



**City of North St. Paul
Arts & Culture
Meeting Minutes**

**September 15, 2021
6:30PM**

The September 15, 2021 Arts & Culture Commission meeting was held at:
City Hall, 2400 Margaret Street, North Saint Paul

An audio recording was done for the meeting.

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

Chair Tom Sonnek - Here
Commissioner Julie Barrett – Attended via Zoom
Commissioner Carey Nadeau - Here
Commissioner Stacy Maher – Late
Commissioner Trudy Ohnsorg - Here
Council Representative Lisa Wong - Here

III. Adopt Agenda

On motion by Commissioner Ohnsborg, seconded by Commissioner Barrett with all present voting aye, motion carried to adopt the agenda.

IV. Approval of the Minutes

Approval of the 9/1/2021 Meeting Minutes with 2 proposed changes to what was written about the open meeting law; 1 – Open Meeting Law applies to a quorum which is 3 people for the Arts & Culture commission. 2 – The Open Meeting Law does not apply to social gatherings. On motion by Commissioner Ohnsborg, seconded by Commissioner Barrett with all present voting aye, motion carried to adopt the agenda.

V. Meeting Open to Public

There was no one from the public in attendance.

VI. Public Hearings

There were no public hearings.

VII. Commission Business, Action Items & Recommendations

- A. **Arts & Culture Commission Co-Chair nomination** – Tom opened it up for anyone that would like to nominate another person to be co-chair. Stacy nominated Trudy to be co-chair which was seconded by Carey Nadeau. Trudy was asked if this was something she is interested in. Trudy stated she would be happy to do this but need to let the commission know that she travels. She will be gone for 1 ½ months in December and January. Tom reassured her that someone else could step in the event that the Chair and Co-chair should be gone at the same time. Lisa Wong will look into what she was subject to for the council meeting while she was out of town so the commission will know what needs to be done in the future should someone be out of town and join by Zoom. Tom reiterated we have a motion that was seconded to nominate Trudy to be Co-chair of the Arts & Culture Commission with all present voting aye, Tom called on Julie Barrett individually as she was on zoom. Julie voted aye, motion carried to appoint Trudy as the Co-chair. Trudy abstained from voting. Stacy apologized for not asking Trudy ahead of time, but based on Trudy's past experience in River Falls, she thought it would be a fresh perspective to have.
- B. **Direction of the Commission_WHY** – Tom wanted to take this time on what they did at the September 1st meeting and create some shape around that. Tom asked Lisa Ritchie to share on the screen the spreadsheet he had prepared. The spreadsheet had been sent to commissioners via email so Julie should also be able to follow along. Tom started by stating that he didn't want anyone to be overwhelmed by the spreadsheet as it can come off somewhat dense. Tom's background is in lean management consulting and thinks this will help guide the commission as an "A3" is a common tool that gets everyone on the same page. You use one single document to tell your story. Tom gravitates to these as there is a story in each section of the spreadsheet. Tom categorized the work from last week, incorporating the information into the spreadsheet. He stated this is just a rough draft and nothing is set in stone. "Purpose Statement" we need to deliver on our purpose, we need to have the major inputs. Tom created a draft of the Purpose statement for the Arts & Culture commission: "To express the spirit of our community through the development of arts throughout the city." This was open for discussion. Tom stated if the purpose statement is their "WHY", what are the main things we need? Scrolling down on the page, the color-coded items are Tom's way of categorizing. Green coded is collaboration with other groups. Meeting with diverse community leaders. Engaging with the business community. Connecting with the council and commissions. Learning from other cities that have done this same thing. Blue color coding represents something to do with money. Purple represents art itself, Orange represents standards and process within how we do this. Tom summed up how each of these represent the necessary things to move forward and elaborated on breaking each item down even further. Tom's goal by the end of the meeting today is to get an idea of "what does the shape feel like and what needs to be added? Then determine priorities. The first things we do will probably be more of those foundational things that have to do with connecting with inter-government agencies, documenting our standards and processes and doing research. We are in this forming stage. Tom asked for feedback. Stacy asked how the color coding played into the chart. Tom stated the color coding on the side, doesn't that color coding doesn't play into the spreadsheet, it was just how Tom coded our notes to break it down into different groups. Taking it further stating the four groups, ended up in the four sections. "Four directional statements." Stacy asked if the color coding could be implemented into the directional statements. Tom stated you could but it doesn't signify anything. The next step on Tom's document is to rate the items; RED, YELLOW & GREEN, based on current state. RED (we are missing some key element), YELLOW (maybe some questions we aren't sure about) & GREEN (we are in good shape). This will help to focus and prioritize. Overtime, the spreadsheet can be used as a guiding document to help determine what things need to be focused on. Trudy suggested on the X4 Directional

Statement (Documented Standards & Processes) Commission Standards, we are maybe yellow, maybe into the green as we have our members, we have roles and meeting cadence. Tom stated this is just an example. Trudy, inquired about "Culture". Lisa Wong stated it was her idea to include "Culture" into the commission. Her perspective to highlight the culture that is here and evolving. It goes back to that identity that people find themselves in art. A way for culture to come through art and vice-versa to engage different cultures. Stacy asked Lisa if the statement "To express the spirit and culture of our community through the development of the arts throughout the city" be appropriate with what your intention was? Lisa said we are at the point that the commission is creating the direction and it does sound good. Tom stated one thing we cannot create is "Culture". Stacy stated, but you can express it. Tom agreed and stated that it is where you place the word makes sense. Trudy questioned if "Culture" should be singular? The commission spent some time discussing the Direction Purpose. Stacy questioned whether the word "Spirit" should be used. The group determined the 2nd definition in the dictionary did in fact fit and "Spirit" should be included. Lisa thought high-lighting the history spirit. She expects that something we will see in our art is the history of North Saint Paul. The group continued to discuss, referencing the dictionary to place definitions to the Direction Purpose. Trudy asked if we could take more time to think about this? Tom's reply was; "Sure". He then stated generally speaking, someone came up with this thing when we met before about expressing "who we are" which was really great! Tom hadn't thought of that. He just wanted nice things to look at. Tom really keyed in on that one and it's a great way to talk about this work and how we try to move forward in the community with it. It's not the Arts and Culture commission doing this, the Commission is making the visions and spirit of the community...of you come out. Kind of like Trudy's example of the River Falls sculpture that didn't truly represent the community. Trudy said it looked like a palm tree and it didn't belong. Tom stated that you are never going to cover the cultural heritage of everyone that lives in the city but what are some things that are emblematic of us given our history or make up of our current demographics. Lisa Ritchie stated she is thinking about the concept of uniting people rather than trying to separate different cultures. Recognizing everybody but creating unity. Stacy pushed back on that stating people will be united when all cultures are recognized. She thinks it is easy to think one identity does encompass all but in doing that you're excluding so many people because it doesn't. It is the reality of being human in today's society. She gets concerned about group think to buy into one identity being representative of everyone. She thinks there is too high of a potential of being exclusionary even if it's not intended. Lisa's concern is there would be divisive. Stacy stated that if we don't give everyone that opportunity to have that voice, she thinks that is when the divisiveness comes into play. Tom stated this is a great place for this conversation because art is divisive. Anything that is put up will be hated by some and loved by others. The nature of art is that it's a unique expression. Us doing this work is valuable and trying to get the voice of everybody. Everything that we do will have some artistic expression in the city will not be representative of the spirit and culture of everyone in the city. That's when we get into the 4th input, our processes, how do we select certain things, what is off limits and what's not. A lot of artistic people will say, nothing should be off limits, everything counts. Tom questioned, is that where we want to be? On the other side, it will be so safe with everything they do, it will be boring. Trudy stated that she had time to think... Inspire connection and community through the development of public art and cultural expression. Tom likes it. Stacy wants to challenge the group. She doesn't think our intentions are to create a divisiveness, ever. She doesn't think that is healthy to try to do that, however, each of us should embrace if someone does have a problem with whatever is done. And be excited about it because that is the spirit of art. In some ways, from a positive lens, welcome it. She would love to hear more, thank you...let's talk. Like taking that approach is hard and it's not often a road that is taken because it's easy to get defensive. Tom agreed, stating it would never be our intention to purposely be divisive. Stacy stated we should also be welcoming of criticism because that sparks a conversation that we could all benefit from. Lisa stated her

thought is to not really focus on that but rather focusing on what we can provide and this is what we have and this is who we are. We are all one. Trudy stated, differences that matter, and that help us bringing our true selves to this blend. Inspire connection and community (this is important to Trudy that those came first as to her, that is the goal. Creating art is secondary. It's the life. Inspire connection and community through the development of public art (she feels its important to make that distinction) and cultural expression. Lisa agreed and stated "we are public." Tom questioned if that could also encompass performing arts if we are to ever go that way? Trudy agreed that it could. Tom emphasized it to be available to the public. Trudy wanted to make the distinction of it not being in her back yard. Tom stated it is not specifically saying performing arts, but it's also not saying it doesn't include performing arts. Stacy recommended replacing "public" with accessible. Trudy thought on that is "Accessible Art is the art that nobody will object to, knowing that is not what Stacy meant. Tom state he liked Trudy's statement and the commission should think it over and decide in the next meeting what to use as the commission's directional purpose. Tom stated the commission is making great progress on determining the Direction of the Commission_WHY. He feels like there is substance to what has been discussed. He then moved the discussion to the inputs.

- C. **Direction of the Commission_Key Elements** – He asked if these seemed like the right inputs based on the elements that were discussed last time. Trudy stated she thinks they are. Stacy inquired if we were talking about the inputs under the first one or all of the inputs? Tom responded, "Broad Collaborative Representation, Steady Funding Sources, Artists & Ideas and Documented Standards & Processes." Stating "if the commission agrees these things make sense as the broad buckets, then we can go back to the document and complete the spreadsheet accordingly". He then explained at a high level, how the spreadsheet should be approached and completed. Trudy commented that she really liked the spreadsheet, indicating it is helpful. She also added that she also likes to break the quadrants down into 2x2 grids, determining who has a lot of influence vs. who we actually have a chance of getting to and see where they fall. Tom compared it to a 4 square for the whole collaborative representation and asked Trudy to confirm. Trudy stated it is like a stakeholder analysis. Tom thinks that is a good point but the things listed on the spreadsheet are "must-do's". The commission continued to review the spreadsheet and discuss it. Evaluating each item and updating the spreadsheet accordingly. Carey stated she had read thru the ordinances and learned that boards and commissions of the city are allowed to engage with a student member who is a North Saint Paul resident, who is a none voting resident. She would love to work towards this in the future. Tom made the association of this to the spreadsheet and how we can implement it. Trudy would also like to look at the other end of the spectrum, getting seniors involved and also questioned, "what are we missing?" Carey commented, social services organizations and non-profits. The school district has group based on identities. Tom summed it up as "How to build representation in diverse groups". Trudy said it would be good to be able to refer to a census. Tom added the Comprehensive Plan may also contain some information. Stacy indicated LBGTI is a very encompassing group of individuals and inquired if they have representation in our city? She would like to say "yes" but doesn't know as she doesn't see any. Possibly, our community members are traveling to south Minneapolis or places that have a larger culture. But doesn't mean that's not important. Tom instructed Lisa to update the spreadsheet with a RED code as we need more info in this area. Trudy asked if there is a North St. Paul Rotary? Tom asked if the Rotary Club is a business-oriented organization and would then fall under "Business Community" on the spreadsheet. Lisa Wong gave a high overview of what the Rotary Club is and does. Lisa Ritchie continued to update the spreadsheet as the commission gave their input on the Directional Inputs for x1 Directional Statement: Broad Collaborative Representation. Tom asked if there are any other groups or representation that we should be connecting with? Trudy stated "Higher Education" such as Century College, 916 etc. The group continued to review, discuss and update the Broad Collaborative Representation.

Tom's stated his intention in this meeting is to get a couple of action items on what we can get started on. Lisa Wong stated she wanted to add something to the funding and said the Council is currently negotiating right now and some money has been put aside for the Arts & Culture Commission. The commission continued to review Study Funding Sources and also discussed the funding from the city. The commission took interest in the idea of creating art that would create "buzz". Trudy suggested finding the stakeholders that would support the Arts & Culture commission and creating art of interest to them that also represents the city...such as "Snowmen". Tom mentioned he and Terry Furlong had previously started researching the artist who created the "Peanuts" statues in St. Paul to do "Snowmen" statues.

Stacy stated we could create Snowmen to represent our different diversity groups if we had the money to do so. Tom said if the city is willing to participate in the funding, thought a mural would create buzz quickly. Lisa Wong said the money coming to the Arts & Culture Commission will be partially coming from the Park Fund. The city is working on a way finding plan (signage throughout the city including parks) and this would be a good collaboration between the commissions. Stacy suggested the sponsors would obtain the "Snowmen for x amount of time and then are redistributed to the parks for their final home. Or have the option to buy the Snowmen art. Tom referenced the spreadsheet and showed how this conversation incorporated into the spreadsheet and how the commission can execute upon it. Tom spoke of the "Local Government Aid" (LGA) funding that the city gets every year. Trudy suggested using a portion of those funds to be used for the Art in the Parks. It was suggested to discuss the funding with the finance director when the time is appropriate.

Tom reflected back to the spreadsheet and stated there may be a way to have the downtown businesses contribute to funding as the arts will drive traffic downtown. Trudy spoke of an event where the public receives a punch card and with each retail location visited, their card is punched and then eligible for prizes. The conversation then switched back to the funding from the city and made some suggestions on what options we may have for public donations. Moving on to Artists & Ideas in the spreadsheet, Stacy summed up the previous conversation of "Snowmen" and "Murals". Tom said the commission needs to get down into our processes and standards and give recommendations on the murals and if the commission is in full support they could recommend to the council, noting that the council could still say no.

Trudy stated "Our recommendation would be we proceed with the development of these relationships, finding the artists to compete and set standards around the design. Stacy asked if the council would pick the design and artist, but Tom said it most likely be the Arts & Culture commissions responsibility to set the parameters around requirements. We would need to be sure we had all of the boxes checked before proceeding. First, we need to establish what those requirements are. There was a short discussion on how sign ordinances would come into play with murals and acknowledged all murals would need to be well planned out. Stacy mentioned doing a public call not only for artists, but also for businesses that may want to have a mural. Trudy suggested getting the Arts & Culture Commission established before putting the call out to the businesses. In discussing murals in the city, Stacy suggested having in the contract with the artist an extended period of time for maintaining the murals. Tom thinks these are all good ideas and would like to consult with other cities that have done murals in the past. In addition to what other cities are doing or have done, getting involved with our internal commissions is a good idea. Tom brought up the planning commission meeting tomorrow and inquired about the agenda, wondering if that meeting would be appropriate to introduce the Arts & Culture Commission. He stated we should put on our next agenda, setting dates for the Arts & Culture Commission to attend a Planning Commission meeting, Parks & Recreation meeting and Council meeting to introduce themselves to become more visible. Also, defining what our "Home Run" ideas are. Lisa Wong mentioned she is going to present "Park-lets" to the planning commission which creates green space – shared space. This is also something the Arts & Culture could consider.

VIII. Reports from Staff

Lisa Ritchie shared information on approval for funding for attending the open meeting webinar through the League of Minnesota Cities but the commission stated the information that had been forwarded was suffice. Carey Nadeau was able to locate in the North St Paul ordinances, the information around the roles, rules and regulations for the commission (chapter 32.75). Lisa stated she had included the resolution for the Schifsky mural in the packet for reference. She also does not have a collaboration tool at this point but are working to incorporate one in the future. Trudy stated that as homework for herself, she would research processes and procedures of what other cities have done for creating murals. Stacy stated she would also get the information from Roseville of their processes and procedure in creating their flower sculpture program. Lisa Ritchie suggested collaborating with the Metro Arts Council and Carey suggested adding the "North St Paul Green Committee". Tom added both of these committees to the spreadsheet.

IX. Reports from Commissioners

- X. Tom confirmed Julie was still in attendance and she was but she doesn't have anything to mention. Tom called on each commissioner and none had anything to report.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Sonnek entertain a motion to adjourn. Moved by commissioner Maher, seconded by Commissioner Ohnsorg, with all present voting aye, motion carried to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM