

**OHIO ARTS COUNCIL
BOARD MEETING
MARCH 31, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Jim Dicke at 10:10 a.m. via video conference. Board members in attendance: Robb Hankins, secretary; Gary Hanson; Tom Johnson; Monica Kridler; Darryl Mehaffie; Farid Naffah; Adam Shank; Beth Waldren; Bill White; Neal Zimmers; and Rep. Tavia Galonski. Board members not in attendance: Ginger Warner, chair; Jon Holt; Tina Husted; Rep. Sara Carruthers; and Sen. Matt Dolan. Staff attending: Donna Collins, Dan Katona, Justin Nigro, Dia Foley, Carla Oesterle, Kathy Signorino, Brianna Dance; Amanda Etchison, Ted Hattemer, Patrick Hughes, Katie Monahan, Chiquita Mullins Lee, Cat Sheridan, Jarred Small, Jim Szekacs, and Kim Turner. Also in attendance: Hilary Damaser, principal assistant attorney general; Erin Glossop, Office of Sen. Teresa Fedor; Kezia Ofosu, Office of Sen. Teresa Fedor; Torrie Allen, president and CEO of Arts Midwest; Alana Horton, communications manager at Arts Midwest; Angela Meleca, executive director of Ohio Citizens for the Arts (OCA); Michael Roediger, president of the OCA board of directors; Jarrod Hartzler, executive director of the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education; Tara Smith, OAC arts administration fellow; Danny Eldredge, Hannah News Service; Bill Blair, McKinley Advisors; Todd Burge; and Vince Squillace.

Vice-Chair Jim Dicke welcomed all in attendance and shared a message of gratitude from Chair Ginger Warner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Dicke invited the board to review minutes from the Ohio Arts Council (OAC) board meeting held on January 20, 2021.

MOTION by Monica Kridler, seconded by Adam Shank, to approve the minutes from the OAC board meeting on January 20, 2021. **Motion carried without dissent.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

For her director's report, Ohio Arts Council Executive Director Donna Collins began by thanking the board members for their dedication to serving Ohio's artists and arts organizations and their continued flexibility in conducting business remotely.

Ms. Collins informed the board that OAC Organizational Programs Coordinator Janelle Hallett left the agency in February to take a job at Otterbein University. Ms. Collins explained that Ms. Hallett's position remains vacant as the OAC enters grant panel review season, and she thanked Organizational Program Coordinators Brianna Dance and Jim Szekacs, as well as Deputy Director Dan Katona, for assisting constituents in the Northeast Ohio region as plans for Ms. Hallett's replacement are developed. Ms. Collins pledged to keep the board apprised of any hiring developments.

Next, Ms. Collins shared that the 4-percent salary cut and step-increase freeze affecting exempt employees, included as statewide cost-savings measures in response to the coronavirus pandemic's fiscal impact, had been lifted. She explained that the salaries of exempt employees would be restored by 3 percent and step-increases would resume in April.

Explaining that the State of Ohio, under the direction of Governor Mike DeWine, is emphasizing a renewed focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), Ms. Collins said that the OAC staff has been engaging in ongoing training modules presented by the Ohio Department of Administrative Services. These regular virtual DEI trainings contributed to the fulfillment of a new statewide competency titled "embracing diversity and inclusion" that is included in each state employee's annual performance review. Ms. Collins also shared that the OAC staff has had its own internal DEI Committee for several years. The committee has begun organizing quarterly professional development opportunities and providing other resources for the entire OAC staff, Ms. Collins said.

Ms. Collins then shared that virtual panel review meetings for FY 2022 grant applications would begin on April 6, 2021, with the TeachArtsOhio program. Panel meetings were scheduled throughout the spring, concluding with ArtSTART panel meetings by May's end. She shared her gratitude for the work of the agency's staff. She reminded the board that panel meetings are public and streamed live and encouraged board members to attend.

Ms. Collins shared that the OAC was recently announced as one of 36 state arts agencies receiving awards from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and Aroha Philanthropies. Ohio secured \$60,000 for the Ohio Intensive Creative Aging Training Initiative, the higher of two tiers of awards, to support the further professional development of teaching artists to work with senior populations. Ms. Collins thanked Arts Learning Coordinators Jarred Small and Chiquita Mullins Lee for their work on the award application and for their leadership in developing the initiative.

Finally, Ms. Collins recapped the OAC's work with regional arts organization Arts Midwest. Over the past year, Ohio arts and culture organizations have received more than \$700,000 from Arts Midwest. Ms. Collins explained that more information could be found in the Arts Midwest annual return-on-investment report, to be discussed later by Arts Midwest President and CEO Torrie Allen.

QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE REPORTS

Mr. Dicke began reviewing the agency's quarterly expenditure report covering the second quarter of FY 2021. He highlighted the fact that the second quarter's report included a separate section devoted to previously approved Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act payments.

MOTION by Darryl Mehaffie, seconded by Bill White, to approve the quarterly expenditure report for the second quarter of FY 2021. **Motion carried without dissent.**

RATIFICATION REPORT

Mr. Dicke reviewed the ratification report. He reminded the board that the items listed are programs or initiatives where the board has granted the executive director expedited authority to issue grants between board meetings.

Neal Zimmers asked for more clarification regarding the expenditure listed for Southern Methodist University (SMU). Ms. Collins explained that the OAC uses SMU's DataArts project, a national initiative focused on collecting and analyzing financial and participation information from arts and cultural organizations, as a quantitative reporting mechanism for grant recipients. OAC grantees, Ms. Collins explained, complete a Cultural Data Profile with DataArts that includes information related to finances and staffing. She invited Mr. Katona to speak more about DataArts. Mr. Katona explained that the project's partnership with SMU began about a year and a half ago. He said that, through the DataArts online management system, SMU works to analyze data collected from organizations in several states, including Ohio, to empower arts and cultural leaders with data-driven, evidence-based insights. Responding to Mr. Dicke, Mr. Katona said that DataArts is headquartered in Pennsylvania, although payment for DataArts services is directed to SMU in Texas.

MOTION by Robb Hankins, seconded by Neal Zimmers, to approve the ratification report. **Motion carried without dissent.**

NEW BUSINESS: STATE/FEDERAL BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Dicke invited Ms. Collins to provide a report on the state and federal budget process.

Ms. Collins said that the OAC is following state and federal developments related to potential COVID-19 relief funding. She shared that the agency has received notice that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), through the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, is set to receive \$135 million. She added that state arts agencies have been advised that they will receive guidance in April regarding distribution plans for these funds, noting that the agency will need additional legislative authority to make expenditures. She promised to keep the board apprised of any developments.

At the state level, Ms. Collins said, the biennial state budget process continues. She said she testified in the Ohio House of Representatives Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education on February 18, 2021. She reported that her testimony was well-received and recalled that legislators asked thoughtful questions following her testimony. A few questions revolved around agency data, and Ms. Collins said she was pleased to share with the subcommittee members that the OAC does collect data from grant recipients that further delves into the agency's impact through grantmaking efforts. Ms. Collins added that the OAC shared follow-

up materials with the subcommittee. Ms. Collins then explained that the OAC is currently awaiting the House substitute bill version of the budget and its passage through the Ohio House of Representatives. Next, the budget will move to the Ohio Senate, where she will testify again. Ms. Collins said the board would be notified as more information becomes available regarding the Senate testimony date.

Mr. Dicke thanked Ms. Collins for her report and reflected on the news shared, specifically adding that the forthcoming support from the NEA and state will greatly assist the state's arts and culture sector.

NEW BUSINESS: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF NEA ARP ACT FUNDS

Further discussing the NEA and the American Rescue Plan Act, Mr. Dicke offered an idea that the board's Executive Committee be empowered to consider and review any plans proposed for expending additional dollars from the NEA as that money becomes available.

MOTION by Tom Johnson, seconded by Darryl Mehaffie, for the Executive Committee to consider and review any plans for expending additional American Rescue Plan dollars flowing from the National Endowment for the Arts. **Motion carried without dissent.**

NEW BUSINESS: CAPITOL SQUARE REVIEW AND ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE

Mr. Dicke invited Mr. Zimmers, the agency's representative on the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB), to provide an update on that board's recent meetings.

Mr. Zimmers stated that CSRAB met earlier in March to discuss a variety of agenda items, one being the approval of a temporary, year-long display of a bronze statue of the late Colonel and U.S. Senator John Glenn in the Map Room of the Statehouse. Mr. Zimmers explained that the statue is meant to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Col. Glenn's flight into space and circumnavigation of the Earth. The statue was created by Alan Cottrill, a sculptor from Zanesville, Mr. Zimmers said. Mr. Zimmers added that he personally was pleased that CSRAB chose to feature the work of an Ohio artist for this sculpture.

NEW BUSINESS: *POETRY OUT LOUD* UPDATE

Mr. Dicke began discussion of the 2021 *Poetry Out Loud (POL)* program, the national high school poetry recitation competition created by the NEA and the Poetry Foundation and administered in partnership with state arts agencies. Acknowledging that COVID-19 health and safety guidelines required adjustments to the operations of schools and classrooms, Mr. Dicke commended the OAC on another successful year of facilitating the state's competition in conjunction with six regional partners. He then invited Ms. Mullins Lee, Ohio's *POL* coordinator, to provide a more in-depth recap of the recent State Finals competition.

Ms. Mullins Lee began her report by sharing that Ohio's *POL* 2021 State Finals competition, the 16th in program history, took place on March 5, 2021. This year, she said, participating

students recited their poems live from the WOSU Public Media studios in front a virtual audience and panel of judges. The competition was broadcast publicly through Zoom. All participants and production staff practiced mask-wearing and social distancing, while on-site and participating in the event.

Ms. Mullins Lee then announced that Monserrat Tlahuel-Flores, a senior at St. Francis DeSales High School in Columbus, was named the 2021 Ohio *POL* State Champion. Ms. Tlahuel-Flores had competed in the Ohio *POL* program all throughout her high school career, placing second in the 2020 *POL* State Finals competition the year prior. Ms. Mullins Lee shared that, in addition to securing the title of state champion, Ms. Tlahuel-Flores received \$200 and her school received a \$500 check to purchase poetry books for its library.

The event featured special guests joining the festivities virtually, including former State Senator Eric H. Kearney of Cincinnati and Ohio Poet Laureate Kari Gunter-Seymour. Ms. Mullins Lee explained that the first-, second-, and third-place winners were honored with an original art print by Columbus artist Wendy Kendrick that also featured an excerpt of a poem by Ms. Gunter-Seymour.

Ms. Mullins Lee shared that Ms. Tlahuel-Flores would now represent Ohio at the 2021 *POL* National Finals, which are being presented as a virtual, video-submission-based competition across two days in May. The national semifinals, she said, would be streamed on May 2, 2021, and the national finals, featuring the nation's top nine finalists, would be streamed on May 27, 2021. Both events will be available for public viewing on the NEA's *POL* website.

Ms. Mullins Lee concluded her report with a message of appreciation for the determination of *POL* students, teachers, parents, and regional partners over the past year, and she shared her hopes for a return to the normal program structure in 2022.

NEW BUSINESS: FY 2022 APPLICATIONS UPDATE

Mr. Dicke introduced the next order of business with a reminder that the OAC is in the midst of its grant application season for FY 2022. He explained that, as the world begins to climb out of the pandemic, arts organizations and artists are looking forward to new arts programming, returning audiences, and a resilient creative economy. Mr. Dicke invited Mr. Katona to provide an update on the current grant season and applications in preparation for the board's review of application recommendations at its summer board meeting.

Mr. Katona shared that the OAC's grants and investment offices have been in constant communication with grantees throughout the past year as constituents worked to adjust programming and operations to pandemic-necessitated restrictions. He added that the economic toll of COVID-19 is still being acutely felt within the arts and culture sector, but he reiterated how support through state and federal relief funding has been gratefully received by organizations throughout the past year.

Mr. Katona then shared a brief overview of grant application metrics and statistics, noting most levels were generally flat despite the pandemic. He also added that the final deadlines for the FY 2022 application season—off-year updates for Sustainability and Statewide Arts Service Organization grantees and a grant deadline for the ArtSTART program—were still forthcoming. In summary, Mr. Katona said that he felt confident in the number of applications received in FY 2022 relative to past application cycles. He also mentioned that the OAC has been encouraging organizations to apply for grants even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and emphasized that the agency has been working on a case-by-case basis to ensure flexibility in all stages of the application and review process.

NEW BUSINESS: GOVERNOR’S AWARDS FOR THE ARTS UPDATE

Mr. Dicke invited Operations and Public Affairs Director Justin Nigro to provide an update on the Governor’s Awards for the Arts in Ohio, which had been postponed from its original 2020 date due to COVID-19 mass gathering restrictions. It had since been decided that the event would be reformatted to take place virtually.

Mr. Nigro shared that the OAC had confirmed participation from Gov. DeWine and Senate President Matt Huffman for the virtual Governor’s Awards event with an invitation pending to House Speaker Robert Cupp. Next, Mr. Nigro announced that the OAC had confirmed with the Ohio Channel that the pre-recorded Governor’s Awards program would premiere online on Monday, May 10, 2021, at noon. The program would be aired on the Ohio Channel’s Facebook and YouTube channels, and cross-shared on the OAC’s social media channels. Mr. Nigro said he believed the virtual program would have a significant built-in audience, reaching even more people than the traditional in-person event. Following the online debut, the Governor’s Awards would have a televised rebroadcast on the Ohio Channel on Saturday, May 15, 2021, at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Mr. Nigro said that the Ohio Channel will also be making the televised program available to public broadcasting stations across the state for potential simulcasting. Finally, Mr. Nigro said that the OAC would promote these broadcast plans in early April to the public. OAC staff would encourage winners to host virtual watch parties or even socially distanced small gatherings where appropriate. He concluded by saying he believed the OAC was very fortunate that this group of winners has been so accommodating and understanding about this year’s alternative celebration.

NEW BUSINESS: FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE FILING REMINDER

Mr. Dicke offered a brief reminder for board members to file their financial disclosure statements with the Ohio Ethics Commission by the deadline in May.

ARTS MIDWEST UPDATE

Mr. Dicke next welcomed Mr. Allen, president and CEO of Arts Midwest, a regional arts organization serving the nine-state region of Midwestern states that includes Ohio.

Mr. Allen thanked Mr. Dicke and led the board through a presentation highlighting key findings from Arts Midwest's 2020 return on investment report tailored to Ohio. He began by sharing a brief overview of Arts Midwest, mentioning that the organization serves its member state arts agencies through investments in grantmaking, growth through training and education, and convenings that seek to gather members of the arts and culture sector.

Next, Mr. Allen explained the role of U.S. regional arts organizations, which he said work closely with the NEA as a primary partner to help carry out the Arts Endowment's charter. These efforts encompass national arts initiatives such as Shakespeare in American Communities, America's Big Read, and a host of other programs. Recently, he added, Arts Midwest assisted the NEA with the distribution of CARES Act funding to organizations operating in its member states.

As its main function, Arts Midwest stewards ongoing relationships within and between states in its region to offer services and programs that are responsive to their needs, Mr. Allen said. He explained that examples of this work can be seen in the Arts Midwest Touring Fund and GIG Fund programs. He said that Arts Midwest helps leverage private dollars within states like Ohio to offer experiences such as the international touring artist performances made possible through its World Fest program. The organization also facilitates community among state arts agencies' staffs through collaborative working groups, accessibility initiatives, and events like its annual conference.

Mr. Allen said that Ohio pays a little more than \$62,000 in state dues toward Arts Midwest yearly. This year, Arts Midwest returned \$258,833 on that investment—a return of 316 percent—through 41 grants to Ohio arts organizations reaching 39 communities. Through these grant activities, a total of 53,096 participants benefitted from programming supported by Arts Midwest in FY 2020, Mr. Allen said.

Mr. Allen shared that Arts Midwest is testing ways to better align its current focus areas into the three main categories of gather, grow, and invest. For example, he said, the Arts Midwest conference is a gathering of the arts community to network, learn from each other, and find new ways to collaborate. The organization works to create spaces, Mr. Allen said, that help organizations and leaders test ideas, identify new strategies, and build their skills. He added that the conference, which is normally held in-person in a different Midwestern city each year, will be converted to a virtual format in 2021, with official dates set to be announced soon. Member states can also look forward to smaller virtual gatherings outside of the formal conference in spring 2021, he said. Through its second focus area, growing, Arts Midwest shares toolkits, resources, and moments of learning and inspiration, Mr. Allen said. The organization offers trainings, gatherings, and online spaces for people to access materials and learn from others in the arts and culture sector throughout the Midwest and beyond. Looking ahead to the summer, Arts Midwest is preparing to launch an online hub featuring high-quality professional development resources adapted from the organization's most

popular training and education programs. Mr. Allen said that the Arts Midwest staff sees this as a big step toward supporting arts leaders throughout its region while responding to the potential limitations of meeting together in person. Moving to the third focus area, Mr. Allen detailed how Arts Midwest has invested in Ohio's arts community over the past fiscal year. Of note, he said, were opportunities to distribute federal dollars through the disbursement of CARES Act funding and initiatives like the Resilience Fund, the latter of which resulted in an investment in 24 Ohio organizations totaling more than \$500,000.

Mr. Allen wrapped up his presentation with a brief overview of Arts Midwest's plans for the future. Explaining that he spent his first few years at the organization listening and observing, Mr. Allen said that Arts Midwest is currently undergoing a process of articulating a new vision and activating new directions. The overarching strategy, he continued, involves curatorial visioning, case concepting, brand exploration, and developing impact analysis systems and strategic planning. The organization's goal is to have a new framework for its overarching strategy finalized and in place by summer 2021.

Mr. Dicke thanked Mr. Allen for his presentation. Robb Hankins asked whether Mr. Allen could share any positive trends he expects to emerge as the arts and culture sector recovers from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Allen said the stressors of COVID-19 have ignited a movement to more seriously consider the arts a viable professional trade. Such efforts have brought to light opportunities to expand the arts and culture sector's connection to other major sources of economic relief and support, such as those provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the U.S. military. Mr. Allen said this has greatly broadened the scope of the arts in federal funding conversations. As a parting thought, Mr. Allen shared that he believes the key to a strong arts and culture sector lies in the creation of authentic collaboration and true accessibility. He thanked the OAC board and staff for their commitment to fostering this atmosphere in Ohio.

NEW BUSINESS: BOARD UPDATES

Mr. Hankins shared with the board that he had recently received communication from Bill Blair of McKinley Advisors, a Canton-based consulting firm, wherein Mr. Blair announced that his company had decided to take on *gratis* advocacy work for the arts. Mr. Hankins said he was inspired by this news and noted the impact of state funding for the arts in Stark County and throughout the state, especially as it pertains to economic support and recovery during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Hankins closed by encouraging members of the board to consider themselves as champions of the arts in Ohio. Adam Shank added that he would be willing to help as needed. Representative Tavia Galonski shared the positive impact of advocacy and outreach, such as letters from constituents and grantees. These messages have an important effect on her and her colleagues' work in the Ohio House of Representatives, she said. Mr. Dicke thanked all parties for their thoughts and advice.

Bill White inquired as to whether any updates have been received regarding the OAC staff's return to the office and the board's return to in-person meetings. Ms. Collins said that the OAC takes its lead for return-to-office protocol from Gov. DeWine's office. She added that the agency has yet to receive specific guidance as to when to expect a resumption of in-person activities. Mr. White thanked Ms. Collins for her update. Mr. Dicke agreed and commended the State of Ohio on its efficient roll out of COVID-19 vaccines. He concluded by saying that he is hopeful that these efforts, guided the leadership of the Ohio General Assembly and Gov. DeWine, will allow a sense of normalcy to return.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.