

ARTS COMMISSION
December 5, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room 2, City Hall

MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Trentadue	- Chair, City Council Member
Stephen O'Shea	- Alternate Chair Arts Council of New Westminster Representative
Peter Leblanc	- Community Based Arts Sector Non-Profit Representative
Julian Legere	- Professional Arts & Culture Sector Representative
Julia Schoennagel	- Community Member
David Vivian	- Community Member
Katey Wright	- Community Member

VOTING MEMBER REGRETS:

Erin Jeffery	- Community Based Arts Sector Non-Profit Representative
Vesna Maljkovic	- Education Sector Representative
Kelly Proznick	- Community Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Todd Ayotte	- Manager, Community Arts & Theatre
Rob McCullough	- Manager, Museums & Heritage Services
Chris Koth	- Manager, Programs & Community Development
Sarah Joyce	- Director-Curator New Media Gallery
Carilyn Cook	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS / DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

1.1 MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Arts Commission agenda of the December 5, 2019 meeting be adopted, noting that New Business Item 5.1 – Introduction of Todd Ayotte, Manager, Community Arts & Theatre be addressed prior to the start of Unfinished Business Items.

CARRIED.

All members of the Commission present voted in favour of the motion.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of October 3, 2019

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Arts Commission minutes of the October 3, 2019 meeting be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED.

All members of the Commission present voted in favour of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

There were no items.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 Arts Strategy Working Group

Sarah Joyce, Director-Curator, New Media Gallery, urged the Commission to defer discussion until it is clear what the City will be doing with respect to the climate emergency and truth and reconciliation.

Councillor Trentadue advised that at the next meeting, the Commission should address both the Arts Strategy and the Theatre Strategy and how to move forward with them, as well as the Commission's contribution to them in relation to the work staff is doing regarding the climate emergency and truth and reconciliation.

Todd Ayotte, Manager, Community Arts & Theatre, shared his goal of re-engaging the Commission and key stakeholders around both strategies, noting that they are living documents and it is important to maintain ongoing dialogue regarding implementation

Arts Commission members agreed that this topic be deferred to provide members time to re-familiarize themselves with both the Arts Strategy and the Theatre Strategy, which is expected to be adopted by Council at the Monday, December 9, 2019 Council meeting.

4.2 Arts Strategy Alignment with Municipal Programs (Funding)

No further discussion was needed on this issue.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Introduction of Todd Ayotte, Manager of Community Arts and Theatre

Councillor Trentadue introduced Mr. Ayotte, the new Manager of Community Arts and Theatre, and a brief roundtable introduction took place. Councillor Trentadue acknowledged Rob McCullough's hard work and diligence as he stepped in to assist the Arts Commission prior to Mr. Ayotte starting with the City.

Mr. Ayotte shared some information regarding his experience in municipal arts administration with the City of Vancouver and the City of Surrey and noted that he is pleased to be joining the City of New Westminster. He looks forward to working with the Commission and the wider community.

5.2 Anvil Centre Community Art Space

Todd Ayotte, Manager of Community Arts and Theatre, requested feedback on the following issues as they pertain to the Anvil Centre Community Art Space: naming of the space, programming mix and outreach, and alignment with Council priorities such as the climate emergency and truth and reconciliation.

Naming of the Space

The current name, "Community Art Space" does not reflect the specific function of the space as a gallery.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following comments:

- It is important to ensure that the Community Art Space and the New Media Gallery maintain distinct presence within the Anvil Centre; and,
- Given the distinct program and mandate of the two program areas, it was felt that rebranding the Community Art space as a gallery will not create confusion for visitors.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- The current name does not describe what the space does nor is there signage identifying the art gallery upstairs;
- As people enter the Anvil Centre, confusion with the New Media Gallery must be avoided;
- Although they all operate differently, the gallery needs to be kept in context with the City's other multiple art galleries;

- It needs to be clear that the gallery is not related to the theatre in relation to programming.

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Arts Commission recommend that the Anvil Centre community art space be named the “Community Art Gallery.”

CARRIED.

All members of the Commission present voted in favour of the motion.

Programming Mix and Outreach:

Regarding the programming call and outreach, Mr. Ayotte suggested the following:

- Reduce the current requirement from three artists to two which may encourage more individual artists to collaborate, self curate, and submit work; and,
- Pursue strategic associations with key partners to develop “anchor” exhibits during defined times during the year which may be complemented by open call opportunities and which could include working with Indigenous artists or have themes such as environmental issues, etc.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following comments:

- Language in the call will be revised to make artists feel more welcome and encourage them to self curate;
- Every exhibition receives promotion, an opening day reception, and a staffed bar; however, staff are open to hearing ideas as to how to improve things; and,
- Acknowledging the increase in resources that would be required, at another time, staff will revisit shortening gallery exhibition times in order to hold more shows throughout the year.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- There were more opportunities for exhibitions when the gallery first opened and less people knew about it. There is now a two-year waiting list and other restrictions;
- The gallery can be inaccessible at times and it would be nice if it showed more New West artists;
- The community would be very excited at the opportunity to exhibit in the space more often but the extra administration costs that would be incurred with a higher turnover is something to consider;

- Programming at the gallery over the last five years has been very successful providing every established art group in the City with at least two opportunities to exhibit in the space. As well, strong partnerships with organizations such as the Union Gospel Mission and Inclusion BC have brought outside groups to the gallery;
- A curators' network which includes, amongst others, the New Media Gallery and the Plaskett Gallery, developed a policy piece wherein if you exhibit in New Westminster in a calendar year in one gallery, you are not able to exhibit in any other space in the City in that same calendar year in order to provide the most amount of opportunities for shows in the community. The Gallery at Queen's Park, however, recognized that groups were exhibiting in their space and shifted to showing only solo or duo exhibitions in order to differentiate the gallery from the others in that respect;
- Artists in New Westminster may not know of the opportunity to self curate and create groups themselves;
- Increasing the number of shows may prove challenging with limited resources as it is sometimes difficult to connect with artists and get responses, etc.;
- As the Arts Strategy emphasises collaboration for things such as anchor shows, there may be value in coordinating with other galleries to determine what gaps can be filled and to ensure the same artists are not always exhibited;
- Visitors may miss a lot of the exhibits if there is a higher turnover rate;
- Gaps in the call should be identified and brought back to the Commission for further discussion;
- It can be confusing for people who arrive at the gallery as there is no doctent to greet visitors; and,
- A review of the guidelines and contract, including sales, how damage to artwork is handled, what artists can expect in the space, and how the space can be used (i.e for sales, for a talk, etc.), should be undertaken at the same time the call is being reviewed.

Alignment with Council Priorities

Determination needs to be made regarding how the community art program can respond to the climate emergency, support the truth and reconciliation process, and engage with the groups of diverse artists that exist outside of the City's traditional arts networks.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following comments:

- Ongoing programs such as the banner program could see artists engaging and working with the public to create awareness through art projects;

- Since these Council priorities are ongoing, this topic should be further discussed at a future meeting. Commission members were encouraged to consider how these issues can be addressed in order to provide feedback to staff; and,
- At a policy level, beyond theme, consideration should be made to explicitly invite works that address Council priorities, in particular the climate emergency and the truth and reconciliation process, through various mediums.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- Historically, Art Services, under the City’s previous Arts Coordinator, curated their own group exhibitions based on various themes, and it would be reasonable continue with this practice; and,
- It would be valuable to show how artists can contribute to climate action and reconciliation.

Procedural note: Item 4.1 – Arts Strategy Working Group was addressed at this time.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

6.1 Report from Arts Commission Representative on Public Art Advisory Committee (Standing Item)

Peter Leblanc, Community Based Arts Sector, Non-Profit Representative, stated that the November 7, 2019 meeting of the Public Art Advisory Committee was cancelled with the next meeting being held on Wednesday, December 11, 2019.

6.2 New West Artists (NWA) 2019 Annual Report

Julia Schoennagel, Community Member, passed around invitations to the New West Artists Gallery’s “Let It Snow” pop up show and sale which is taking place from December 5th to 29th. Ms. Schoennagel also shared the following:

- The NWA are waiting to hear back regarding the city grant they applied for;
- A gifting campaign is in the works to generate funding for the gallery; and,
- NWA will be showing once a month at the Plaskett Gallery with the Touch of Winter exhibit.

6.3 Arts Council of New Westminster Report

Stephen O’Shea, Arts Council of New Westminster Representative, encouraged Committee members to share information and updates about their perspective organizations and/or what they are personally working on in the Arts.

6.4 Culture Forward Working Group Update

Mr. McCullough will follow up with Vali Marling, General Manager, Anvil Centre, to receive a debriefing on the Culture Forward event and report back.

Other member updates included:

Chris Koth, Manager, Programs & Community Development, announced that the library recently completed their 2020 call for artists, receiving 23 submissions and, after a blind selection, will have 10 artists who will exhibit next year. He stated that the library is looking forward to working with the Arts Commission on how to make the area at the library a more intentional arts space.

Mr. Leblanc shared that over the course of 2019 the City lost two community arts events including Open Mic at Old Crow Coffee Co. and Way Off Broadway Wednesdays, adding that 100 Braid Street Art Studios & Gallery is now holding monthly open mic nights.

Commission members briefly discussed the City bylaw that prohibits posters being displayed and queried what the history was with respect to banning the display of posters in the City, noting that Vancouver may be a good resource as to how to deal with this issue.

Ms. Schoennagel shared that the New West Artists Gallery is looking into hosting ongoing small concerts but that SOCAN would require some sort of payment which may make the initiative too cost prohibitive. Mr. Leblanc advised that SOCAN has a platform that collects a SOCAN fee automatically on each ticket purchased, which is taken before the artist gets paid.

Katey Wright, Community Member, announced that Patrick Street Productions will be presenting “It’s a Wonderful Life” at the Anvil Theatre from December 19th to January 5, 2020.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 New Westminster Historical Society Newsletter – November 2019

8.0 NEXT MEETING

This is the last meeting of this committee year. The first meeting of the 2020 committee year is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2020 in Committee Room 2 at 5:30 p.m.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Certified Correct,

Original Signed
Councillor Mary Trentadue
Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk