

**February 7, 2024
7:00 PM**

I. Call to Order

Chair Sonnek called the meeting to order at 7:49 PM.

II. Roll Call

Tom Sonnek, Chair
Carey Nadeau, Vice-Chair
Amanda Black, Commissioner
Lisa Ritchie, Commissioner
See Yang, Commissioner
Laura Strang, Commissioner
Sharon Clark-Williams, Commissioner
Lisa Wong, Council Member

Staff

Sara Lang, Commission Secretary

III. Adopt Agenda

On motion by Commissioner Nadeau, seconded by Commissioner Black, with all present voting aye (7-0), motion carried to approve the agenda as presented.

IV. Commission Business, Action Items & Recommendations

A. Facilitated Group Workshop on Culture in North St. Paul

The facilitated workshop began with an introduction from the leader, Jocelyn Rousey who is the Director of Customer Innovation at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. In her role, she leads an internal and special projects team to help foster new ideas.

The facilitated workshop included displays on the wall to discuss, including locations (United States, Minnesota/Twin Cities, North St. Paul/Arts and Culture Commission and You-the Commissioner), dates (2010-2019 and further back, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, today and the future) and questions. The main workshop question was “what has helped define the work of this Commission and led to where you are today?” Other questions on the board included “how has the Commission come to define culture as part of its work?” and “how have you come to define culture for yourself?”

The workshop began with warm up questions including brief introductions of each Commission member. The questions each Commissioner was asked was when they began serving on the Arts and Culture Commission and what is their favorite way that culture can be expressed?

Commissioner Black began serving in 2023 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through food.

Commissioner Strang began serving in 2024 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through music.

Commissioner Sonnek began serving in 2021 and his favorite way culture can be expressed is through food.

Commissioner Ritchie began serving in 2023 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through art.

Commissioner Nadeau began serving in 2021 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through music.

Commissioner Clark-Williams began serving in 2024 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through clothing and hair.

Commissioner Yang began serving in 2022 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through language.

Council Member Wong began serving in 2021 and her favorite way culture can be expressed is through food.

Presenter Rousey noted that her favorite way culture can be expressed is through food.

The next portion of the workshop was to work individually first, then as a group, adding events to the wall that have helped shape where we are today, at the national level, down to an individual level. The below table shows the events and designations made by the Commissioners.

	Innocence	Fear + Despair	Hesitancy + Pivots		Extremes		
	2010-2019 + further back	2020	2021	2022	2023	Today	Future
United States	-land/economic acknowledgment -Obama involved in pop culture -Hate sells	-Social Reckoning -George Floyd -Pandemic -Trump presidency -Separation of cultures -Brazen leadership in politics	-Global warming presence -Jan. 6 th -Asian hate	-Social reintegration -Inflation -Discrepancy in the middle class -Rules are written to exclude people -Roe overturned	-Ukraine/Russia conflict -Twitter turned into X -Taylor Swift Era's Tour	-Israel/Palestine conflict -No accountability in politics -Cancel culture -AI	
Minnesota/Twin Cities	-Prince died -Blue Rooster added to sculpture garden -Clean Water Land Legacy Amendment -Allianz Field opened (soccer) -influx of immigrants to MN	-Local unrest	-Different communication methods between people explored -Different forms of expression explored	-Suni Lee wins gold -Immigration of Afghans	-Historical MN legislative session -Working and middle classes acknowledged -Reproductive rights -St. Paul City Council are all women under 40 -Free lunches for students	-MN named state with least anxiety	-Paid family and medical leave
North St. Paul/Arts and Culture Commission	-Car Show -Small Town Character -Building a diverse community -Kenny the Snowman	-Downtown revitalization plan -Comparing to other cities	-Formation of the ACC -Project Snowy -Art Cart brought back	-Autumn Arts Festival	-Silver Lake mural -Utility box wrapping	-Defining culture workshop	-Community Engagement -People to come to the City and say they want their town to be like NSP
You (Commissioner)	-Luv's Ice Cream mural prospect		-Commissioners Sonnek, Nadeau and Council	-Commissioner Yang joined the ACC -Commissioner Strang moved to	-Commissioners Black and Ritchie joined the Commission	-Commissioners Clark-Williams and Strang joined the Commission	
	-Commissioner Black launched art business -Commissioner Yang became comfortable with self-identity		Member Wong joined the ACC	MN/mural lead her to the ACC -Commissioner Clark-Williams learned of the Commission	-Commissioner Yang traveled to South Korea and Japan		

When the Commission was asked what trends they see in the events they noted negative trends seem to come back (wars), insecurity after 9/11 and that watching the news is stressful.

Discussion questions:

1- What catches your attention?

The Commission noted that the items that catch their attention with the list include all of the negatives but despite the negatives we keep moving forward. They also noted that social media is a common theme for getting all of the news out, AI is becoming a big and potentially scary technology, weather issues are now unavoidable and the destruction of institutions seems to have become more common.

2- What title do we give to the full story?

The Commission decided that groundwork matters at the local level because it keeps us moving forward so they titled the story "The Power of Grassroots Action to Foster Inclusivity/Belonging." There was discussion on how art relates to culture and whether art for art's sake is enough. The Commission agreed that moving forward, the Commission can create art for art's sake and to allow for cultural expression and connection.

3- Highlight of exercise?

Highlights included that it is interesting to see all of these events as one large picture and that this was helpful to understand how fellow Commissioners view the world. It was also pointed out that all of the work done at the lower level of the list is in response to the negativity created in the upper part of the list.

4- What happens to your understanding of the Commission's work with this timeline?

There was some discussion on what the work of the Commission should represent moving forward. Ideas suggested that the art from the Commission can help take the public's mind off of the negativity in the world. Another idea was to be more responsive to larger events. A question of whether some responses to events would create controversy for the City was discussed and was split on responses. Some believed there is also controversy in art and others thought it would become a larger distraction.

It was noted that talking about the individual experiences of the Commissioners helps the Commission operate. A discussion of updating the Commission's mission statement occurred. An importance of creating a safe space to explore sense of self and inspire others through art was stressed.

Tension was identified on the initiatives of the ACC and it was decided that the next step would be to explore that more.

Commissioner Yang asked if there are concerns around the word "inclusivity."

Commissioners responded by noting that there should be a balance of art for art's sake and for cultural inclusivity.

Commissioner Nadeau noted that as a Commission we need to consider folks with disabilities when talking about inclusivity.

5- What's the takeaway?

Commissioners agreed that art can serve different purposes and that a discussion on what it means to be inclusive in art and if any of our current art not inclusive should occur. Other comments included that a lot of good work has been done but there is room for potential and that every Commissioner has great and unique thoughts to add to the discussion. This exercise allowed for a greater understanding of colleagues.

V. Adjournment

On motion by Commissioner Nadeau, seconded by Commissioner Ritchie, with all present

voting aye (7-0), motion carried to adjourn the meeting.

Chair Sonnek adjourned the special Arts and Culture meeting at 9:32 PM.