



Commission for Diversity & Inclusion

Culture and Arts Working Committee

ACTION LETTER
Monday, November 8, 2021

Call to order:

Chairperson Martin called the November 8, 2021 Culture and Arts Working Committee meeting to order at 7:54 p.m.

Roll Call:

Members Present

Chairperson Martin
Commissioner Courtney
Commissioner Harrison

Janine Henley-30 year resident, taught at Summit Point Elementary, currently has 13 piano students.
Tina Garrett-professional master oil painter, served on the Arts Council, and Downtown Mainstreet for years. Travels to teach art around the world.

Dale Coy – resident

(Alan Rendall and wife from Art School KC unable to attend)

3. Approval of the Agenda

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

4. Approval of October 11, 2021 Action Letter

A motion was made by Commissioner Courtney, seconded by Commissioner Harrison, to approve the October 11, 2021 action letter. Approved by a 3-0 vote.

5. Public Comments

None

6. Continued discussion – Goal for the meeting was to get perspective from individual artists within the Arts, visual and performing.

- **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?**

Tina Garrett is glad there is wide range of high school participation. Should be more available but what we do have going we do well. Good job communicating with local businesses and asking for their participation. Good job offering free or low cost to a wider range of more

expensive events like symphony tickets, etc. Smaller towns have theaters that belong to the town where high schools can hold their programs, as well as actual art galleries. She wishes with Art Walk to incorporate fine arts so youth see that they can participate in that professionally. We have good diversity financially of what's affordable or free but not sure versatility culturally. What are we doing that is Missouri culturally? Downtown Days is good but the cultural importance has gotten lost and is very commercial.

Janine – Concerned about opportunities being equitable for children in our community. There is a big need for financial assistance for children to take voice or music lessons. Also mentioned the idea of having a local band.

- **How accessible physically and economically are Culture and Arts in Lee's Summit? Both to participate & enjoy as a patron or audience member?**

Tina – Art walks or show openings tend to happen at night only, excluding those not able to get out on their own in the evening. She suggested having an art walk that starts at 4 and ends at 8 with amateur and professional work, break out one acts or standup comedy, open mike night, etc. Lack of maybe sometimes if we don't coordinate that someone is going to make a specific dollar amount then it won't happen at all. Scottsdale has free trolley to get people to have access.

Janine- agreed about accessibility being a key issue and having infrastructure to get people from point A to B.

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

Tina – It's a negative flow to KC and Overland Park because of their arts scene. Need a positive draw to bring in people from other places. We should by nature of our tax base and our organizational be outranking more rural and further away towns and are not.

Janine – We do have LS Symphony or concert 4 times a year or downtown. Why does Lee's Summit not have more free concerts available? And doesn't see the concert series as being very diverse.

Tina - Consider artists in residence, incentivize to spend some time busking out on the streets or hanging their work in a cooperative business. She just went to Edmond, OK for a Friday Art Walk and saw a little poster in the local galleries. They had an artist in residence from their local college and would have a show in the end. A perfect way to bring into our core areas people who might not otherwise share their talents with us. We could lure artists with a chance to have a show and that can be played across any genre of art.

- **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?**

Tina – Lack of sidewalk infrastructure is a roadblock to allow access events. Public transportation is as well. She thinks that having a physical theatre here that could be paired with both acting and musical entertainment could benefit Lee's Summit. The front area could

be a gallery space run by co-artists. She gave compliments for the new sculptures downtown but suggested having them be more interactive so they can be used to make music as a stage or platform. Not passive but participation.

Janine- Culturally the city is behind and there is a need to grow in the area of expanding our culture. With living in the Midwest there is not a vast exposure to a variety of cultures. Advertising is another roadblock. How are we getting the word out to people? There's a lot of poverty in LS and therefore not receiving the same opportunity.

Tina –Suggested the populous be surveyed either through the schools or through the parents. She is struggling to define what the culture of Lee's Summit is. The community needs to see things that they are proud that their town does, whether it is small plays, group murals, trash clean up, etc. If it comes from the bottom up it will be more inclusive. Need to make things available and relevant. Summit Art festival brings in many different artists displaying. It is a positive draw and suggested making it a true arts festival by opening it up to varied artists to include the visual, performing, and culinary arts to bring out a diverse type of people.

Janine – mentioned the lack of diversity in dance. It is standard wherever you go and would be interesting to see other groups brought in.

Tina – having booths where one is taught or shown how to participate in the arts. She suggested a Drum circle to make connections with the indigenous people that used to be in Missouri.

- **What questions or comments do you have for the Commission that might help us with our work? What would you like to see us be able to do that would help us do our work? What would you like the commission do for you or LS?**

Tina – She left the Arts Council because of gross negligence of the funds. Please use funds to the best of ability to make every penny stretch. Make walkability a priority.

Janine – Stressed the importance to get the word out. A lot of things are not publicized and need a better way of getting it out into the communities.

Commissioner Harrison – Hearing from different groups the main concern is how do we get the word out and to reach diverse groups of people. Today the means of communication are so fractured and getting information from niche sources. Finding out the most effective partner we can connect with to spread the word.

Commissioner Courtney – She asked about the reflections program in the schools. One of her children came home really interested in doing a reflections piece. Her first concern was that was his autism and they have a special needs division. So if there are programs already happening and it could be something added on just one more tent with adults and children with special needs to be a part of it.

7. Roundtable

Commissioner Courtney- Glenda Masters talked two meetings ago about how they choose the visual arts. She loves idea of stage for musical artists to spontaneously share their talent.

Available, available, available and relevant. We need to hit the streets to find people to survey and asking them these questions.

Commissioner Harrison – no added comments.

Commissioner Martin – Make sure to let your voice be heard during the Green Street Project. He expressed the need to have constant focus on addition and not subtraction to the things already happening, meaning extra money, funds, and resources. We don't lose the symphony but supplement it as well as Summit Theater Group, art festival, etc. Emphasized the importance to involve the special education kids and those who experience the world in a different way. He thanked all for their attendance and for being part of the conversation.

8. Adjourn

Seeing no further business, Chairperson Martin adjourned the November 8, 2021 sub-committee meeting at 8:49 p.m.