

# MIDDLETOWN COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

Minutes of April 28, 2010

## Present

Barbara Arafah  
David Bauer  
Patricia Evans  
Fran Ganguli  
Lee Godburn  
Frank Kuan  
Jennifer Lecce  
Charlotte McCoid [arrived at 7:23 p.m.]  
Rob Resnikoff  
Robert Santangelo

## Absent

Richard Kamins  
Joyce Kirkpatrick  
Michelle Lau [Youth-in-Government]  
Kisha Michael

## Also Attending

Stephan Allison, Coordinator

## CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Rob Resnikoff called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. at the Municipal Building, Room 208, in Middletown, CT.

## PUBLIC SESSION

None held.

## MINUTES OF March 24, 2010

Patricia Evans made a motion to accept the minutes of March 24, 2010, and this was seconded by Lee Godburn. Motioned carried unanimously.

## REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

Vice Chair Resnikoff shared that Chair Joyce Kirkpatrick was absent because she had a rehearsal for *Elijah*, presented by the Greater Middletown Chorale, and it would be on Sunday, May 2 at the Middletown High School Performance Arts Center. It was mentioned that this concert already has been sold out. Vice Chair also noted that Secretary Kisha Michael was not in attendance because of another commitment, and he thanked Frank Kuan for stepping in to be the acting secretary for the evening.

## OLD BUSINESS

### Budget Report

Reviewed and accepted as presented.

### Staff Report/Program Update

i) Arts Stakeholders Group – Stephan Allison noted that there should be a meeting next month. He further stated that the website project has begun and there should be at least one arts/entertainment kiosks in the downtown area by Fall 2010.

ii) Arts & Creative Industries Council (Chamber of Commerce – Creative Juice) – Allison reported that a representative from the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism presented at the meeting; however, his expertise was on the historic preservation side, not necessarily the artistic side. Nonetheless, it was a good meeting. Barbara Arafah was in attendance, and she said that she enjoyed the meeting. She further commented that the aforementioned speaker acknowledged Middletown's arts scenes, and he compared us to a city like Chicago. The next meeting should be scheduled in two weeks.

## Other

No report. It was mentioned that the public hearing for the budget (including MCA) has been scheduled for Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Public Art Committee**

Patricia Evans reported that she and Chair Kirkpatrick visited Robin Price at her studio/office, and they were educated on her printing press and techniques. From the meeting, Price was apprised that the MCA would like to have a piece of her work included in the public art collection. They discussed various options, and Price said that she would prepare an appropriate piece for MCA to purchase, probably by the end of May. It was noted that this would be a good photo opportunity. The Mayor would be asked to accept the artwork on behalf of the City Art Collection and the MCA. A report of the Public Art Committee is included with the minutes.

### **Planning & Projects Committee**

Lee Godburn reported that he and Kisha Michael met and talked about the public art benches. They would like to see the benches having some sort of a theme that would also serve to unify the whole of Main Street. He recommended inviting an artist friend who has worked on the Hartford's Cow Parade to talk with commissioners about the project and his suggestions for artists' buy-in. A healthy discussion took place on what the benches should be liked and their placement (as to avoid loitering, mitigating public safety concerns and any clean up and maintenance issues) as well as the kind of input needed from interested parties including residents, merchants and various city departments. Ideas for funding (and fundraising) were also talked about – it was mentioned that the City has access to federal transportation fund, and depending on the scope of this project (and if it has any transportation component), this could be a possible source of funding.

Godburn shared that the Arts Advocacy Award was well attended and the majority of commissioners were in attendance. First and Last was very hospitable and they only charged MCA for what was consumed. The final bill came to be less than budgeted. Allison passed out a copy of the proclamation for Marco Gaylord and the Greater Middletown Chorale.

### **Other Committees**

The MCAAAA will happen again this year. It was discussed that Mercy, Xavier, and Vinal would need to receive the form letter inviting them to participate. Artworks are scheduled to be at the Media Center of Middletown High by late May. The ceremony to present the award would probably be in early June. MCA would have a representative at the student assembly to present that award.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Review Grants Policy, Consider Recommendations For Next Year**

Vice Chair Resnikoff asked fellow commissioners for feedback on the grants policy now that the first cycle has just concluded – what more could be done to refine the process? [1] Resnikoff shared that he would like to have Category 2 applicants also fill out the same application as Category 1. [2] He further noted that sponsoring 501(c)3 organizations should be required to fill out a full application. [3] Godburn shared that he would like to have a stronger push for PR to get words out to applicants. [4] Barbara Arafah said that she would like to see the process not so rushed and to have more time to consider each proposal. [5] Jennifer Lecce said that it would be helpful to see all applications so that we all would be more informed during deliberation, regardless if commissioners are on a panel or not.

[1] Commissioners talked about adjusting the ceiling and floor limits for Category 1 and 2 so that we could weed out weak applicants. Some questions that came up include: How to get adequate information on budget and programs from applicants? Would adjusting the category amounts be enough to ensure a fairer process and not discouraging organizations to apply? Category 1 applications are more involved than the other categories. A lengthy discussion ensued. Ultimately, Charlotte McCoid made a motion to change the minimum amount for Category 1 from \$8000 to \$5000, and Arafah seconded this motion. Evans, and Resnikoff voted for this motion, while Arafah, Godburn, Kuan, Lecce, McCoid, Fran Ganguli and Bob Santangelo voted against it; David Bauer abstained. With 2 for, 8 against, and 1 abstention, the motion failed.

[2] Should sponsoring organization also file an application? It was noted that a letter of reference or recommendation clearly was not adequate. After much discussion, commissioners came to the conclusion that having the sponsor organization filling out an application might be too onerous and would not necessarily yield useful information. The

letter could be sufficient if there were guidelines stipulating what MCA would look for from the sponsoring agency. Evans made a motion that guidelines should be set up for what sponsoring agency would be expected to provide, and this was seconded by Lecce. Motion passed unanimously. A side discussion took place regarding if the sponsoring agency must be 501(c)3. This would need more discussion. This would be on the agenda for next month's meeting.

[3] It was agreed by all that grants information needed to get out to the public in a timely manner. It was noted that self submission would be accepted by a number of news venues these days, including Hartford Courant, Middletown Press and Middletown Eye. The Publicity Committee would be asked to continue to work on this.

[4] It was discussed that this year's process was rushed because of a tight schedule. Next year it should be better.

[5] Allison said that he would get all of the applications for Category 2 and 3 to all commissioners. He asked commissioners to share their questions or feedback in writing if they are not on a particular panel.

Allison brought up the question about not having a limit (upper or lower) on Category 1. After some discussion, Godburn made a motion of not having any upper or lower limit for Category 1, and this was seconded by McCoid. Motion carried unanimously.

Future discussion would be needed regarding Category 2 (suggestion to lower the ceiling limit to \$5000) and Category 3 (upper limit to \$1500).

### **Funding Arts Advocacy Day Awards**

Allison reported that funding for the Arts Advocacy Day Awards could come from a different source and not public money. Specifically this would come from the vendor fees from the Firework Festival. Typically about \$2500 would be collected; however, this would be contingent upon if the festival would be held. Commissioners agreed that this would be a good option.

### **Other**

None.

### **Announcements**

Information regarding the MPS Cultural Council, Oddfellows Playhouse, Young Audience, and Mayor's Budget 2010-2011 was reviewed, and no other action was required.

### **Other**

McCoid shared with the group that Wendy Black Nasta, one of our grant recipients, has gotten the use of Wadsworth Mansion for the Brazilian festival, and proceeds from the event would be used to fund scholarships. The program has been scheduled for Fall 2010.

Arafeh reminded the group that the Greater Middletown Concert Association would be presenting two operas on Saturday 5/15 at the MHS Performance Arts Center. For more information, visit [www.greatermiddletownconcerts.org](http://www.greatermiddletownconcerts.org).

Vice Chair Resnikoff shared a postcard of a play, *Private Eyes*, by Steven Dietz. He further noted that he is one of the cast members, and they would be performing at various locations (New Haven, Middletown and Old Saybrook). Visit [www.t4ct.org](http://www.t4ct.org) for more information.

### **Other**

### **Adjournment**

Godburn made a motion to adjourn; Lecce seconded it. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting concluded at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Frank Kuan