

Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission Special Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2010
Mirth Cafe
7:05 pm

Present: Susan Craig, Christie Dobson, Jane Pennington, Kathy Porsch, Sarah Harris, Darin White, Lori Madaus, Mandy Lamb

Absent: Matthew Herren, Amy Kelly

Other: Two members of the public: Susan Tate, Lawrence Arts Center; Margaret Perkins-McGuinness, Spencer Art Museum

Commissioner Pennington called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Purpose

This meeting was called by Commission Chair Amy Kelly and Grants Committee Chair Kathy Porsch to consider an application in response to the National Endowment for the Arts Mayor's Initiative on City Design 25th Anniversary Initiative. The deadline for the preliminary proposal is March 15 and, if the City is invited to submit a full proposal, the final deadline is May 10.

Action Item

The commissioners present voted unanimously in favor of a motion to develop an application for the National Endowment for the Arts Mayor's Initiative on City Design 25th Anniversary Initiative grant in collaboration with other Lawrence Arts organizations.

Discussion

Commissioner Porsch explained that purpose of the meeting was to consider ideas that might be proposed in response to the NEA Mayor's Initiative and decide whether to respond to the invitation. The process would be to develop the three-page pre-proposal and submit it to the Lawrence City Commission for review and approval, then the City would submit the application via grants.gov. She summarized the request for proposal and noted key issues. These included:

- 1) A one-to-one match is required, but this does not have to be hard-dollar. However, in-kind match must be tracked and reported carefully. She showed the group the forms which must be submitted to the NEA.
- 2) The Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission is a group of volunteers all of whom have full-time jobs and other commitments; thus it would be difficult or impossible for the commission itself to implement and manage the grant should it be awarded. Further, the city staff is stretched to the maximum and is unlikely to be able to effectively administer such a grant with its heavy tracking and reporting requirements.
- 3) Although this grant is available only to the City itself, the City can designate a 501(c)3 organization as the lead on the grant. In such a case, the grant application would be submitted by the city and, if awarded, the funds would come to the city, which would set up the grant

and pay out the funds for the project through the 501(c)3 organization designated to implement and administer it. That organization would be responsible for organization of the collaborators, spearheading the project, tracking progress and in-kind contributions, and writing the final report, which it would submit to the City to be submitted on to NEA.

Commissioner Porsch then thanked the members of the public present for their interest and welcomed them to join freely in the discussion. Much brainstorming ensued. The key ideas that emerged were:

- 1) Expand the existing grant program for one year to enhance and promote the arts in Lawrence by more broadly disseminating more funds more widely. Commissioner Porsch noted that re-granting is not allowed under this NEA program.
- 2) Start a First Fridays program.
- 3) Develop a comprehensive long-term arts and culture master plan for Lawrence by hiring an outside consultant to map the local cultural assets and act as facilitator to bring all of the stake-holders together to collaboratively develop a plan for Lawrence.
- 4) Develop a business/arts partnership in which property owners with vacant space in the downtown area would allow it to be used as exhibit space for various forms of art.
- 5) Re-establish the quarterly gallery walks and possibly make them monthly.
- 6) Develop a “farmers’ market” type of weekly arts bazaar.
- 7) Develop a “citizen’s engagement” project that would focus on connecting Lawrence artists and arts organizations with one another and with the public and get them all talking together in order to keep a broad community of people engaged in the arts.
- 8) Establish a Arts Resource Officer position similar to the Heritage Resource Officer that would be paid by the grant with the City to pick-up the salary at the end of the 12-month period of the grant. This individual would implement the grant project and subsequently provide the necessary continuity to ensure programs started under the grant continue past the grant period. This would help to ensure that good programs do not disappear when the volunteers who organize them move away or have other calls on their time. Such an individual could also organize applications for and administer other similar arts grants.
- 9) Develop a downtown Lawrence arts district, which would become a prescribed opportunities district not only for artists, arts organizations, and art-related businesses, but also for other businesses that would benefit from being located in an area that generates a lot of foot traffic. Maps could be developed that defined the downtown Lawrence arts district but also marked other participants in the overall Lawrence arts community, e.g., the Lied Center and Spencer Art Museum.

Commissioner Pennington moved that the Lawrence Cultural Arts Center move forward with developing a grant application in collaboration with other Lawrence Arts Organizations. Commissioner Dobson seconded the motion. All commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Craig asked who would take the lead on developing the grant application. Commissioner Porsch said once the core project idea was determined, she would be willing to devote long evening and weekend hours to putting the information together and writing the proposal, but that she simply did not have the time to do the research, gather the supporting materials, and confirm collaborators.

Subsequently, there was general consensus that the proposal will be for a planning grant to develop a downtown Lawrence arts district, which may incorporate many of the other ideas discussed as components of the plan. Both members of the public present agreed to contribute to the effort by providing key information, gathering supporting materials, and assisting in the development of the critical collaborations with local arts organizations.

The commissioners discussed the amount of funding to request, with some suggesting it be kept minimal because of the difficulty of fund raising in tough economic times, while others suggested this would be the hook upon which to hang a major fund-raising effort and pointing out that in-kind would be fairly easy to raise with all the volunteers in the arts and the possibility of contributed space for various events. Commissioner Porsch said the amount to be requested could be determined as the overarching plan is worked out. She said the project description and the budget need to be worked out in conjunction. Perkins-McGuinness said she has collected data on local arts organizations for a class and will contribute those findings, as well as look into how Arts Kansas City is funded to get ideas for raising the cost-share and developing the . Tate indicated that she hopes the Lawrence Arts Center can be closely involved with developing and implementing the planning grant.

Potential collaborators mentioned were: Lawrence Arts Center, Van Gogh, BALM, Lawrence Community Theatre, Watkins Museum, City Library, Destination Management, and Freedom's Frontier. This list will expand as others are identified.

Commissioner Porsch said the commission can consider the outcome of the special meeting and the central focus of the grant application, as well as how it might be administered and implemented at its next regular meeting and welcomed the two members of the public to attend that meeting, as well. Meanwhile, she will outline the three-page pre-proposal and set up some budget categories and begin to fill in the blanks as she receives information from the commissioners and Tate and Perkins-McGuinness.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.