

City of North Saint Paul
Arts & Culture Commission Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2023

6:30 PM

I. Call to Order

Chair Sonnek called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

II. Roll Call

Tom Sonnek, Chair

Carey Nadeau, Vice Chair

Stacy Maher, Commissioner

Lisa Ritchie, Commissioner (excused absent)

Emily Haeg Nguyen, Commissioner

See Yang, Commissioner

Amanda Black, Commissioner

Cecelia Goracki, Student Commissioner (non-voting)

Lisa Wong, Council Member (non-voting)

Staff

Sara Lang, Commission Secretary

III. Adopt Agenda

On motion by Commissioner Nadeau, seconded by Commissioner Maher, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to approve the agenda as presented.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of the 06/7/23 Meeting Minutes

On motion by Commissioner Haeg Nguyen, seconded by Commissioner Black, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to approve the minutes as presented with the addition of some cultural discussion points from the last meeting. Commissioner Nadeau will send Secretary Lang updates for the minutes.

V. Meeting Open to the Public

There was no public input.

VI. Public Hearings

There were no public hearings

VII. Commission Business, Action Items & Recommendations

A. Updates from Sub-committees

A - 1 Project Snowy

Commissioner Yang reported there is now a page on the North St. Paul website for the project. The timeline is on track and outreach is ready to go forward with agreements in place. Commissioner Black explained the City has been divided into three sections with each Commissioner assigned to a section for delivering flyers to businesses by the August meeting. One purchase has already been made. The next step will be the call for artists.

A - 2 Mural Project

Chair Sonnek said he was very excited about the response from artists for the mural project. Information was sent to 34 muralists. The first project is planned to be the Silver Lake bathroom building which was already slated for repainting by the Public Works department. The City had planned to remove all shrubbery and replace it after painting so that will still happen. Artists were sought who would be willing to engage in community outreach and all who responded said they were willing to do that. Sonnek presented examples submitted by the three metro area artists who responded. Two or three other artists responded with interest but the time frame did not work for them. The designs have been presented to the Park and Rec Commission and they preferred the third design.

Commissioner Nadeau said she liked the outreach plan presented by the third artist, which would be to have birdhouses painted by community members and placed throughout the community, as well as the design, although she would be pleased to work with the other artists on other murals. Chair Sonnek said he also supported choosing the third artist for this project.

On motion by Commissioner Black, seconded by Commissioner Nadeau with Commissioner Yang abstaining (5-0-1), motion carried to select the design with the blue doors presented by Taylor Berman. Commissioner Yang did not vote but said she was not opposed to the selection.

Chair Sonnek suggested incorporating Berman's plan for a birdhouse outreach project into the Autumn Arts Festival as a second project with that artist using half of the budget for public art installation. He said this had not yet been discussed with the artist. There was discussion as to whether the birdhouses would be built by festivalgoers or pre-built by the artist. The goal would be to keep some of the birdhouses to hang in the parks throughout the City.

Commissioner wondered if the artist had other ideas for community engagement and expressed a concern that the Arts Festival would reach only a certain segment of the community.

The project would not need to be limited to the Autumn Arts Festival and that the artist had listed several community outreach ideas and said he was open to others. Chair Sonnek asked if there was a feeling that the Arts Festival is exclusionary in any way, noting that all parks are ADA accessible. Lack of interest in an Arts Festival would be a personal choice. It was suggested by Commissioners that it probably comes down to outreach and residents understanding what the Arts Festival is and what is available at the event.

On motion by Commissioner Yang, seconded by Commissioner Maher, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to earmark up to \$1,000 from the art installation budget line item to propose the birdhouse project to the selected mural artist.

A - 3 Utility Box Project

The two utility box wraps have been installed and Commissioners said they were very happy with the appearance and the quality. Sara Lang, Commission Secretary, reported they are still working with Roddy's Bar on image selection for the utility box outside of their building for the next phase of the project.

Commissioners discussed moving on to other utility boxes for the second phase and continuing to explore designs for the utility box by Roddy's for next year. Discussion included using multiple images or using a copy of the image inside Roddy's as the design for the boxes.

A - 4 Art Cart

Commissioner Black said the next event will also be rock painting at Music in the Park at Casey Lake Park on July 20. The Art Cart rock project at the car show was very popular. Rocks are either taken home by the painters or will be randomly placed in parks.

Commission Secretary Lang presented proposed Art Cart expenses put together by Commissioner Ritchie for future projects.

On motion by Commissioner Nadeau, seconded by Chair Sonnek, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to accept the Art Cart expenses as listed in the packet.

A - 4 Paint and Sip

Three possible dates for the next Paint and Sip were suggested depending on the availability of the location. Commission Secretary Lang will look into the dates and work with Commissioners Nadeau and Ritchie on coordination.

A - 5 Autumn Arts Festival

Commissioner Black said a layout for the event has been finalized that will not require a tent and stage for the band and clears the parking lot for parking. The Art Cart will be

at the Arts Festival and participants will have the opportunity to color a snowman picture. The idea is that the Commission would collect them and hang them in City Hall after the event. There have been 20 booths accepted so far and applications are being accepted through the end of July. The Commission is continuing to reach out to performers and is seeking suggestions. The main band has been selected, MT Pockets, and needs to have their contract formalized.

B. Culture in ACC Projects

Commissioner Yang said this topic came up at the last meeting with the suggestion that much of the Commission's focus has been on art and perhaps there should be more focus on culture. She said they discussed that as a Commission they are not culturally representative of the entire North St. Paul community and would there be a way to identify other cultural groups and engage the community.

Commissioner Black said she had looked into what other entities are doing and found there is a World Intercultural Day for Dialogue and Development in May. She suggested that could be put on the City's calendar.

Commissioner Yang suggested three questions: what does culture mean to us within our Arts and Culture Commission, what kind of community engagement would be appropriate and how to assess needs, realizing the City does not have dedicated staff in this area.

Commissioner Haeg Nguyen said that within the Commission they don't have a good way to make assumptions about who we are reaching and who we are not reaching without some numbers behind it.

Chair Sonnek recalled that the word culture was added to the title of the Commission and suggested reviewing the thought process when that was added.

Ms. Lang said the City wanted to make sure the Commission focuses on its scope, which according to its stated purpose would be to focus on culture in public art and the public art events put on by the Commission. She said hiring a DEI staff person in the City is beyond the scope of the Commission. It would be a bigger discussion that should be brought to the City Council.

Commissioner Black said the Commission needs to identify what it doesn't know about the events they are offering so future events can have different cultural focuses. She said she does not know who or what that resource would be to identify that.

The Commission discussed that food is art and cultural and a food night covering multiple cultures is a possibility.

Chair Sonnek said there is a feeling there is a gap right now in the culture part of the Commission and asked what it would look like to close that gap.

Commissioner Haeg Nguyen said this thought process should be considered on a project by project basis as each is planned. A food night would be wonderful but alone

would not address culture overall. For each project there should be an expectation to look at the project through a cultural lens.

Chair Sonnek said the Commission scope could be considered artist expression of the cultural diversity that exists in North St Paul. The Commission said determining what is the culture of North St Paul is a big question that needs to be considered.

Commissioner Black said she reviewed minutes from the fall of 2021 when culture was added to the title of the Commission. There was discussion at that time she encouraged everyone to review. Commission Secretary Lang will send out a copy of the minutes to the group after this meeting.

Lisa Wong, city council liaison, said the City is not doing its job unless it considers everyone in the community.

The Commission asked Ms. Lang to pull census data from the community.

Commissioner Goracki said culture can be defined as the achievements of a group of people and diversity could be used to determine the culture of North St. Paul.

Commissioner Black noted the Commission has several wonderful projects in the works and in 2024 could plan something that focuses on culture.

Chair Sonnek pointed out this is a young Commission still hitting its stride and because it hasn't done some things yet doesn't mean it's wrong. He said they are learning and growing and will continue to do better. He asked everyone on the Commission to continue to think about this. He said this is something the Commission could check back in on at each meeting – how to close the gap and asked the Commission to try to answer some of the questions presented by Commissioner Yang as we continue with discussion.

The Commission decided to form a subcommittee to discuss culture within the Arts and Culture Commission.

VIII. Old Business

There was no old business not already covered in project reports.

IX. Reports from Staff

Ms. Lang reported that a survey has been prepared with the help of Commissioner Nadeau and will be published beginning the next day asking about participating in Arts and Culture Commission activities and what people would like to see. The survey will be available in hard copy and online. She has submitted for a grant for the Art Cart but won't hear until sometime next year. This was also with the help of Commissioner Nadeau. The parade is back on and will be Thursday, Sept 14, two days before the Arts Festival. She suggested the Commission participate in the parade. Commissioners brainstormed ideas for a parade unit. The idea is to have all Commissions walk together in the parade.

X. Reports from Commissioners

Commissioner Yang asked about the upcoming Commission tour. It is moving forward but has not been scheduled. She put out information in an arts Facebook group seeking possible teachers for arts activities and needs to follow up with responses. She mentioned the St Paul Foundation has a grant opportunity opening for applications.

Commissioner Black reminded everyone to follow up with their Project Snowy assignments once they are received. The goal is to have at least one contact with each organization by the next meeting.

Chair Sonnek asked if the budget request the Commission prepared at the last meeting can still be amended. He asked to have finalizing that request as an agenda item on the next agenda. He suggested the Commission could consider increasing line items for hiring artists with a view toward diversity.

XI. Reports from Council Liaison

Council Member Wong reported the Lillie redevelopment project has had some changes and is moving forward. The dedicated commercial space in the building has been removed. She requested the EDA get involved in making sure businesses are part of the project. There was an amendment to the downtown parking regulations. The City was again approached by Ramsey County with an offer to join them in their Housing Redevelopment Authority and declined again this year. There will be an open house for the student-built housing. The City is negotiating a lease with Triple Crown Batting Cages. A house in the community that had partially collapsed has been demolished. She had been approached by a potential vendor for the Arts Festival wondering when vendors would be notified. Commissioners said the application period had been extended but those who had applied before the first deadline have been notified. The second deadline is July 31.

XII. Adjournment

On motion by Commissioner Maher, seconded by Commissioner Black, with all present voting aye (6-0), motion carried to adjourn.

Chair Sonnek adjourned the Arts & Culture meeting at 8:28 PM

The next regularly scheduled Arts & Culture Commission meeting is Aug 2, 2023