

## **CAMBRIDGE ARTS COUNCIL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING: January 14, 2014, 5:30PM**

**Start:** 5:42pm

**End:** 7:40pm

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Lori D. called the meeting to order at 5:42pm. She also welcomed this meeting as an opportunity to gather both the Advisory Board and Public Art Commission members. Following the welcome, Lori invited each person present to introduce themselves, which group they are a part of and to provide some additional context about professional and arts-related affiliations and work.

### **MINUTES**

Jason reminded members that the secretary was unable to attend the December meeting and that he would prepare notes and circulate those digitally for review and edits. Following, a vote to accept would be taken via e-mail to finalize.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### *Agency Staffing Update*

Jason summarized an update on the Director of Marketing & P.R. marketing position and hiring schedule and asked the members for support with participation on the hiring committee and interview process. Several board members agreed to participate in the interview process, including Diane Norris, Lori Damon, Luis Cotto and Aliyah Gary. Following, Jason provided detailed information about the recent City Council and School Committee elections. The Board discussed the large turnover on the City Council, in particular, and suggested contact and outreach to the new members in an effort to understand Council member priorities and to bring new Councillors up to date on Arts Council initiatives and work within the community. They asked Jason to consider the best strategy for pursuing this outreach.

### **PUBLIC ART PROGRAM**

#### *Let the People Play*

Lillian gave a summary presentation with a slide show on the initiative started in 2007. Key points include:

- Program is tied in with international movement connected to the importance of play for cognitive development, referenced "International Journal of Play"
- Importance of play for all generations and throughout daily life, too many Cambridge parks are just for the very young
- City's Community Development Department has been instrumental in outreach by Jeff Roberts to educate public and design professionals
- CAC gallery show through June 2014. Lillian showed the PR postcard and a sample of the "house of cards" playing deck created with images of play project examples from around the globe for public participation
- Highlights include hopes and dreams chalkboard, salsa steps in Seattle, tree grate poems, transfer accelerator in the Netherlands, umbrella canopies in Portugal, trampoline in sidewalk in Copenhagen
- As part of the project, the Arts Council has commissioned two artists to develop two temporary public art play-based installations to encourage play, whimsy and public engagement. The temporary sculptures will serve as prototypes and move to different locations in the city every 6 weeks

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*Public Art Program & PAC*

Jointly, the members discussed the Public Art Program focusing on objectives and process. Phyllis requested greater initiative related to expanding the Public Art Portfolio and asked for information on how new artists can find out how to get involved. Lillian clarified that there is a big outreach and response for the Portfolio both on-line and via direct human interaction. Members of the Commission also indicated that projects are far more successful if the first stage of artist selection is done by art professionals rather than a committee of citizens/neighbor groups. Professional familiarity with the complexity of the public art process is essential in making sound decisions. Following, there are a variety of opportunities for additional public engagement via Project/Site Committees, direct interaction with selected artists and through direct and ongoing communication about the project with the community at large.

The Commission has also been instrumental in helping artists to translate their work to be suitable as public art if not experienced in public art. Jason noted the First Street Garage is a good example of the significance of pre-conservation reviews. In the case of the garage, many of the first-floor windows were boarded up following a fire in one of the retail spaces. In an effort to create a more attractive and engaging façade, the Department of Public Works and Traffic & Parking Department contacted the Arts Council to work with them to arrive at a solution involving public art. Although this did not originate as part of the Percent-for-Art Program and related Ordinance, it was possible to pursue a temporary public art solution with financial support coming from the departments with jurisdiction over this facility. Nancy Simonds was selected by the Arts Council and PAC as an artist whose gouache on paper work would translate well to an outdoor mural in situ. She subsequently had an exhibition of her work in the CAC gallery, highlighting how her prior work led to the experimentation with a new material and scale to address the opportunity at the First Street Garage. This work allowed her to expand her process and experience base as an artist and to experiment with new materials thereby allowing for a broader spectrum of work.

Lillian noted that more city maintenance or improvement projects at various locations are underway or scheduled and present additional opportunities to incorporate public art in such infrastructure as water fountains, benches and seating and outdoor tables as just some examples. Members present discussed successful examples such as the Hi-Line in NY and Harvard Science Center.

Diane asked how a system can be set up with the schools and the Arts Council for simple maintenance projects such as painting walls, railing, murals, tilework, benches, water fountains, and playground improvements. Diane noted several school projects tend to acquire off-the-shelf catalogue items or do their own painting without the appropriate prep work to last. Jason clarified that the Arts Council and Cambridge Public Schools have been meeting to arrive at such a solution and that both have been part of developing a Policy on Artwork in School Buildings and property. He reported that based on that work, the Cambridge School Committee is currently reviewing language and process that will culminate in a formal policy and that whatever the outcome, the Arts Council will continue to be involved in the roll-out and implementation. Lillian reported that the city's Open Space Committee has also prioritized schools relative to the use of CPA funding in the city. Member agreed that the connections and potential connections between the Arts Council and Public Schools need to be advocated and pursued.

*Public Art/Percent-for-Art Ordinance*

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The city's ordinance cap connected to the Percent-for-Art continues to be a point of frustration and contention for the members of the Public Art Commission. Technically, the Ordinance allows for 1% of the total construction costs of a project to be dedicated for use in commissioning temporary or permanent public artwork for that location. Approximately six years ago the City Manager implemented a 'cap' of \$100,000 for such use and projects. There was extensive discussion by the members of both groups on the need to advocate for the return of the full 1% outlined in the Ordinance. Jason indicated that this has been discussed with the new City Manager and Deputy City Manager who are both aware of the concern. The members asked Jason to continue the effort to speak with and advocate for this return to the specific reading of the Ordinance. However, it was also noted by the members that another, and perhaps more effective strategic approach, would be for the members as residents to meet with, promote and advocate directly with members of City Council and influential city employees, professionals and residents.

Lori D. asked how the Arts Council can bring Public Art to Cambridge streets and to high-tech corporations as well as build stronger partnerships for public art with MIT and Harvard. She advocated for additional 'artsy' and street-level excitement and activity. It was noted that San Francisco's Bridge project was completely privately funded and there was some discussion related to how to activate more opportunities to follow that example here in Cambridge. Jason mentioned the MIT 150<sup>th</sup> Festival of Art Science and Technology (FAST) and the fact that the festival included a variety of extraordinary public art that was engaging and entirely funded by MIT. The group agreed that bridges and connections need to be made for companies, developers, and owners to promote further opportunities to develop public art and engaging arts activities and events.

Lori reminded members that the next Arts Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 2/11/2014, 6 pm.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- **Advisory Board:** Aliyah Gary, Phyllis Bretholtz, Lori Lander, Lori Damon, Ann Lawson, Diane Norris, Matthew Weinberg
- **Public Art Commission:** Hue Nguyen, David De Celis, Christopher Sokolowski, Alexander van Praagh
- **Staff:** Jason Weeks, Executive Director; Lillian Hsu, Director of Public Art

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

- **Advisory Board:** Luis Cotto, Stella McGregor
- **Absent – Public Art Commission:** Dina Deitsch, Ross Miller

Respectfully submitted: Diane Norris, Secretary