

Baltimore Public Art Commission Monthly Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 2021, Virtually, 10 AM – 11:06 AM

I. Call to Order

Commissioners

Aaron Bryant

Danielle Brock

Sam Christian Holmes

Jacqueline Bershad

Alma Roberts

BOPA Staff

Kirk Shannon-Butts, Public Art and Curation Manager

Devin Shacklett, Arts Council Program Coordinator

Santiago Nocera, Marketing & Communications Manager

Chris Brooks, Community Arts and Special Projects Manager

Guest

Terri Freeman, Reginald Lewis Museum Director

Nina Themelis, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison to the Mayor of Baltimore City

II. March's Minuets

- There were no additional comments or comments.
 - Sam Holmes recommends accepting the minuets.
 - Alma 2^{nds} ...everyone agrees

III. Meeting objectives

- Updates from Kirk
- Getting to know the new director of the Reginald Lewis Museum, Terri Freeman
- Nina Themelis explains/answers questions about the process in filling the 3 empty seats on the PAC
- Chris Brooks explains his role at BOPA working directly with the community of Baltimore City

IV. Updates from Kirk

- 1% meeting with City Council.
 - Tuesday April 20, Informational Hearing with the Ways and Means Committee at 10:01 am
 - The meeting is about gathering information as they try to streamline the process of collecting funds from the 1% for arts.
 - Kirk sent the invite to everyone.
 - Encourages everyone to support.
 - Aaron will speak on behalf of the PAC.
 - Aaron also encourages everyone to attend virtually.

V. Terri Freeman

- Aaron welcomes Ms. Freeman
 - She thanks him and continues to introduce herself.
 - Maryland is like home to her. She moved to Maryland in 1981.
 - She Moved to Maryland to attend Howard Universities Organizational Communications Management Graduate program.
 - After she Graduated, she moved to Washington D.C and worked for, “Freddy Mac” for 13 years.
 - She became the 1st Executive Director of the Freddy Mac Foundation.
 - After working for Freddy Mac, she moved on to be the president of The Community Foundation for the National Capitol Region, which is now known as The Greater Washington Community foundation
 - Held this position for 18 years
 - This foundation is equivalent to the “Greater Baltimore Community Foundation.”
 - She mentioned Tom Wilcox being her colleague during this time.
 - After she left the Greater Washington Community foundation, she moved on to be come the president of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tn and was there for 6 years.
 - Although she didn’t have any experience working in Museums, she’s always been a supporter/enthusiast of Museums Art and Culture.
 - Her mother worked at the Detroit Institute of the Arts for years.

- From there, her mother moved to the east coast and began working at the Smithsonian American History Museum.
- Working at the National Civil Rights Museum has taught her the importance of Museums and how they impact our communities.
 - She came into this position during the initial uprising of Black Lives Matter, and the heighten focused of police brutality.
 - One of her first public events that she had with the Black Lives Matter Foundation in Memphis, Tennessee. A “die-in” in the courtyard of the Museum.
 - It was clear to her that after this event the Museum can be used as a Public gathering space to allow people to learn to express, communicate and create dialogue.”
- In 2020, her and her husband went through trials and tribulations.
 - Her husband was in Baltimore, as she commuted back and forth from Memphis to Baltimore.
 - It was finally time for her to move back to Baltimore with her husband.
 - Ironically, at this time her current position at the Reginald Arts Museum became available, and she took the opportunity.
 - She takes pride in her position. Her and her husband are on the red wall on the lower level of The Reginal Lewis art museum. They were a part of the initial excitement of the opening of the museum.
 - As director, she will make the Reginal Lewis Arts Museum a space for the community to gather and have difficult conversations without judgement.

- She also desires to have engaging programming.
- She believes that the museum should reflect the man that Reginald Lewis was. She also feels that the museum should better reflect Maryland and not just Baltimore City in what the museum displays.
- There's a lot of construction work that needs to be done to the Museum.
- She strives to bring more brand awareness to the Museum.
- The museum needs better signage.
- She suggested that teachers should bring their architect students to the museum to study its structure.
- She believes that museums are not neutral spaces.
- She wants to have "townhall" like meetings at the Museum to discuss issues in society that needs to be addressed.
- She believes that Maryland's 400 years of history should be exhibited well and told in a way that people may receive it.
- The current exhibits need to be updated and made more interactive so that people can be more engaged.
- Her staff is minimal and she's looking to fill positions and is excited about the rehabilitation of the museum.
- She looks forward to working with organizations in the community.
- She wants the museum to feel like it is for everyone.

- So far, she's been in the position for 2 months.
- Alma Roberts welcomes Ms. Freeman to Baltimore, and she looks forward to working with her.
- Aaron welcomes her to Baltimore also.
- Aaron Bryant opened the floor for questions and comments.
 - Sam Holmes thanks Ms. Freeman and is excited.
 - Sam also asked, "what role will art have in the Museum, and do you see the relationship between the Museum and the arts community continuing?"
 - She responds, "There's space in the Museum that she could dedicate to community art."
 - She adds that the museum needs more foot traffic.
 - Aaron Bryant responds and discuss the importance of having a great social media presence and working with Social media influencers.
 - Ms. Freeman agreed.
 - Jacqueline introduced herself. She is an apart of the even and design team at the Baltimore National Aquarium. She requested to further connecting with Ms. Freeman to discuss her vision more in-depth.
 - She invited Ms. Freeman to walk thru at the aquarium.
 - Ms. Freeman accepted her invitation.
 - Kapo Lin said that he's excited about Ms. Freemans vision. He taught at Morgan State University, and MICA's Architect program. He offered to connect her and or facilitate anything that she may want to do with architect students as well as art & design.
 - Ms. Freeman thanked him. She said, "I can always use more connections."
 - Aaron Bryant added comments regarding one of the museums Architects having connections with College Parks Architect program. He taught there.
 - Aaron Bryant asked if there were any additional comments or questions.
 - There were no further questions.
 - Aaron Bryant extended the invitation to Ms. Freeman to always reach out if the PAC may be of assistance to her in anyway.
 - Ms. Freeman thanked everyone again and left the meeting.

VI. Nina Themelis,

- Kirk introduces Nina to the PAC.
 - Nina thanked Kirk and proceeded to give a brief introduction of herself.
 - She is the deputy Director of Government Relations in the Mayor's Office.

- Mostly works on council matters
- Federal level Legislation
- Responsible for the record keeping and processing of all of Baltimore Cities Boards & Commission.
 - Ex. The Mayors appointments to the Boards and Commission.
 - The Boards and Commission consist of 75 approximate bodies and about 650 individual appointments state level.
 - She also works thru the City Council.
 - Which is where public arts commission appointments are processed. She is responsible for:
 - Making sure there's open casting calls for nominees.
 - Processing the paperwork for the nominees.
 - Processing the selected nominees through the swearing in becoming board members.
- She's been working for the since January of 2010
 - She started working for the Enoch Pratt Library system.
 - She came to city hall in 2015
- Nina updates the PAC on the process of selecting Board Members.
 - Her office has been in the process of evaluating all appointments for all the Board and Commissions under Mayor Scotts administration and should be having public calls for nominees over the coming weeks.
 - These open calls will be available on the Mayors social media outlets, and his website as well.
 - She's also been in communication with Kirk regarding 3 appointments of current membership but in the meantime all current member can serve in a hold over capacity and continue to do the work of the commission in the meantime.
 - She said that she's always available as a resource, or to answer any questions about the process or about anything specific to the Mayor's office Government relations for the Commission in general.
- Aaron Bryant asked if anyone had any questions.
 - He asked, "what is the quickest and most efficient way for the seats on the PAC to be filled?"
 - He requested for the process to be sped up if possible.
 - Nina responded, "the process should take about 4 to 6 weeks." In order to expedite the process, the nominees recommended from the PAC must meet all the specific requirements to be become a member.
 - She would then give the recommendations directly to the Mayor for him to decide.
 - Aaron Bryant also asked, how often to the city council hearings occur?
 - She responded, Monday evenings, every other Monday.
 - Over the summer there's less meetings, but typically every other Monday for the introduction of the nominees.

- For the actual Hearing for said nominees, time is set aside every Thursday at 1:00 pm for the Mayor’s Office and Committee Chair and Council President Office to coordinate the best time. It is not as infrequent as the “Introduction” hearings but could be expedited contingent upon when it is needed.
 - Example, the 3 Hearing’s for the current PAC vacancies could be held in one day.
- The Swearing in ceremonies are also scheduled on a as needed basis.
 - Once the Committee hearing takes place, and the members are approved, they go back to the next Council Meeting for final confirmation.
 - That hearing would be held at the following Monday.
 - The swearing in Ceremonies may occur as quickly as the next day, or whenever the said appropriate time may be.
- Aaron Bryant thanked Nina and asked if anyone had any additional questions.
 - There were no additional questions. He thanked Nina again.
- Nina thanked the PAC for having her and extended the invitation to be reached out to for any additional questions.
 - Nina left the meeting.

VII. Chris Brooks, Community Arts and Special Projects Manager

- Aaron Bryant welcomes Chris Brooks for coming.
 - Chris said, “Thanks for having me.”
- Kirk told Chris to tell the Pac about himself, his position and his work.
 - Chris is the Community Arts and Special Projects Manager for BOPA.
 - He’s a member of the Arts Council team, being responsible for managing community art programs, and projects across various disciplines within BOPA
 - His core responsibility is to manage community and public art grant programs including,
 - CDBG community art program
 - Baltimore Mural Program
 - Mural collection management
 - He works closely with Kirk on the collection.
 - Lead consultant/ manage the art@work program.
 - Develop and cultivate community partnerships and enhance the Arts Council programs and activities.
 - He’s been a part of the Arts Council since 2017, but with BOPA since 2001.
 - He began working majorly festival activities as a contractor under Gary Katchadourin and Randy Vega
 - Working with Gary, he developed a visual art program called, “Dj’ing the culture.”

- In 2001, this program later became, “Artscape After Dark.”
 - Aaron Bryant asked Chris if he curated the “Prince Party.”
 - He said he did.
 - Aaron Bryant requested that he’d curate it again because he enjoyed himself.
- Chris brought his night life and his experience booking artist to BOPA.
 - He’s constantly working with artist within the community.
 - Helping artist get commission.
 - Promoting independent films.
 - Helping artist book venues.
 - Before working for BOPA, he was working with a group that promoted Black Independent Films through a program called, “Black Cinema Café.”
 - They had monthly screenings at the Charles Theater.
 - After losing funding, he created a program called Urban Film Screening, continuing the work.
- He created a program with Olu Butterfly called, “Speak Instead.” A collaboration between DJ’s and poets.
- He works in public services addressing issues concerning the community.
- He provides a seat at the table to the community.
- He provides knowledge and resources regarding public art.
 - Aaron Bryant asked, in what ways can the PAC assist in what Chris/ BOPA does.
 - Chris would like the PAC to shed light on and support important art projects in the city.
- When engaging individual artist, he meets the artist where they are.
 - Always being mindful of their life circumstances. Sometimes artist may have obstacles that prevent them from engagement and full participation. It’s important to give artist multiple options to engage.
- Equity inclusion and diversity.
 - BOPA has been promoting equity inclusion and diversity for all, providing opportunities for artist to make money as well as get exposure.

- Elma added, “Requested a broader definition of equity.”
 - “equity is not just the inclusion of artist, but also where we place art in communities that historically have been overlooked.
 - Our children thrive in artistic environments.
 - Aaron Bryant agreed
- Aaron Bryant asked, “Any additional questions and comments for Chris?”
 - There were no additional comments for Chris.
 - Aaron Bryant invited Chris back to the PAC.
 - Specifically, if he has any upcoming projects that the PAC could assist with.
- Chris adds a final comment saying, “one of the ways we can facilitate projects is through partnerships.
- Aaron Bryant agrees, and would like the PAC to be more engaged in what Chris is doing.
- Chris left the meeting.

VIII. Additional updates

- The Lexington Market artist call closed last week.
 - Really good turnout.
 - The Municipal Society now has the list artist and will select 5 of those artists to work with.
 - Sam Holmes adds, “We could’ve gotten more submissions, that was his only issue.”
 - Specifically, regionally.
 - Kirk Agreed.
 - Alma inquired about Sam’s reasoning of wanting more submissions from the community. “We didn’t get the normal folks, responding?”
 - Sam says, “The normal folk did respond. It’s the folks outside of the regular players” that I would have like to see submit.”
 - Elma adds that the PAC should be personally sharing the said opportunities, calling and helping people thru the process to ensure the increase of submissions.
 - Kirk said that Alma’s idea is like what Chris Brooks spoke on.
- Alma will have 3 art pieces displayed in the new Baltimore, “Busboys and Poets.”
 - Everyone congratulated her.
 - Alma will keep us posted
- Danielle is working on the new city spring school and wants to know where the PAC stands regarding public art in schools.
 - Aaron suggested that the PAC revisit this next meeting and for the PAC to converse with someone with better knowledge on the topic. He thanked Danielle for bringing it up.
 - Kirk is working on working with Baltimore City Schools regarding this conversation. He will follow up with Danielle regarding.

IX. Meeting Adjourn.

- 11:30 PM