy discussion about this application. Although the organization has many strengths, there was concern about whether the organization primarily serves Virginia Beach rather than the Hampton Roads region, as stated in the application. There was concern about the low level of giving by the board of directors and about the lack of response to the comments of the reviewers last year. The organization is not providing the same level of community service as the other major arts organizations. It is not as visible as the other major arts organizations, either in the Hampton Roads region or across the state. However, the Art Center is clearly an asset to Virginia Beach, has stable finances, and has strong educational programs. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to award Priority 1.5 to this applicant.

Taubman Museum of Art. There was a lengthy discussion about this application. The new Museum opened its doors without a realistic business plan and has struggled since that time. The new Director is working to achieve some measure of financial stability, to focus the artistic mission, and to build support within the community. There was concern that with the staff reductions there is no head curator and that the Director is trying to fill this role in addition to his many other responsibilities. There was agreement that the Virginia Commission for the Arts should show support in this transition period. Vaughan Webb made a motion to award Priority 1 funding for 2010-11 but to pay 50% of the grant by August 1, 35% in January after the Commission receives an updated status report on the financial condition of the Museum, and the final 15% after receipt of the final report at the end of the year. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Virginia Stage Company. Sharron Kitchen Miller reported on a meeting between representatives of the Virginia Stage Company and the Hampton Roads members of the Commission, as well as Nick Covatta and Peggy Baggett. From information provided by the Virginia Stage Company, it appears that the organization has made substantial progress, since the grant application was prepared, on reduction of the deficit and improved financial stability. The four Commissioners who attended this meeting recommended Priority 1 funding. Ann Bondurant Trinkle made a motion to award Priority 1 funding for 2010-11 but to pay 50% of the grant by August 1, 35% in January after the Commission receives an updated status report on the financial condition of the organization, and the final 15% after receipt of the final report at the end of the year. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Virginia Symphony. Deborah Wyld reported on a meeting between representatives of the Virginia Symphony and the Hampton Roads members of the Commission, as well as Nick Covatta and Peggy Baggett. The Symphony has a new board President and a new Executive Director and is taking steps to address its financial problems. The four Commissioners who attended this meeting recommended Priority 1 funding to show support for the new direction of the organization. Other members of the Commission expressed reservations, stating that in past years the Symphony has often made a commitment in writing to debt reduction and improved financial planning but has not followed up on these commitments. Nick Covatta called for a vote on Priority 1 funding with three payments or Priority 2 funding. The vote was Priority 1 - 5, Priority 2 - 8.

Marcia Thalhimer made a motion to approve the panel and staff recommendations on the remaining applications from major arts institutions for General Operating Support. She recused herself from voting on the Richmond Symphony. The motion was seconded and approved.

General Operating Support Short Form Applications

Gwen Everett made a motion to approve the short form General Operating Support applications. Ann Edwards Rust and Gwen Everett recused themselves from the vote on the Arts Council of Fairfax County. Evelia Gonzalez Porto recused herself from the vote on the Latin Ballet of Virginia. The motion was seconded and approved.

Special Recognition Awards

Peggy Baggett presented the staff recommendations on the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College and Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Gwen Everett made a motion to approve the grants as recommended by the staff. Vaughan Webb recused himself from voting on the Blue Ridge Institute. The motion was seconded and approved.

Services to the Field Applications

Foster Billingsley presented the panel and staff recommendations on the applications.

Arts and Cultural Council of the Rappahannock. Ann Edwards Rust commented that this local arts agency is just getting started and should be funded at the same level as the current year. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to award \$3,000 to the organization.

Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra, serving as fiscal agent for the James River Council for the Arts & Humanities. The Commissioners agreed by consensus that this grant should be contingent upon the James River Council identifying a new fiscal agent.

The Crooked Road. Lisa Alderman made a motion to award \$5,000 to The Crooked Road. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Vaughan Webb made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the remaining Services to the Field applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

2011-12 Performing Arts Tour Directory

Elizabeth Cantile presented the panel and staff recommendations on the performers to be included in the 2011-12 Tour Directory.

Laura Mann. Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to keep Laura Mann in the Tour Directory. The motion was seconded and defeated, Yes- 4, No - 6.

Barter Theatre and Barter Players. The Commissioners discussed the proposals from the Barter Theatre to have separate listings in the Tour Directory for the mainstage productions and for the educational programs. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to have two listings in the 2011-12 Directory but stated that the decision was an experiment and not a precedent.

Willie Dell made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on the 2011-12 Tour Directory. Marcia Thalhimer recused herself from voting on the Richmond Symphony. The motion was seconded and approved.

Artist Residency Grants

Elizabeth Cantile presented the panel and staff recommendations on the Artist Residency Grants.

Ann Edwards Rust made a motion to approve the staff recommendations on these grants. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Local Government Challenge Grants

There was a discussion of the amount of funding to be spent on the Local Government Challenge Grants. Some Commissioners had heard from their local governments that the localities would cut their funding to the arts if the Virginia Commission for the Arts did not fully fund the Local Government Challenge Grants. Other Commissioners were concerned about transferring funds from other grant programs which have already been reduced. After the discussion there was agreement that all of these funds directly benefit the arts organizations of Virginia and that in a time when state aid to localities is being cut, it is good for the Commission to fully fund these grants.

Peggy Baggett reviewed the requests for exceptions to the guidelines. The Commissioners agreed that the requests from Franklin County, Patrick County, Roanoke County, the City of Hopewell, and the City of Portsmouth are within the spirit of the guidelines for funding. The Commission staff was directed to check with the Portsmouth Museums Foundation to be sure that at least \$10,000 was going to the Courthouse Galleries.

There was concern about the proposal from Prince Edward County to award funds to a division of a state university when there is at least one independent arts organization in the County that could have been funded. Some Commissioners were concerned about the precedent but others stated that the localities should determine the use of the funds.

Willie Dell made a motion to fund all of the Local Government Challenge Grants. Vaughan Webb recused himself from voting on Franklin County, and Ann Edwards Rust recused herself from voting on Fairfax County. The motion was seconded and approved.

2010-11 Grants Budget

Evelia Gonzalez Porto made a motion to approve the 2010-11 grants budget with the changes resulting from Commission action on the grant applications. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Updates

Ann Edwards Rust recused herself from the following discussion. Marcia Speck and Peggy Baggett reported on their meeting with Congressman James Moran, who is now Chair of the

Interior Subcommittee of the U. S. House Appropriations Committee. In this role Rep. Moran will oversee funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Ann Edwards Rust returned to the meeting. Peggy Baggett reported on the June 3rd major arts organizations roundtable. She pointed out that the participants have asked the Commission to discuss its process for dealing with arts organizations in serious financial jeopardy.

Peggy Baggett reported on the MINDS WIDE OPEN initiative.

Lisa Alderman reported on the progress of the Arts Celebration Committee of Virginians for the Arts in raising funds for the annual Art Works for Virginia conference.

Peggy Baggett reported on the Artful District workshop held in partnership with the local arts agencies of the state at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk. She noted that it is time for the Commission to evaluate the professional development initiative for local arts agencies.

Nick Covatta reported on the advocacy strategy of Virginians for the Arts and the plans to contact every member of the General Assembly this fall.

Report of the Nominating Committee

Lisa Alderman gave the report of the Nominating Committee which recommended the following slate of officers for 2010-11:

Chair	Nick Covatta
Vice Chair	Vaughan Webb
Secretary	Deborah Wyld

Nick Covatta asked if there were other nominations from the floor. There being none, the nominations were closed, and the report of the Nominating Committee was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:38 p.m.