

ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of Monday, 07 May 2007
Mansfield Community Center (MCC) Conference Room
MINUTES

1. The meeting was **called to order** by Acting Chair Jay Ames at 7:05p. Members present: Jay Ames, Kim Bova, Scott Lehmann, Joan Prugh, Blanche Serban. Others present: Jay O'Keefe (staff), Curt Vincente (staff), Dennis O'Brien (Town Attorney), Anita Bacon, Leon Bailey, Bobby Brown. The order of the agenda was changed to accommodate Atty. O'Brien, Ms. Bacon, and Ms. Brown.

2. Art display policy. Atty. O'Brien reviewed the Constitutional status of art. Federal courts have ruled that art is a form of expression protected the 1st Amendment. A public agency may establish guidelines and procedures governing art displays in public places, but its acceptance of works for public display creates a right in the artist to have his or her work displayed under the terms of acceptance.

Or so the 9th Circuit ruled in a case quite similar to ours. A committee of local government in Pasco, WA, had invited artists to display works at the town hall, some of which were subsequently removed in response to objections from citizens. A suit was filed, alleging that the rights of the artists had been violated. The court agreed, holding that in setting up the committee and inviting displays, the town had created a public place for art and, accordingly, that the works accepted were protected by the 1st Amendment.

The Town is not required by the Constitution or court rulings to permit art displays in public spaces; all legal problems can be avoided by a "no art" policy. If the Town is interested in having art displayed in public places (as it appears to be) and wants to avoid legal trouble (as we may assume), then we need to develop a policy with *guidelines* for displays and a *procedure* for managing them. Guidelines could cover both quality (e.g., that works be original and of high quality) and content (e.g., that works displayed be suitable for children). The procedure for managing displays should detail the application and acceptance process (e.g., specifying that photos of all works to be displayed be included in the application) and say how complaints will be handled. General guidelines with a good procedure would be fine, in Atty. O'Brien's view; the policy doesn't have to be perfect in order to discourage lawsuits.

Discussion followed. Jay A. worried about striking the right balance between generality and specificity in writing guidelines, and also about whether asking artists for photos of all the works to be displayed might be too burdensome. Curt thought asking for photos in the digital age was not unreasonable. Blanche and Ms. Bacon suggested looking at the display policies of other agencies (such as the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and Windham Hospital).

Atty. O'Brien recommended that the AAC stop talking and write something out so that we have a proposal to discuss. Scott agreed to do this; he will send a draft to AAC members by e-mail. Jay O'K. reminded the AAC that we are to "consult with and solicit comment from our various advisory committees, staff and other interested members of the community." It was agreed that we would send out a draft for comment when we have one that we are reasonably happy with. Atty. O'Brien suggested that we aim for a final draft by 15 July.

3. The minutes of the 02 April 07 meeting were approved as written.

4. MCC art displays.

- a. **Bobby Brown** showed samples of her work – a small sculpture and a print of an acrylic painting – along with photos of other works. She has enough sculpture to fill the double-sided case and also paintings that could be hung in the lower sitting room area. Some of her works (or their titles) include a biblical verse; those quoted at the meeting were not religious in character. The AAC thought her works suitable for display in the next exhibit period, but it needs to see photos of everything in advance. The Downtown Partnership will have the display cases from 1 Sep to 15 Sep and they are empty now, so it would nice to have her works installed as soon as possible, assuming the photos are OK.
- b. **Anita Bacon** brought photos of the watercolors she wants to display in the hallways, starting 15 July. The AAC judged them suitable. She will not use the sitting room display areas, as she believes the light levels there are too high for watercolor.
- c. **Laurie Smolin** is interested in displaying watercolors, starting 15 October. We need to see photos; Kim will ask for them.

Exhibit Period	Entry cases		Sitting room		Hallway	
	Double-sided	Shelves	Upper	Lower	Long (5)	Short (2)
15 Apr – 15 Jul	MAC children’s art (April)		Jay Ames (abstracts)			
15 Jul – 15 Oct	Bobby Brown? (sculpture)			Bobby Brown? (acrylics)	Anita Bacon (watercolors)	
	Festival on the Green 9/1-9/15					
15 Oct – 15 Jan					Laurie Smolin? (watercolors)	

5. **Membership.** Both Ms. Bacon and Mr. Bailey are interested in joining the AAC, even after sitting through this long meeting. Ms. Bacon is a painter; Mr. Bailey is retired from the UConn Dramatic Arts Dept., where he directed many productions. The AAC currently has 2 vacancies, and they were urged to apply for membership to the Committee on Committees (through Jay O’K. if desired).

6. **Double-sided case.** Jay O’K. reported that it will be possible to install a rod for hanging art across the top of this case. The AAC decided that stainless steel would be best.

7. **Adjourned** at 9:05p. Next meeting: 7:00p, Monday, 04 Jun 07.

Scott Lehmann, Acting Secretary, 09 May 07