

Draft

Meeting Minutes

COCA Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, January 18, 2024

4:00 p.m.

Present: Ayne Markos, Beth Keating, Commissioner Brian Welch, Brinda Pamulapati, Carol Hill, Dan Taylor, Haiqiong Deng, Kathy Maiorana, Kim Bryant, Neil Mooney, Rachelle McClure, Reenee Williams,

Remote: Kristen Summers

Absent: Amanda Clements (ex), Hadley Peterson (ex), E. Marie Sissle

Liaisons present: Jennifer Wright

Liaisons absent: Donmetrie Clark, Heather, Kim Harding, Michelle Personette,

Staff Present: Summer Callahan, Sahara Lyon, Samantha Sumler, Sam Joslin, Nick Pavlovik

Staff Remote: Kathleen Spehar

Members of the public: Janet Smith, Tallahassee Community Chorus; Macclain Hardin-Kurza, Tallahassee Community Chorus; Lolita Brawner, USA Dance

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

Macclain Hardin of Tallahassee Community Chorus (TCC) presented to the COCA Board. Macclain stated that TCC became a nonprofit in 1987 and that she started in 1989. Macclain stated that TCC has a long relationship with the Florida State University (FSU) College of Music and that their current Artistic Director (Dr. Michael Hanawalt) is also the Associate Professor of Choral Conducting and Music Education at FSU. Macclain stated that TCC has three performances in the fall, major classical works in the spring and the Unity Concert at the end of January; the 2024 Unity Concert will celebrate Tallahassee's Bicentennial and include a partnership with Theater with a Mission. Macclain stated the 2024 Unity Concert will also premiere a new commission by local composer Nico Gutierrez and poet Terry Kion. Macclain stated that TCC does not require auditions and has singers from all over the community (Big Bend area, South Georgia, Alabama, Apalachicola) and all ages. Macclain stated TCC allows graduate choral conducting students from FSU to serve as assistant conductors. Macclain stated that TCC partners with FSU College of Music to provide class credit under certain circumstances. Macclain stated that TCC has sung at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, China, Prague, France, Italy, the Vatican, Portugal and is currently planning a trip to Scotland in 2025.

Lolita Brawner of USA Dance presented to the COCA Board. Lolita stated that USA Dance is a national organization and that she is the President of 610, the local chapter. Lolita stated that USA Dance has 120 chapters, including one in Puerto Rico and Hawaii, and 15 chapters in Florida. Lolita stated that each chapter represents ballroom and Latin dance, both competitive and social/recreational, and all ages. Lolita shared that the Tallahassee chapter of USA Dance was established in 1999 and participates in an event at the Tallahassee Senior Center every third Saturday. Lolita confirmed that residents come from Dothan, Cairo, Bainbridge, Valdosta,

Thomasville, Panama City, Live Oak, Perry, Crawfordville, Shellpoint and more. Lolita shared that June 7-9, USA Dance will be hosting the 4th Annual Florida Sunshine Dance Challenge, which is a ballroom dance competition; Lolita stated that tourists come from Washington, Illinois, New York, Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, California, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and other Florida cities to attend. Lolita continued, and stated that this event involves a reception, a dinner, social dancing and an intensive day of group lessons and private coaching in addition to the competition. Lolita thanked the COCA Board for their grant support.

I. CONSENT AGENDA

Kathy motioned to approve the consent agenda. Rachelle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. OLD BUSINESS

a. COCA NEA Grant Funds

Summer stated that COCA received \$25,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts for regranting purposes. She shared that while a possible funding solution for the City Grants is currently being explored with Leon County, COCA staff chose to disperse these funds to the three 2024 applicants who did not receive Tourist Development Tax funds. Summer confirmed that those grantees are Florida Fiddlers Association, Cool Breeze and Pas de Vie. Summer stated that the Executive Committee voted to distribute the funds to these grantees at the December Executive Committee meeting. Two of those contracts were signed and paid and the third is waiting on a signature. Reenee asked if there were any funds left over; Summer answered that there were not and that the three grantees had their awards reduced by 10% to meet the restrictions of this round's funding pool.

III. NEW BUSINESS

a. COCA FY23 audit presentation- John M. Grayson, CPA, MBA Grayson Accounting & Consulting, P.A.

Dan introduced the auditor, John Grayson, and stated that the audit was important for the Board to review. John Grayson presented COCA's annual audit and commended Nick Pavlovic, COCA's business manager on his "excellent books and records," on his work going to a paperless system and his quick response time. John stated that COCA had a very smooth audit. John confirmed that the audit was performed with general accepted auditing standards and government auditing standards. John stated that the audit had no deficiencies and that everything looked good. Rachelle stated that, as Treasurer, she also reviewed the audit. Rachelle stated that COCA grants continue to increase; that the City of Tallahassee asked COCA to diversify their funding and that staff continues to do that. Rachelle stated that with a staff increase and staff turnover, location change and a new auditor, managerial expenses stayed relatively flat even in an extreme inflationary environment. Rachelle commended and thanked the COCA staff for their fiduciary responsibility. Rachelle asked when the City last increased their

funding, including adjusting for inflation; Dan answered that he believed this last happened in 2010.

Rachelle moved to approve the 2023 audit. Ayne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. ORAL REPORTS

a. COCA Connects Subcommittee Reports

Sahara delivered the Membership Subcommittee report. Sahara stated that COCA closed the Giving Tuesday campaign in 2023 and that the membership goal (of 40) was not reached. In addition, the financial goal was also not reached. Sahara stated that COCA received 5 new members and 21 renewals. Sahara stated that the Giving Tuesday had a renewal strategy called “Level Up,” where members who renewed by the end of 2023 could be bumped up to the next membership tier (excluding business memberships). Sahara stated that the goal was to target the 85 members whose membership had lapsed during 2023, but that only one of those individuals renewed. Sahara stated that the staff is reviewing the processes for future campaigns. Sahara stated that COCA membership currently includes 186 individuals, 50 households and 42 groups. Dan thanked Sahara for her work and stated that goals are aspirational and not always reached, but added that membership was higher than the same period in 2022. Sahara stated that while set goals were not met, the *Build to 300* campaign was successful and that the current COCA membership (299) was the highest in COCA’s history. Sahara stated that COCA is looking into other possible campaigns, such as 400 for COCA’s 40th anniversary. Neil asked if lapsed members receive any reminders to renew; Sahara answered that they receive several over the following month and year. Reenee asked if there was click rate data associated with the emails; Sahara answered that there is. Reenee asked about the membership levels; Sahara answered that the lowest membership tier is “Student” for \$25, then “Individual” for \$40, and the highest is “Producer” for \$1,000. Reenee suggested those tiers or costs be made clearer; Sahara responded that these suggestions can be incorporated into future membership drives.

Samantha stated that for the “Level Up” campaign, 73 emails were sent, 39 emails were opened and 5 emails were clicked (59% open rate, 8% click rate). Samantha stated that the interns at Sachs Media conducted a survey on COCA’s membership; this survey went out to 952 Leon County residents, of whom 12% are current COCA members, 8% are former COCA members, 38% are newsletter subscribers only and 41% have no relation to COCA. Samantha stated that 77% of the survey respondents were very satisfied with the arts and culture opportunities and 71% have heard of the website. Samantha stated that when asked why COCA members chose to join, 48% identify as an artist, 20% work with a nonprofit or cultural organization and 36% wish to support arts in the community. Samantha stated that 38% of respondents heard of COCA via word of mouth, followed by newsletters, social media, website, current or former member or by print. Samantha stated that survey respondents gave the following reasons for not wanting to become COCA members: 48% already support other or specific nonprofits, 30% found no tangible benefit and 22% felt it was too expensive. Samantha stated that male respondents and respondents under 35 were more likely to say they did not see a tangible benefit and that

membership was too expensive. Samantha stated that the Sachs interns found that respondents would be more likely to become members for: members-only events, meet and greets with artists, priority listings, special funding or educational resources, reduced entry fees or workspace at DOMI Station. Samantha stated that the Sachs interns provided other suggestions to improve membership: simplifying the website, advertising COCA as an organization, using Instagram reels to promote COCA, having shorter and more impactful captions on social media posts, highlighting tangible benefits, posting interactive stories and videos and publicly support other causes and nonprofits. Dan thanked Samantha and asked if the membership subcommittee will review these results; Kathy answered that they are.

Summer delivered the Grants Subcommittee report. Summer stated that in FY23, COCA gave out 100 grants; that is the highest number of grants given out in a single year and the highest percentage of BIPOC organizations in COCA's history. Summer stated that staff presented the results from the FY24 applicant survey, asking what people thought about the grant processes and procedures, and presented a draft of the FY25 guidelines and applications. Summer stated that the grant programs have undergone a lot of change in the last couple of years and that the main goal is stabilization, therefore the changes to the guidelines and application are not structural. Summer shared that the grants subcommittee approved the changes and that the guidelines and application have been provided to the County for a courtesy review. Summer stated that the County was asked to provide their feedback at the end of January.

Brinda provided the DEI Subcommittee report. Brinda stated that the DEI subcommittee moved to continue with last year's plan, prioritizing visibility, venues, grants, access and services. Brinda stated that the first action of the subcommittee is *Creating Spaces*, visiting and spotlighting underinvested and underrepresented spaces. Brinda asked for suggestions or brainstorming ideas. Brinda stated that COCA should create or update an existing database to track underrepresented venues that could host *Creating Spaces* discussions.

b. Liaisons

Jennifer Wright of Opening Nights delivered her liaison report. Jennifer stated that Opening Nights is entering the busy season, including Delirium Musicum, Neil Degross Tyson, Sons of Serendip, the Simon & Garfunkel Story, Vienna Boy Choir, Complexions Contemporary Ballet and more. Jennifer stated that the Department of Art History is holding an exhibition, "Land and Language in Contemporary Irish Art," which will be free to the public. Jennifer stated that the Museum of Fine Arts will present its second annual *Roaming Art and Wine Tour*. Jennifer stated that the School of Theater will hold Natasha Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812.

c. Staff Reports

Sahara Lyon, Arts Education Manager

Sahara stated that the Winterfest opening reception was held December 1, 2023, and that it was incredibly successful, with 250-300 attendees. Sahara stated that two student ensembles (Buck Lake Elementary School and Griffin Middle School) performed. Sahara stated that 11 awards were given out and that 10 of those students were able to attend. Sahara stated that

teachers have been thanked and received a stipend of \$142, thanks to a grant from the DAC/NEA. Sahara stated that her next event of Chalk Walk, on Wednesday January 24 at the Capitol. Sahara stated that she and Sam will be hosting two shared interns (as opposed to one Arts Education intern and one Public Art intern). Sahara stated that she attended the primary and secondary art teacher meetings and has three class tours scheduled. Reenee asked which high schools are involved; Sahara answered that Lincoln, Chiles, Richards, Godby, Maclay, SAIL and North Florida Christian School were in attendance, but Leon will not participate due to a pre-scheduled field trip. Reenee asked how students participate; Sahara answered that participating teachers choose student groups.

Sam Joslin, Public Arts Manager

Sam stated that she held the Winterfest opening reception with Sahara. Sam stated that she continues to work with the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) on the Mural Matchmaking Pilot Program and that the first phase was launched today; for this phase, the CRA is providing \$25,000 to manage the program, with the possibility for more funding in coming years. Sam stated that she is working with the Division of Arts and Culture (DAC) to activate their Innovation Gallery, located in the R.A. Gray Building. Sam stated that the next Art in Public Places exhibition schedule will begin at the end of January for the Artport gallery and mid-February for City Hall. Sam stated that the first artist to be featured in the Artport is Claire Osborne, a local painter, whose opening reception will be Thursday, January 25 from 5 to 7 p.m. Sam stated that Creative Tallahassee applications are currently open and that the exhibition is scheduled for April 5, 2024, at City Hall. Sam stated that Creative Tallahassee has a Bicentennial theme. Sam stated that COCA received a South Arts Cross-Sector Impact Project Extension Grant for \$10,000 to create more banners in the Bond neighborhood; Sam is working with the City of Tallahassee, Parks and Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs to execute that project. Sam stated that she will be working with Sahara on Chalk Walk.

Summer Callahan, Grants Manager

Summer stated that in addition to the NEA distribution and the Grants subcommittee, all but two grantees across all three grant programs (Cultural Grant, Cultural Tourism Marketing Grant, NEA-funded City Grant) have returned their signed contracts and received their funds. Summer stated that she will be holding a workshop, "Revenue, Relevancy, Partnerships" with Jan Rodusky of Venn There Grants; this workshop will have in-person and virtual options and will cover diversifying funding for nonprofits. Summer stated that she is researching grant opportunities for COCA to apply to in 2025. Summer stated that she will participate in Arts Advocacy Day at the Capitol.

Samantha Sumler, Marketing & Communications Manager

Samantha stated that COCA recently launched the Bicentennial-focused newsletter "Artistic Ambition." Samantha stated the newsletter has a 45% open rate. Samantha stated that COCA will publish one article per month in the Tallahassee Democrat, highlighting an artist or organization who encapsulates "artistic ambition." Samantha stated that the January article highlighted Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra's upcoming "200 Years" concert. Samantha stated that between February 22 and March 3, they will be hosting a workshop series covering posting

Classifieds, artist profiles and more on the COCA website. Samantha stated that registration for the workshop series will open in the next week and will be posted to social media. Samantha stated that during the break, COCA post a social media campaign titled “23 Days of Artistry,” highlighting COCA highlights from 2023 and asking viewers to take action for arts advocacy. Samantha stated that they will make a Classified to find a Black artist to feature for February’s *Artist Inspire*. Samantha stated that they are attempting to streamline the marketing options for purchase on the COCA website and will be meeting with Artsopolis to discuss these changes.

Nick Pavlovik, Business Manager

Nick stated that the audit is complete. Nick stated that over 67 payments to grantees were distributed, approximately \$1.3 million. Nick stated that organizations with a grant less than \$10,000 (including all Cultural Tourism Marketing Grants) receive one payment, but that the majority of grantees will receive a second payment contingent on their Mid-year Report due in May. Nick stated that COCA made 43 payments for the Winterfest teachers. Nick stated that COCA is working on a grant with the Division of Arts and Culture for the Black History Month Arts and Culture Festival; Nick is working on contracts for the performers of that festival. Nick stated that Kathleen will discuss the City contract that should be completed by the end of the month. Nick stated that Tourist Development Tax revenue increased 14% from last quarter. Nick stated that COCA currently has more than \$70,000 from the previous quarter and that this is positive news for next year’s grant cycle; Nick stated that he anticipates regranting nearly \$2 million. Nick encouraged the Board to read the audit and direct any questions to John or himself.

d. Executive Director

Kathleen started by thanking the staff and Board for their work & support. Kathleen stated that the audit proves COCA’s ongoing excellent stewardship of funds. She shared she was in Orlando during the *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6* rollout and worked with COCA’s national partners, some of whom will be traveling to Tallahassee for Arts Advocacy Day. Kathleen stated that full funding for all 864 DAC programs and projects would cost \$77,343,303, and that Leon County has 33 recommended grants totaling \$2,141,119. Kathleen asked the Board to attend the Arts Advocacy events, including a presentation at Challenger Learning Center and the rally at the 22nd floor of the Senate building. Kathleen stated that funding through the DAC has not been consistent but that there are enough state resources to support these grants. Kathleen stated that grantees, Board members and arts and culture advocates are being asked to meet with legislators, send emails, write letters and call.

Kathleen then shared community partnership updates. COCA participated in the Bicentennial Day at the Capitol on January 11. Kathleen stated that COCA is working with Independence Landing, who is interested in opening a gallery space, and SoMo Walls, since artist calls for SoMo Walls should be published this year. Kathleen stated that COCA has been invited to participate in a College of Music (COM) Symposium at the end of February. Kathleen stated that the Bicentennial marketing rollout will be held tonight at Mission San Luis. Kathleen stated that Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra is offering discounted tickets (\$20 with the code Tally200) for their *Portraits of America* Bicentennial Concert. Kathleen stated that Javacya Arts Conservatory

will hold a virtual concert featuring violinist Amadi Azikiwe. Kathleen confirmed that COCA will participate in the Black History Festival on February 9 alongside the Division of Arts and Culture (DCA). Kathleen then moved to other news, congratulating Renee on winning the Ambassador of the Year Award from the Tallahassee chamber of Commerce and Dan on his recent exhibit at LeMoyne Arts.

e. Chair

Dan announced an upcoming show at LeMoyne Arts, to be featured until February 24. Dan stated that LeMoyne will also participate in the Chain of Parks Artist Reveal that evening. Dan stated that although all Board positions are currently filled, he encouraged current Board members to identify possible applicants.

V. Announcements

Carol stated that Essential Theatre Association (ETA) at FAMU will be holding two shows in the upcoming 60 days: *Pipeline*, from January 31 through February 4; *The Wiz*, from February 28 through March 3.

Samantha shared that a Social Media 101 training for the Board will be held before the next Board meeting and asked for the Board to think about any topics they'd like covered.

VI. The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Summer Callahan and Sahara Lyon