



*Commission for Diversity & Inclusion*

*Culture and Arts Working Committee*

**ACTION LETTER**  
**Monday, October 11, 2021**

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**Call to order:**

Chairperson Martin called the October 11, 2021 Culture and Arts Working Committee meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Members Present

Chairperson Martin

Commissioner Courtney

Commissioner Harrison (entered meeting at 7:40 p.m.)

Commissioner Presley

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

A motion was made by commissioner Courtney, seconded by Commissioner Presley, to approve the agenda adding the mission statement. Approved by a 3-0 vote.

**4. Approval of September 13, 2021 Action Letter**

A motion was made by Commissioner Presley, seconded by commissioner Courtney, to approve the September 13, 2021 action letter. Approved by a 3-0 vote.

**5. Public Comments**

None

**6. Continued discussion –**

Chairperson Martin asked everyone attending the meeting to introduce themselves, beginning with the Commissioners.

Donnie Rodgers - Executive Director of Downtown Lee's Summit Mainstreet.

Bob and Candy White – Bob is the Candy is the Executive Director of the Lee's Summit Symphony and Candy is the Co-Executive Director.

Jody Fristoe - Director of Summit Art, a local non-profit that supports visual art and artists.

Two Summit Art Board members, Wanda Tyner and Mike Lewis.

Glenda Masters, Cultural Arts Manager with the City of Lee's Summit.

## 7. Continued discussion –

Chairperson Martin shared the Commission vision statement:

*Lee's Summit embraces the differences in our community.*

*We value each individual's culture, background, and identity; and strive to promote mutual respect, understanding and representation of all.*

*We are committed to eliminating barriers, improving access to resources and creating growth opportunities throughout the community.*

This meeting is designed to talk to the legacy arts institutions that are doing arts programming within the city. Future meetings will focus on individual artists, and individual arts and businesses that give voices of diversity. These meetings will be used as opportunities to gather information. Questions were presented to the group to form the basis for discussion for information purposes.

- **In what ways do you feel your organization is getting it right in offering cultural and Artistic experiences for the community of Lee's Summit?**

Mr. White shared the LS Symphony is making an effort to introduce a variety of programming to appeal to as many different types of interests as possible. They are limited by what is out there with regards to music, availability, cost, and adequate performers to particular pieces and genres to perform. They are moving away from strictly classical music and towards current pieces that embrace diversity to lend a different sound and look to our community.

Summit Art group said they had a Plein Air Festival on 31 acres of private property. It was a huge success with almost 100 artists participating. It was a brand new for the community and the LS Symphony performed at that new event.

Downtown Lee's Summit has the Art Walk which creates opportunities for diverse artists to display their work and for the community to experience something different with no cost. Fourth Fridays gives opportunity for nontraditional groups of developing potential to display art. They offer a range of activities without the barrier of cost to experience some type of creative art.

- **How accessible physically and economically is your organization? Both to participate & enjoy as a patron?**

Summit Art during COVID is not currently operating with a physical gallery or space but by zoom or extended galleries. They offer memberships at various levels and for students it is free. The two festivals, the Plein Air festival and the Art Festival, are free to the public.

Donnie Rodgers mentioned with their events being outdoors they are looking to bring back Downtown Days offering opportunities for local artisans and vendors to set up as well. Fourth Friday Art Walk connects artists with the businesses.

Bob and Candy White mentioned the accessibility of LS Symphony performances at John Knox Village with reasonably priced tickets. During covid there were 3 free virtual concerts with their first in person concert in June.

Glenda Masters said it is not just financial accessibility but of other barriers such as transportation, awareness of events, language and visual impairment issues.

- **Do you feel people who benefit from your organization reflect diversity of the area around you? (race, religion, culture, economically)**

Donnie Rogers commented that it is hard to measure and track where people are coming from. He feels it has become more diverse but some events and activities are geared to one group.

Bob & Candy White stated their organization has made a strong attempt to reach out to as many different cultures as possible through the music they perform. They feel that their audience is changing and commented on the need for feedback. Commissioner Courtney asked about events for children. Mr. White said a few years ago they had a family concert including an instrument petting zoo which was wildly popular with the kids.

Summit Art is striving to grow with the city. They are struggling in the same way that Mainstreet and Symphony are with the need for more communication and facilitation.

- **What challenges do you feel your arts organization faces in response to growing acknowledgement that culture and arts in the US must respond to issues of Diversity & Inclusion? Roadblocks?**

Summit Art was denied a grant last year because of a lack of diversity in their board and membership. It was suggested that they writing a diversity & inclusion statement. It is on the website and need direction on how to gain more diversity.

Mr. White said you can perform those things that will attract a diverse audience but have to have access to what those are and who they will draw in.

Mr. Rodgers added that it has been a struggle to grow their boards through their communities. The struggle for them is how to connect better with those in the community and reaching the younger citizens. He expressed the need to look at multiple languages, visually impaired, and the community as a whole.

- **What can we do as a Commission to help? To assist the arts groups in the work going on?**

Commissioner Courtney stated the Commission is here pay attention, assess, then help. "What do you need because we want to find it for you and give it to you."

Mr. White asked about access about demographics. Ms. Masters stated it is challenging to get more diversity when the primary audience is representative. A lot comes from finding out who they are and where they are and asking what they need and want. The cultural arts can

have an influence and would be nice to bring some of that diverse exposure to the homogenous community.

Donnie Rodgers mentioned the changing demographics on race, but have they looked at religion, sexual orientation, and other shifts in population. He expressed the need to get that info from the census.

Later conversations may answer some questions and provide resources as well. It would be beneficial to look at other communities and finding the successes in order to provide models for organizations. Several Commissioners and attendees expressed the want to stay in Lee's Summit for activities and events and to draw the rest of the metro here as well.

Commissioner Martin gave a summary of the consensus: Organizations are ready and willing, not sure how to, request the board to be a clearing house of information and resources to then be used and utilized by the various arts organizations.

Gratitude was given to all who attended helping to open up avenues for discussion and exploration to come up with proposals and ideas down the road. With a year left in their journey it will lead to proposals for the City and a statement of where we are and hope to be.

### 8. Adjourn

Seeing no further business, Chairperson Martin adjourned the October 11, 2021 sub-committee meeting at 8:48 p.m.