



Draft

## Meeting Minutes

COCA Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, March 21, 2024

4:00pm

Present: Ayne Markos, Beth Keating, Brinda Pamulapati, Dan Taylor, E. Marie Sissle, Hadley Peterson, Haiqiong Dang, Kathy Maoirana, Kim Bryant, Kristen Summers, Rachelle McClure

Virtual: Donmetrie Clark, Reenee Williams

Staff: Kathleen Spehar, Summer Callahan, Sam Joslin, Samantha Lyon, Nick Pavlovik, Samantha Sumler

Members of the Public Virtual: DeSean Stokes, Heather Simpson, Kerri Post, Megan Lausch, Miriam Chasteen, Paul Fitzgerald

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

### I. COCA Grantee Presentations (Part I)

Janet Pichard of the Tallahassee Ballet presented to the COCA Board. Janet stated that Tallahassee Ballet's current season included: "Evening of Music and Dance" at Opperman Music Hall, which is performed in partnership with the FSU School of Music; the Nutcracker; "Intimate," a new and immersive performance; and Sleeping Beauty. Janet stated that the Tallahassee Ballet also performs community outreach, school performances, the *Dance Chance* program and mini performances. Janet stated that the Tallahassee Ballet collaborates with libraries, Chain of Parks and summer camps and that Tallahassee Ballet funding is derived from ticketing, profits from their ballet school, donations and grants. Janet thanked the COCA Board for their support. Janet stated that Tallahassee Ballet started as a community ballet fifty years ago, but currently has both paid and community dancers and a youth company. Janet stated that the Ballet's goal is to become a fully professional company with healthcare and five-day work weeks, but currently dancers supplement their income through second jobs.

Ashley Hunter of Goodwood Museum and Gardens presented to the COCA Board. Ashley stated that Goodwood saw a 17.2% increase in visitors (approximately 67,000) between January 2022 and January 2023. Ashley stated that many of those visits were associated with ongoing museum programs focusing on the lives of the enslaved and daily museum house tours, but that many visits were associated with COCA-supported events, including Free Family Fun Days, theater rehearsals and performances. Ashley stated that Goodwood aims to be a community gathering space and offers various events, such as book signings, spring plant sales, "Pig & Pearl" preservation gala and ice cream socials. Ashley stated that upcoming events include live music events and a game night.

The remaining presenter, Alan Hanstein from Challenger Learning Center, was not available at this time. The Board agreed to proceed with the consent agenda and allow Alan to present later in the meeting.

### II. CONSENT AGENDA

Dan asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Rachelle stated that the meeting minutes for the February 15 COCA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes included a typo towards the end of the first page.

Rachelle motioned to approve the consent agenda with that minor change. Kathy seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS

a. COCA Financial overview

Nick presented the COCA financial overview through February 29. Nick stated that when the budget is crafted, only confirmed grants are included, but that additional grants were confirmed after that time. Nick stated that membership fees are slightly below the budgeted amount, but are expected to increase in the coming months. Nick stated that advertising revenue is continually trending higher and contributions have increased due to a large contribution from Duke Energy. Nick stated that all of COCA's grants have been executed and that COCA gave out \$1.3 million dollars in the FY24 fiscal year. Nick stated that COCA has seen a 14% increase in TDT tax collection (approximately \$882,000) and anticipates having \$2 million available for the TDT-funded grant programs in FY25.

Nick stated that COCA spends conservatively and the only noticeable deviation from that trend is "professional servicing," (for example, the audit). Ayne complimented Nick on the financials. Kathleen stated that COCA is an excellent steward of these funds.

Nick presented the balance sheet. Nick stated that COCA is highly liquid and has approximately \$2.4 million in the bank, \$660k of which are reserved for grant payouts. Nick stated that there is a second payment cycle opening in May when most of these funds will be distributed. Nick stated that COCA is waiting on a fourth payment from the Division of Arts and Culture, which is complicated by the different fiscal years used by COCA and the State of Florida. Nick pointed out that of the anticipated \$2 million from TDT-collections, \$1.3 million has already been distributed to COCA for an average of \$520,000 per fiscal quarter. Nick stated that in March 2023, the Central Reserve raised the interest rate to fight inflation, which also raised the interest rate on funds in COCA's savings accounts; Nick stated that this increase is providing approximately \$80,000 in extra revenue, which will be used for COCA grants (not general operating). Rachelle asked if interest on TDT-collections was subject to TDT-restrictions, Kathleen answered that it is.

Beth motioned to approve the financials. Ayne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Nick presented COCA's financial management processes. Nick stated that ten years ago, COCA established a fiscal policy to ensure proper handling of finances. Nick stated that purchases now require pre-approval and that documents are reviewed and reconciled by multiple individuals to ensure accountability and internal controls. Nick stated that a separation of duties is in place to prevent one person from handling multiple aspects of a financial transaction. Nick stated that for purchases above \$5,000, dual signatures are required and that the board must be involved for approving purchases above \$10,000. Nick stated that the budget creation process involves analyzing economic trends, future events and approved contracts, while expenses are anticipated based on funding sources, deliverables and duties. Nick stated that as a non-profit, COCA must have at least 80% of its budget be program-related to demonstrate effective use of funds. Nick stated that COCA uses 91% of its budget on program-related expenses, as determined by COCA's recent audit.

Rachelle stated that, as the Treasurer, she is concerned about the lack of cost-of-living adjustments in COCA's City and County contracts over the past ten years. Rachelle emphasized the importance of the arts in economic development and the significant contribution it brings in terms of tourism. Rachelle suggested the Board officially request cost of living adjustments in the contract, including drafting a letter to the City and County to

justify this increase. Rachelle stated that it is standard practice for contracts to be adjusted based on the customer price index and that if the current contracts are up for renewal, this is an opportune time to request the adjustments.

Reenee asked if COCA could receive funding from the CRA's Strategic Investment plan. Dan stated that historically this has not been an option. Reenee stated that there will be a public meeting on April 17 to discuss the use of these funds. Kathleen confirmed COCA will attend that meeting, and cautioned this may not be an option because COCA already receives an allotment from the CRA for its new Mural Makeover program.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS

Summer presented the changes to the FY25 Grant Guidelines and application process. Summer stated that in November, a survey was emailed to FY23 and FY24 grantees, included in the newsletter and posted to social media. Summer summarized the feedback: that grantees liked having three applications included in one document; that grantees liked the Submittable platform but were confused about certain technical points; that some grantees were confused by grant processes. Summer stated that because the grant processes have changed so much in the last couple years, the goal for FY25 is to stabilize and refine the grant process. Summer stated that the Grants Sub-committee met twice and that COCA staff met with the Leon County Division of Tourism to review and discuss the guidelines. Summer then summarized the major changes to the grants program. Based on financial analysis, funding levels were revised and increased; Leon County asked for an additional week to verify the Cultural Grant and Cultural Tourism Marketing Grants for tourism eligibility, so the application will open a week earlier (on April 24) to ensure that Leon County staff has 12 working days to complete their verification; and *Local Community Grant* (previously referred to as the *Cultural Grant - Community*) will have a separate panel, though all three grants will still share a single application. Summer explained the reason for this change: two years ago, the funding source and amount for the *Local Community Grant* was not confirmed until January, which puts applications to that category in "limbo" between the panel in August and January. Summer stated that moving the *Local Community Grant* panel to January will allow local grantees the same surety as the TDT-funded grantees. Dan asked if the amount of the *Local Community Grant* has also increased; Summer answered the *Local Community Grant* is still capped at \$10,000. Ayne asked if the application format had been split into pages. Summer answer that it was.

Rachelle motioned to approve the changes to the guidelines and application, while allowing the staff to make minor changes as needed. Hadley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### V. ORAL REPORTS

##### a. COCA Connects FY24 Subcommittees

Sahara delivered the Membership Sub-committee update. Sahara stated that COCA plans to grow their membership during the spring and summer. Sahara stated that the findings from the Sachs media survey indicated that the COCA staff and board should continue to recruit new members, develop new membership benefits, share social media posts and seek out business and organizational partnerships. Sahara stated that the goal for this fiscal year is to maintain 300 members and build towards 400 members for COCA's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sahara stated that COCA staff has improved their membership processes on the website and plan to partner with videographers to create more video content for social media. Sahara stated that in March, COCA staff will continue to send reminder emails to lapsed memberships as they transition from the NEON system to the TAG system. Sahara asked Board members to propose new member programs and events.

Sahara stated that COCA is considering a members-only tour or happy hour and an in-person membership campaign during Tallahassee’s festival season. Sahara stated that from May to July, COCA will have our summer internship and membership campaign, which will be aimed at businesses. Sahara asked the Board members to each recruit one new business to become a COCA member—not just arts businesses but “arts-friendly” businesses as well. Sahara stated that the Membership sub-committee discussed a lawn sign and discussed the possibility of reducing the number of membership tiers. Brinda suggested a membership tier for “art lovers,” which confers discounted tickets to arts events; Sahara stated that the Membership Sub-committee is exploring these options.

Brinda delivered the DEI Sub-Committee update. Brinda stated that the DEI Sub-committee has discussed reviving the COCA’s Creating Spaces initiative and that the group identified Anderson Brickler Gallery as the next Creating Spaces location; this event will include a panel based on the current exhibit, *Reflection and Reckoning: Brown vs Board of Education at 70*. Brinda stated that this panel will include the gallery owner Dr. Celeste Hart and two artists from the exhibition. This event is scheduled for May 13 and the next DEI Sub-committee meeting is scheduled for March 25.

Kathleen stated that Amenda Clements, the chair of the Grants Sub-committee, was ill, but that Summer’s earlier presentation covered the most recent Grants Sub-committee meeting updates.

#### VI. COCA Grantee Presentations (Part II)

Alan Hanstein from Challenger Learning Center presented to the COCA Board. Alan discussed the updates to the planetarium and upcoming programs, including the documentary “Lasting Impressions in IMAX,” which animates impressionist art in 3D. Alan stated that the Center’s IMAX theater also shows new films, such as “Dune 2”, and collaborates with Southern Shakespeare Theater. Alan stated that the Center will also host the BlindCAN Film Festival, featuring visually-impaired filmmakers. Alan stated that the Center offers free math tutoring for K-12 students every Thursday and free movies through the Holocaust Education Resource Council. Alan stated that the Center needs volunteers for the math tutoring program. Alan stated that thanks to COCA, the Center is updating their outdated Florida map to a bright projector and screen to show dynamic content. Reenee congratulated Alan on his work at the Challenger.

#### VII. ORAL REPORTS

##### b. Liaisons

Donmetrie Clark delivered the liaison report for Tallahassee State College (formerly Tallahassee Community College). Donmetrie stated that TSC will host the “Legally Blonde” musical between April 4 and April 14.

Dan stated that the former liaison to FSU’s Opening Nights, Jennifer Wright, has left that role. Dan thanked her for her service.

##### c. Chair

Dan and Kathleen discussed board seats. Kathleen stated COCA has three Board seats seeking renewal and one Board seat requiring a new candidate. She asked the Board to have any interested parties submit applications by April 5. Kathleen offered to meet with any parties who might have questions about COCA membership or Board of Director roles. Dan asked the Board to attend arts events, take pictures, send pictures to Samantha, use the hashtags #tallahasseearts and #ihearttally on Facebook and Instagram and tag COCA in any social

media posts. Dan congratulated Board member Reenee Williams on her recent inclusion in “Tallahassee’s 25 Women to Know.”

d. Staff

*Sahara Lyon, Arts Education Manager*

Sahara stated that she held Chalk Walk at the Capitol in conjunction with Arts Advocacy Day. Sahara stated that 10 groups from 7 different Leon County high schools attended. Sahara stated that she has hosted three class tours at City Hall with two professors from FSU and is currently scheduling tours from the summer semester. Sahara stated that she assisted with planning a “Leap Day Luncheon” with Kathleen and the FSU College of Music, which had approximately 30 attendees from the local music leader community. Sahara stated that she looks forward to planning more events with FSU’s College of Music. Sahara stated that she assisted with the Black History Arts and Culture Festival at the R.A. Gray Building, along with Sam, Kathleen and two interns, as well as a number of gallery installations, deinstallations and receptions. Sahara stated that she and her interns tabled at “Be My Neighbor Day” with WFSU, which was attended by over 500 people. Sahara stated that she was interviewed for a podcast by an FSU Arts Administration student. Sahara stated that she is working on the April newsletter, the Mid-year Report and planning a professional development workshop for arts teachers to attend over the summer. Sahara stated that she attended Kate Sullivan Elementary’s 75th anniversary, where their arts project -a mural stencil created by FSU’s Arts Education department and filled in by elementary students- was unveiled. Sahara stated that FSU’s Arts Education department hopes to hold a similar project at every school in Leon County during the Bicentennial year. Sahara stated that she will be attending the Children’s Services Council Summer Youth Expo and the Youth Art Month Exhibition at the Leon County Public Library.

*Sam Joslin, Public Arts Manager*

Sam stated that *Creative Tallahassee* applications closed February 26 and 39 artists were selected to display their work. Sam stated that the *Mural Makeover Program* received 11 applications and the City is currently deciding on which 2 applications will receive free murals. Sam stated that an art installation to reduce bird window strikes at City Hall is underway. Sam stated that she is still seeking Arts Advisory committee members for the next exhibition season. Sam stated that an exhibition called “I Can Dream, Can’t I?” by Jeanine Czaja-Mordon will be on display in City Hall until *Creative Tallahassee* is installed. Sam stated the Cosby Painter Hayes would have an exhibit on display from March 22 to May 15, with a reception scheduled for the upcoming Thursday. Sam stated that artist Angelica Neyra’s work, “Exilios de Cárdenas”, was installed in the Innovation Gallery at the R.A. Gray building, and was then reinstalled outside the COCA office at Domi Station. Sam stated that she is still working with Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs on the South Arts Cross-Sector Impact Extension Grant to provide more banners for the Greater Art for Greater Bond project.

*Samantha Sumler, Marketing & Communications Manager*

Samantha stated that newsletter stats had increased over the previous 90 days and are currently 4% higher than the industry average and 3% higher than industry standard click-through rates. Samantha stated that in March, they created an “Artists Inspire” call for Women’s History Month and asked for the board to submit any candidates they may know. Samantha stated that a photographer/videographer attended the Black History Art and Cultural Festival and that the same photographer/videographer will attend the Creative Tallahassee reception. Samantha stated that their intern Gabrielle updated the media guide for grantees to use and posted the media guide to the website. Samantha stated that they held two “How-To” workshops in February and March covering how to submit events, classifieds and more. Samantha stated that they are looking for guest writers for COCA “Spotlight” articles. Samantha stated that new merchandise is being purchased specifically for the upcoming April tabling events, including: pens, water bottles, sunglasses and

more. Samantha asked the board for assistance in tabling during the April festival season: *Cool Breeze Art and Smooth Jazz Festival, Tallahassee Pride, Chain of Parks and Word of South*. Samantha stated that the board can sign up for these slots on the Board portal, where Board documents are posted. Samantha stated that they have a new intern named Willow, who will be participating in the *COCA Street Team*. Ayne asked about the difference between a guest writer and the standard writer; Samantha answered that a guest writer would only contribute an article once every four to five weeks and can attend events in person, whereas the current writer is remote-only. Rachele stated that tabling for COCA is an amazing opportunity. Ayne stated that if Samantha wants help tabling, they should ask directly via email. Dan reiterated that tabling for COCA is rewarding.

*Summer Callahan, Grants Manager*

Summer stated that in February, she held a workshop titled “Revenue, Relevancy, Partnerships” with Jan Rodusky of *Venn There Grants*. Summer stated this was a hybrid workshop held at Domi Station with five in-person attendees and 34 virtual attendees. Summer stated that the workshop was well-received and COCA may offer similar workshops in the future. Summer stated that she submitted the application for regrants to the National Endowment for the Arts and is researching other possible grants. Summer stated that there is a potential grant from Truist Foundation that might serve a program developing artists as small businesses. Summer reiterated that she has been working with the Grants Sub-committee and Leon County to revise the guidelines and application for the FY25 fiscal year. Summer stated that a group, *the National Songwriters Association International Tallahassee Chapter*, joined COCA as a member and has been holding monthly meetings at Domi. Summer stated that the group wants to hold a songwriting workshop at Domi Station and would like COCA’s assistance in holding and marketing the event. Summer stated that she continues to hold funding consultations and assist with grant applications upon request. Dan thanked Summer for the funding consultations.

*Nick Pavlovik, Business Manager*

Nick stated that COCA is in the process of transitioning memberships from the old system, NEON, to the new system, TAG. Nick stated that some users may need to update their information for automatic renewals. Nick stated that COCA completed two grants with the state and is preparing for the mid-year report and employee evaluations.

e. Executive Director

Kathleen thanked the staff for their work. Kathleen congratulated a Sahara on her wedding and thanked Jennifer Wright for her service on the COCA board.

Additionally, Kathleen expressed gratitude for the advocacy work done during the legislative session, which resulted in securing \$32 million for various organizations. Kathleen discussed the elimination of a grant line item that affected local artists and rural counties, leaving them with no funding. Kathleen stated that the Florida Cultural Alliance will hold a meeting to discuss solutions for the next year. Kathleen then moved to an update on the progress of COCA’s FY24 organizational plan, which outlines the organization’s focus areas of artistic collaboration, organizational facility, finance, programming services, and membership. Kathleen stated that she will attend an upcoming “Local Arts Agency Summit”. Kathleen listed upcoming COCA events and initiatives for the Board to be aware of, including: *Stop at the Station, National Poetry Month, Autism Awareness Month, Pride*. Kathleen is looking into holding a board retreat this summer. Kathleen shared the results of Village Square’s recent Townhall Forum with City and County commissioners. Commissioners spoke



positively about arts and cultural programs in Tallahassee, including the Symphony Orchestra and *Tallahassee Music Week*. Kathleen stated that COCA is still using AEP6 data to advocate for arts funding and arts initiatives, and offered to attend any meeting where she could present the value of arts and cultural funding. Kathleen stated that Sahara will attend a Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra in-person meeting the upcoming week and asked for the Board's help in identifying any future speaking opportunities.

## II. ANNOUCEMENTS

Dan announced upcoming festivals: *Word of South*, *Chain of Parks*, *History Festival* and *Historian's Symposium*. Dan congratulated Reenee and Hadley for their participation in this year's KCCI. Hadley described the first project as a potential revitalization of Bicentennial Park outside City Hall. Kathleen congratulated Kathy for becoming President of the Animal Shelter Board and E. Marie for her entrepreneurial activities. Brinda announced Venvi Gallery's recent exhibition.

## III. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Summer Callahan*