

The City of Frederick, Maryland
PUBLIC ART COMMISSION
Virtual Meeting via MS Teams
Minutes of February 9, 2021
(Approved March 9, 2021)

Members Present: A. Cain, T. Daniel, D. Rosano, W. Poindexter, E. Wise VanderWoude, L. Staruk, D. Doxzen

Regrets / Absent: K. Kuranda, Alderwoman Kuzemchak

Staff Present: Bob Smith, Deputy Director for Parks & Recreation; S. Stamper, Office Manager

Guests Present: Ms. Martha Oster-Beal, Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC)

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

A. Cain called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

MINUTES: January 12, 2021

There were a few minor clerical corrections which were noted, and the minutes will be revised accordingly.

D. Rosano moved to approve the minutes as corrected on the public meeting recording. T. Daniel seconded the motion which was approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Review and discussion of a request by Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) to install a “Step into History” frame in downtown Frederick this spring - roughly March to June 2021. Featuring an image from the museum and library collections, the MCHC’s larger-than-life-size frame allows passersby to step (literally) into history and engage with the past. A QR code leads to a webpage providing interested visitors with historical context about the image they are stepping into. Presentation of some additional information since last meeting.

Ms. Martha Oster-Beal, Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) was present for this application.

Highlights of revisions/additional information presented by Ms. Oster-Beal:

Location - there was some confusion last month about where the Step into History frame would be installed. A sketch of the C. Burr Artz Library grounds indicating the frame’s proposed location was distributed in the agenda packet. (Also shown via share screen during discussion at the meeting).

ADA Compliant - The frame is ADA compliant with the minimum clear width for a single wheelchair.

Image Selection - Requesting to move forward with the image that was presented to the commission last month. See information in agenda packet. It was also shown via share screen during discussion at this meeting. The image is a draft for the purpose of visualizing the finished product. Some adjustments to the cut-outs and zoom ratio will be made.

The project was presented to the January 28th Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and received approval. The HPC approval packet was distributed in the Public Art Commission agenda packet, and the screen was shared during this meeting.

MCHC hopes to install the proposed image/project at the library in late March.

There was discussion and concerns from the commission regarding the quality of the photo image. The image is blurry, and the lighting is uneven. It is difficult to determine that the back structure is a train. The commission wanted to know if there would be on location signage or some explanation of the photo and its relevance to Frederick.

Ms. Oster-Beal responded to the questions and concerns. She explained that the proposed photo image is from 1868. While it is not possible to have a sharp image due to the technical qualities of the original photo, it becomes very striking when blown up to life size. There will be some touchup, but they do not want to make changes that would alter the historical integrity of the original photo. As viewers “step into” the frame structure, there will be a blowup of the original photo, explanatory text, and a QR code within the inner “wall” of the frame. The QR code would be linked to the project’s website. The photo is believed to be a group of artists and businesspeople taking an inaugural ride from Baltimore to Ohio on the railroad. The rendering is only depicting a straight-on view. When blown up, viewers will see more of the front and sides of the train. Some work is still being done to the ratio. Another rendering could be provided to the commission.

A Cain stated that the proposed image was discussed at length at last month’s meeting. She does not feel the image is representational of diversity and inclusion of the population of Frederick either today or in 1868. Frederick, in 1868, had a thriving African American population and business sector. Photo evidence of this does exist. She asked if the selected image is limited to the MCHC collection. She suggested maybe a photo from a collection outside the MCHC organization or a different time period should be utilized for the Frederick site.

Ms. Oster-Beal replied that she feels the proposed image is the best photo within the MCHC collection for the site in Frederick. She feels the image would welcome anyone, and that it is relatable, silly, and would inspire viewers to use his/her imagination. MCHC is historically a white organization based in Baltimore, Maryland. The organization is working to diversify its collection to include more images of locations within the State, and in representation of the population. The goal of the project was to share their collection of images. The name of their organization will appear on the project. Additionally, they wanted the selected images to tie into the unique history of Frederick. As the library is the proposed site for the project in Frederick, images from the collection depicting people viewing books may potentially be utilized. These photos are not unique to Frederick, however.

D. Doxzen said that he feels it can be difficult to find a historic photo with diverse populations represented. In the past, it was not common for African American to have their photos taken. When photographs were taken, the groupings of the subject people were not inclusive nor diverse.

W. Poindexter noted that he had made the comment about the lack of inclusiveness and diversity of the proposed image, during the last meeting. He likes the idea of the “Step into History” project, but the image itself is the wrong one for this time in America. He is appalled by the proposed image, especially after what this Country has been through with the racial unrest. He acknowledged that it is tricky to portray/display images from the past and have everyone feel comfortable.

L. Staruk expressed her agreement with the comments by A. Cain and W. Poindexter regarding the lack of inclusion and diversity in the subject matter of the proposed image for Frederick.

There was discussion regarding whether to vote on this project, or what the procedural process would be for this project.

B. Smith explained that the Commission could hold a special meeting to review the project if a decision is needed prior to March. Or, the applicant can return to a future regular monthly meeting.

No motion was made for this project.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Discussion Items:

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant

A Cain indicated that B. Smith had brought this grant to her attention. She said it is a grant for small municipalities for which the NEA will match funds. She thinks the cap of funds is 20K. The application deadline is July 2021.

B. Smith elaborated that the City is working with a grant consultant based in Washington D. C. The consultant brought the NEA grant to the attention of City officials. This grant is awarded twice a year. The first deadline is two days from the date of this meeting. The next deadline is July. The grant is for up to 100,000 dollars. However, most award amounts are in the range of 20 - 40,000-dollar range. The grant requires a one-to-one matching funds agreement. Perhaps the City or Public Art Commission could find a funding partner for their contribution of matching funds. He believes it is an annual grant program. He will forward further information regarding the NEA grant to commission members this week.

Subcommittee and Project Liaison Assignments

A Cain gave brief background information regarding the purpose of each subcommittee. There was discussion, and the following members volunteered:

D. Rosano will be the liaison working with Julia Brennan, regarding the Shawbaker Flag conservation.

A Cain will continue working with Kristen Loudermilk regarding the City seal conservation.

D. Doxzen and A. Cain will work on an art acquisition policy and pare the current draft down to less than 58 pages.

E. VanderWoude and L. Staruk will work with the City's GIS/IT department to create a website specifically for the Public Art Commission, and which will contain an inventory of public art within the City.

T. Daniel will work with the City's Historic Preservation Commission regarding a signage template for public art, and more specifically for Becky the Calf and the Saunders Mosaics. The signage was last discussed in June 2020.

W. Poindexter moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:18 p.m. D. Rosano seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.