

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on October 14, 2009.

Members Present:

Peter G. Cook
Douglas Brimhall
Vincent DiBella
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti

Kit Filbey
Victor Linoff
Rebecca Nolan

Members Absent:

Amanda Buscas
Dr. D. Kent Layton
Lars Nielson, Jr.

Staff Present:

Johann Zietsman
Sunnee Spencer
Tom Wilson
Jean Kaminski

Guests Present:

Tom Verploegen

Peter Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Peter Cook, Chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of June 10. There being none, Kit Filbey made a motion to approve the minutes, and Rebecca Nolan seconded the motion. The Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of June 10. They are posted on the City's Website.

Items from Citizens Present:

There were no citizens present.

Introduction of New Board Members – Peter Cook

As the Board has three new members, Peter Cook, Chair, suggested that each Board member introduce themselves and give a short background of who they are and their interests. **Peter Cook:** This is Peter's final year to serve on the Board having served two full terms. He is a retired software engineer and vice-president and is interested in the cultural scene, particularly the Museums. He has found it rewarding watching Mesa change from the Darby's dinner days to the elegant facilities we have today. **Victor Linhoff:** Vic is a new Board member and has had a diverse career owning a business for some years that has transcended into an Internet business today. Arts and Culture is a strong part of his background from a lighting designer, actor, stage manager, to 15 years of broadcasting on radio and Television and then moved on to a "real life." Still interested in arts and culture, Vic worked in the Museum field for a number of years serving on Boards and is currently the chair of the Mesa Historical Museum Board. He also worked with historical preservation and chaired the Preservation Commission and is honored to serve on the Board. **Kit Filbey:** A fairly new member of the Board, replacing a former member late last year, she owns a facility service company working out of her home. She holds a BA in Fine Arts degree and taught for a while and did some acting in community-theater. She is passionate about the arts and excited to be on the Board. **Rebecca Nolan:** Rebecca is currently a stay-at-home mom. While working outside the home she was in the financial sector; her most recent position was as the budget manager for the Department of Corrections. She grew up in NY taking arts and culture for granted. After moving to Mesa, and hoping for a more vibrant arts and cultural scene than what she found, she decided that rather than bemoaning it, she would try to do something about it and joined the Board.

Douglas Brimhall: Doug is an architect who is a fifth generation Mesan who married a fourth generation Mesan and has three children. Having been in Mesa all his life, Doug is interested in Mesa's development, especially downtown Mesa. The arts have always been a passion of his. **Vince DiBella:** Vince is a local architect and been in Mesa since 1992. His firm owns their current building that is located in Downtown Mesa, and is engaged in the development of downtown. Vince has worked on with the Arizona Museum of Natural History on the Federal Building. His children are musically inclined and he is interested in promoting arts and culture through the schools state-wide and promoting the arts in general. **Robbi Venditti:** Robbi lived in the greater Phoenix area most of her life; living in Mesa in the last three years. She recently retired from the Army after 24 years. When she moved to Mesa, she asked her Councilmember how she could help the community, threw her name in the hat, and we were fortunate to get her on our Board.

Discuss and Take Action – Election of Chair – Peter Cook

Peter Cook, Chair, has served as chair for the past two years. As this is his final year on the Board, and due to the fact that he will be out of town for the next three Board meetings, Mr. Cook stated that he is unable to serve as chair in his final year. Mr. Cook said that Rebecca Nolan had sent an e-mail saying she would be interested in serving as chair or vice-chair. Since Douglas Brimhall has the longest history with the Board, Mr. Cook asked him if he would be willing to serve as chair. He responded that he would. Victor Linoff made a motion that the Board elects Douglas Brimhall as the Chair for this coming fiscal year, and Rebecca Nolan seconded. The Board members present unanimously passed the motion.

Discuss and Take Action – Election of Vice-Chair – Peter Cook

As Rebecca Nolan had volunteered to serve, Victor Linoff made a motion that the Board elects Rebecca Nolan as Vice-Chair, and Kit Filbey seconded. The Board members present unanimously passed the motion.

Presentation and Information – Vision and Concept for Downtown Mesa – Tom Verploegen

Tom Verploegen presented a Power Point of the Downtown Mesa Association's (DMA) Vision for Downtown Mesa's Square Mile. The presentation represents a synopsis of the January 2009 DMA Board's vision and concept plan from their perspective. The plan incorporates informal input from the private, non-profit, and public sectors over the last year and a half. More input from stakeholders will be sought to finalize and adopt a final vision and concept plan.

In the last 25 years, Downtown Mesa has seen more than 300 new commercial developments and major renovations, a net gain of 240 businesses; and more than 1,000 new and major renovated residences.

The DMA's vision for a vibrant downtown is: an economically healthy, growing and vital community downtown as a quality place to live, work, play, shop/dine, learn, and invest.

Their five vision elements are: 1) a flourishing downtown – attracting jobs, residents, growth and investments, making nighttime active; 2) a pedestrian friendly downtown – walk-ability first priority, block-by-block focus; 3) a diverse downtown – mixed use culturally and generationally inclusive; 4) a unique downtown – developing distinctive offerings; and 5) a collaborative downtown – building a downtown business culture and sense of community together.

Ten of the 26 plan elements/strategies are most critical to advancing the plan vision. Success of these ten will leverage the ability for the other projects to succeed as well. These transformative projects will require continuous communication and collaboration between the public (City of Mesa), private, and non-profit sectors. These ten elements are: 1) embrace regional/area transportation access; 2) adopt City of Mesa municipal buildings master plan in downtown; 3) develop City owned redevelopment/vacant property within downtown; 4) formulate tailored downtown mesa building rehabilitation code; 5) subdivide outmoded and oversized private buildings in downtown core; 6) develop unique and inviting walkable public realm; 7) evaluate Latino/Hispanic marketplace/cultural complex; 8) attract more education facilities; 9) see and be seen in active downtown; 10) increase downtown sphere of influence.

A memorandum was distributed from the DMA Strategic Alliances Committee and Tom Verploegen, DMA President and Downtown Vision/Concept Plan Facilitator recommending that the Input and Outreach Report for updating the Downtown Mesa Vision and Concept Plan be transferred to and incorporated with the upcoming, more comprehensive Central Main Street Neighborhood Area Plan Process that is to begin soon. The memorandum included a highlight report that provided an overview of the input received from citizens, stakeholders, and interested parties pertaining to updating the Downtown Mesa Vision and Concept Plan as of September 30.

Mr. Verploegen closed by inviting the Board to send them any input they may have that would enhance and/or add to the Vision and Concept Plan.

Peter Cook, Chair, thanked Mr. Verploegen for his informative presentation.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Sunnee Spencer

- "My Favorite Monster," which just closed, had approximately 27,500 who attended the exhibit.
- The Museum has had 21,707 in attendance this year as compared to 13,112 last year during this same time frame (July 1 through September 30).
- Staff is putting the final touches on the new exhibit "Pattern Wizardry" that opens Friday, October 9 and runs through April 4, 2010.
- Also opening at Arizona Museum for Youth is "Galapagos: Reflections through Photographs by Sue Cullumber." Ms. Cullumber took part in the 2008 Toyota International Teacher Program expedition to the Galapagos Islands and took photos of the creatures that greeted her.
- The Museum has been featured quite a lot in the media: Fox 10 news interviewed a member at the Museum regarding their thoughts on parents pulling their kids out of school to boycott President Obama's classroom speech; Sunnee Spencer was interviewed on Mesa City Radio; and the Museum is now on travelskoot.com.
- The Museum has five Arizona State University junior-level undergrads in the Early Childhood Program that will serve as interns in the education area.
- The Target "3 for Free" October Sunday had 1,961 visitors.

- The Museum will have a dedicated internship program with the University of Advancing Technology who will work with curator Jeff Morris on some technological projects that will allow for hands-on activities that relate to exhibitions.
- Recently, the Cardon Children's Medical Center offered the Museum a space to create a Youth Satellite Gallery at their new site; a great opportunity for the Museum.
- The expansion project at the Museum is scheduled to begin work on October 26. The expansion and renovation will open when the "Play Ball" exhibition debuts on February 25, 2010.
- The Museum has received \$20,000 from the Timken Foundation for the renovation and has sent a request to the Arizona Humanities Council for \$9,700 for the "Play Ball" exhibition.
- Sandy Johnson, Americorp Vista, has come on Board as the manager of teen and adult volunteers; since September she has brought on 18 new volunteers.

Sunnee Spencer distributed postcards for the opening of "Pattern Wizardry" and the "Galapagos" exhibits.

At the same time, Peter Cook, Chair, distributed a postcard for the upcoming Mesa Arts Center Foundation "Hidden Gems Luxury Home Tour" on November 14. Sunnee also reminded the Board of the Ghost Tour in Downtown Mesa on Saturday, October 24, 10:30 a.m.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- The latest exhibition, "Therizinosaur: Mystery of the Sickle-Claw Dinosaur" has opened. The Therizinosaur was a 93 million-year-old terrestrial dinosaur (lived on the land), but was discovered in an ancient seaway that ran up and down the southwest from Arizona to Canada during the cretaceous period. The mystery of how you get a terrestrial dinosaur out of the sea (how did it get there?) is answered in the exhibition. The exhibition is in collaboration with the Museum of Northern Arizona.
- Another new exhibition that opened in the upper gallery is "Prehistoric Pronghorn: Ancient Antelope." This exhibit is in collaboration with the International Wildlife Museum in Tucson.
- The Museum is working on two other projects: 1) Mesa Grande – a large six-acre Hohokam Temple mound site that is owned by the City and is located across from the old Banner Mesa Medical Center on Brown Road. The site dates from around 1100 to 1400. The Museum has plans to interpret the site with money coming from a number of different sources. One of those sources was a grant from the Heritage Fund; however due to the budget crisis the money was swept, but then was restored. The Museum was awarded the money, again, about a month ago, and is currently working with City engineers and the architects to get the interpretive trail constructed first and will then look at signage, etc.; 2) The Federal Building at the corner of Pepper and Macdonald, which recently underwent asbestos abatement at the end of the fiscal year tearing up the building quite a bit on the inside. The Museum is now working to re-establish water and sewage utilities to the building to make it useful. Currently it is being used as storage for collections and exhibition and educational materials. The Museum would like to establish an archeological lab and archeological storage which would require utilities.

Director's Report – Johann Zietsman

Mesa Arts Center opened the season with "MAC Ignites!" which included the opening of the fall exhibits in Mesa Contemporary Arts, performances in the four Theaters, performances on the Shadow Walk, and in conjunction with the Second Friday Night out in downtown Mesa. Mesa Arts Center saw approximately 6,000 visitors on campus that evening. A tremendous success for the Affiliates who showcased their organizations in the Theaters as well as collaborating with Sister Cities who occupied the Ikeda Theater that evening. It was an evening of showcasing what we do and giving people who cannot always come to Mesa Arts Center a taste of the season. Mesa Arts Center hopes to do more events of this type for the community.

Mesa Arts Center launched a new Website with a completely different look; it is much more interactive. One new feature is if a patron sees something they think they would like to attend, but do not want to purchase a ticket at that particular time, they can click the "remind me" button. Two weeks prior to the event, the patron will receive an e-mail reminding them they were interested in the event and it is coming soon.

Stageworks' first play, "Puss N Boots and Other Cat Tails," has been touring Mesa Public Schools with 13 performances, with attendance of approximately 4,000 children; a strong beginning for the season.

The Volunteer Program has also kicked off with a strong start providing 2,270 hours for a value to the City of \$45,962. Mesa Arts Center has a well-managed, well-supported Volunteer Program that has approximately 700 members who contribute more than a million dollars in value every year. The Museums too have growing Volunteer Programs. Our volunteers are incredibly valuable and the Arts and Cultural Department could not survive without them.

Mesa Contemporary Arts held a 10 x 10 fundraiser on October 10. 110 artists donated artwork on a 10 x 10 canvas. Admission was \$10 per person and the artwork was sold for \$100 each. This was a first time event, and we will take what we have learned from and build on that for next year.

General attendance for the Theaters is mixed. Tap Dogs had approximately 1,200 tickets sold, Lisa Williams had approximately 845, and Jazz at Lincoln Center approximately 1,200*. Attendance is running about the same, but the buying pattern is shifting; folks are purchasing much later rather than buying advanced tickets. The pattern appears to be the same throughout the industry and throughout the country. Memberships tend to be down, subscriptions are down, advanced ticket sales are down, and yet attendance is similar to last year.

*Note: Paula Poundstone sold out.

Mesa Arts Center Foundation had a retreat last month and discussed the next level for the Foundation in terms of fundraising; identifying the next compelling reason for fundraising and how to accomplish that. They also discussed the next transformative project, which Johann presented and the Board responded to positively. This project will be developed over the next few months and involves looking at a new re-organization model. Right now the Board meets on a monthly basis and for the most part not all members are engaged in what is discussed. The re-organization would not waste Board members time with information they are not interested in, but rather allow them to work in the area that they are passionate about.

Staff is working on how to manage the short-term transition of the Mesa Historical Museum while the search for a permanent solution is on-going. "Play Ball" will open in February in the newly renovated Arizona Museum for Youth while the "Wallace & Ladmo" exhibition is now at the Library. Staff continues to work on other possible locations for other exhibits.

Mr. Zietsman announced that he will attend the November meeting; however, he is leaving Mesa at the end of November to move to Calgary where he will assume the CEO position for Epcor Center. Rob Schultz will serve as the Interim Director during the search process. The City is looking for an Executive Search Firm to conduct a national search for a replacement. The City is committed to ensure Mesa gets the best possible person to fill Mr. Zietsman shoes.

Peter Cook, Chair, expressed his gratitude to Johann for his leadership, and Vic Linoff presented a gift to Mr. Zietsman on behalf of the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johann Zietsman, Director
Arts and Cultural Department