



Minutes of the Meeting
Middletown Commission on the Arts
Wednesday, April 28, 2021
7:00 p.m., Middletown, CT
Via WebEx

Present:

David Bauer
Lee Godburn
Pam Steele
Joyce Kirkpatrick
Julia Faraci
Charlotte McCoid – 7:30 PM
Barbara Arafeh – 7:27 PM
Ed McKeon, Common Council – 7:18 PM
Ed Ford, Common Council – 7:18 PM

Also present, Kisha Michael, Staff

1. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Pam Steele at 7:06 p.m.
2. Public Session - No one from the public were present.
3. Approval of Minutes - March 24, 2021 Meeting
***The Minutes were unanimously approved, following a motion by Lee Godburn, seconded by Julia Faraci.
4. Approval of Agenda -
***The agenda was unanimously approved, following a motion by Joyce Kirkpatrick, seconded by Lee Godburn.
5. Remarks from the Chair –
 - i. Secretary – Joyce volunteered to act as secretary for the current meeting.
 - ii. Chair, Pamela Steele, announced that the Commission’s membership is proceeding and that the MCA should be almost fully populated by May. This should facilitate the planning for the upcoming MCA 50th Anniversary.

She reminded the Commission of the process of the City Arts Grants – MCA submits its recommendations to the Mayor; the Mayor reviews and then sends his/her recommendations to the Common Council for approval. Until the Common Council approves the Mayor’s recommendation, the grants are not final. The current grants are pending until after the May 3rd Council meeting. Then the MCA staff, Kisha Michael, will notify the recipients.

She also urged the MCA to read Kisha’s e-mails thoroughly in order to be well informed. The best times to reach Pam are during the week. Saturday is best avoided.

6. Old Business
 - a. Staff Report
 - i. GOS Grant Resolution –Kisha Michael reported that she is currently busy implementing the summer Kids Arts program.

She reminded the Commissioners that they can virtually attend the May 3 Common Council meeting when there will be several items of great interest to the MCA: a

discussion of the proposed merger of the Arts Office into the Department of Economic Development; the Commission's GOS grants will be finalized.

- ii. Other - She urged Commissioners to attend in person, but with Covid precautions, the MCA's Arts Advocacy Award 2021 to Ursel Shaffer on Thursday, May 6 at Ursel's Web Frame Shop and Art Gallery, when Mayor Florsheim will make the presentation at 11:00 a.m.

b. Committee Reports

- i. 50th Anniversary Discussion – (Executive Committee) Lee Godburn reported that the Executive Committee had met. They indicated that a focus of the anniversary should be Youth Inclusion; that the MCA Anniversary might be a year-long festival format with events throughout the year (July 2021 – July 2022). They hope to involve the many arts groups and schools including Wesleyan (resurrect the Big Draw?) and even a possible giant graffiti mural on paper might be created on Main Street by kids. Pam noted that MCA will celebrate Arts for the entire City; possibly have a Visual Arts Gallery; augment Summer Sounds Concerts with warm-up presentations of poetry, musical presentations, dance, etc. Lee suggests that the emphasis be on how the City of Middletown has supported the arts over 50 years through the MCA. He proposes to ask everyone, "What is your art?" and further explained that the answer could be beyond the usual art, drama, music – it could be Kung Fu, writing, poetry, etc. David Bauer brought the history of 50 years of arts grants – Kisha has the record of all grants given which could be listed on a large board, perhaps at the Open Air Market. Joyce Kirkpatrick spoke about the early days of the MCA being influenced by Middletown's Bicentennial (of the USA) Celebration which ran from about 1975-1977. Its theme was the many (30 – 40) ethnic groups that composed Middletown. This theme might be woven into the MCA's 50th Anniversary.
- ii. Risley Sculpture (s) - (Public Art Committee) Joyce Kirkpatrick reported on a meeting that she and David Bauer had on Monday to examine and document the damage to the sculptured Bench and Screens in the Municipal Building Lobby. Cold Steel welding repairs and restoring the painted surface are needed. Discussion resulted in the name of a second welder to add to the list of possible technicians. The Public Art Committee will continue to investigate.

***A second Risley sculpture of wood – recently returned from the Senior Community Center - was also discussed. The Commission unanimously voted to engage Richard Bergan to repair the wooden sculpture "Untitled" by John Risley for \$1600, following a motion by David Bauer, seconded by Lee Godburn

- iii. Middletown Commission on the Arts Annual Arts Award (MCAAAA)– (Planning and Projects) Lee Godburn reported that he and Pam Steele had actually visited MHS to review the art proposed by the art staff and chose two winners, one framed piece - 1st place and a circle piece - honorable mention.

Lee noted that the Open Air Market is to be held at the Wadsworth Mansion on Sunday, August 29. The MCA will have a tent, exhibit and activities and will need MCA members present. Activities may need to be tailored depending on the Covid restrictions for an anticipated large crowd event. The MCA Open Air Market display should feature the MCA 50th Anniversary.

- iv. Other - A discussion of the possible need for a check to cover a vendor fee for the Open Air Market in the amount of \$75 followed. ***The MCA then voted to authorize Kisha Michael to spend up to \$75, if needed, to participate in the Open Air Market, if the entry fee is needed following a motion by David Bauer, seconded by Charlotte McCoid.

7. New Business - Ed McKeon spoke about the reorganization putting Arts into Economic Development. He will propose an amendment at the Council meeting that the Arts Office remain under the Mayor's Office – since the Arts are more than economic development, and should remain “strong, independent and singular.” He also apologized for his lack of attendance, but has conflicting meetings with the Charter Revision Committee and the Finance and Government Commission that also meet on Wednesdays. He suggested moving the MCA meeting day. MCA Commissioners have conflicts with other evenings, so the matter will be investigated. Since the MCA is meeting on WebEx now, the lack of real space in City Hall might not affect the meetings in May or June or beyond. Noting the need for more support in the Arts Office, Ed also suggested that the MCA members lobby for a small portion of the \$12 million in federal assistance coming to Middletown to address the pandemic and its fallout.

Ed Ford commented on Ed McKeon's efforts and announced that he will support an independent Arts Office. Appreciation for the MCA representatives and City Council members' efforts on behalf of the MCA with regard to the City reorganization were expressed by Julia Faraci and Pam Steele.

8. Announcements - Kisha noted that the MCA's Youth Grant recipient will be starting her art classes for Middletown students on Monday, May 3rd. She also thanked the Council members for their support and vision to build on the MCA's 50 years. Julia Faraci commended Kisha for her strong presentation of the Arts at the last Council meeting.
9. Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM, following a motion by Lee Godburn.

cc: Town Clerk,
Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim