



**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
Wednesday, February 11, 2026

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A regular meeting of the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) Board of Trustees was called to order at 4:03 pm at the Cleveland Public Library - Main Branch, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor 325 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114.

The roll call showed that Trustees Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart and Vernaci were present. It was determined that there was a quorum. Trustee Scott Taylor was absent.

Also in attendance were: Jill Paulsen, Executive Director, and CAC staff.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Action: Motion to approve minutes of the December 17, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

Motion by – Trustee Vernaci  
Second by – Trustee DiCosimo

Discussion: None.

Vote to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

Vote: all ayes.

The motion carried.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MEETING AGENDA ITEMS**

There was no public comment.

**3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Paulsen thanked everyone for joining her and the Board. Ms. Paulsen's remarks can be found in the meeting materials.

**4. CONNECT WITH CULTURE**

Ms. Maya Curtis, grant manager, introduced Christine Madden, COO of Center for Arts Inspired Learning (CAL). Ms. Madden provided the Board with an overview of CAL and two students performed a song they wrote as part of their participation in CAL's ArtWorks program.

## **5. FINANCE REPORT**

Ms. Meg Harris provided the financial update.

### **2025 Unaudited Financials**

**Revenue.** Total tax revenue for 2025 was \$18,968,808. Tax revenue for the year was \$1,049,558 (5.86%) above budget. Interest revenue was \$533,794, 11% below budget. This is a result of declining interest rates.

**Revenue Trends.** Year-over-year unit sales of cigarettes at the wholesale level in 2025 decreased by 3.54% from FY2024. The three-year rolling average of unit sales decrease was 7.7%.

**Expenditure.** Final, unaudited expenditures for FY25 were \$12,251,625, ending the year \$166,059 under budget.

**Annual Audit.** The Local Government Services division of the Ohio Auditor of State began work on CAC's GAAP conversion for 2025 in early January and should finish the conversion in March.

### **2026 Financials YTD**

**Revenue.** Tax revenue through January was \$1,481,869. This is \$195,631 (11.7%) below budget. The units taxed decreased 18.6% compared to January 2025. Interest revenue through January was \$61,632.

**Expenditure.** The majority of CAC's budget is comprised of grants which were approved by the Board in 2025. These grants are accrued at the beginning of the year and recognized on the balance sheet. Non-grant expenditure through January was \$97,857.

Discussion:

- CAC finished 2025 with tax receipts \$1M over forecast; these dollars have been factored into long-term planning based on the three-year look-back model CAC uses when forecasting future revenue both for 2026 and the ten-year levy period.
- The timeframe to incorporate potential higher-than-anticipated revenue for the levy period is likely two to three years from now. Staff advised that one year of tax receipts is not enough to understand the full long-term revenue impact of new tax levy.
- For the 2026-27 grant cycle, CAC staff recommended a funding level for grants with the aim of that level being sustainable for 10 years, through 2035. Maintaining this level, at least through the current two-year cycle, will allow CAC to monitor and adjust revenue expectations more accurately.
- CAC will continue to monitor revenue and review financials at future Board meetings.

## **6. CONTRACTS AND POLICY APPROVALS**

**Action:** Motion to approve the Cybersecurity Policy in compliance with Ohio [R.C. §9.64](#) requirements with the provisions that it be reviewed by legal counsel and recommendations incorporated..

Motion by – Trustee Blakemore

Second by – Trustee Vernaci

Discussion:

- CAC's annual IT service contract includes enhanced Cybersecurity. Staff receive monthly training which exceeds the State's annual requirement.
- CAC is working with its IT contractor to ensure the policy is fully implemented by July, 1, 2026.

Vote to approve the Cybersecurity Policy in compliance with Ohio [R.C. §9.64](#) requirements with the provisions that it be reviewed by legal counsel and recommendations incorporated.

Vote: all ayes.

**Action:** Motion to approve a contract with Elizabeth Russell LLC for communications support in an amount up to \$20,000 for the period of March 1 – December 31, 2026.

Motion by – Trustee DiCosimo  
Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Discussion: None.

Vote to approve a contract with Elizabeth Russell LLC for communications support in an amount up to \$20,000 for the period of March 1 – December 31, 2026.

Vote: all ayes.

## **7. GRANTMAKING UPDATES**

Mr. Jake Sinatra, CAC director of grantmaking strategy and communications, and Ms. Maya Curtis, grant manager, presented an overview of plan for 2027 grantmaking. General Operating Support is in the first year of its two-year commitment (2026-27); the program is not open to new applicants this year.

For 2027 Project Support (PS), CAC **recommends no substantive changes to the program**, so that the staff and Board can continue to learn from recent updates. In 2027, the program will continue to include:

- Funding for nonprofits with or without a primary mission of arts and culture.
- Grant amounts of up to \$7,500 or \$5,000 based on the applicant's budget and financial documents. All grant amounts are subject to available CAC funding.
- New grant applicants must apply for Project Support and are eligible for up to \$5,000.
- Continued use of CAC's one-step application process and panel review process for Project Support. An online panel will take place in September.
- No SMU DataArts Cultural Data Profile requirement.
- 1:1 match required. 50% of matching funds can be in-kind income for all PS grantees.

**Discussion:**

- It was clarified that all PS27 applicants would go through panel.
- Feedback from grantees has been positive and they appreciate knowing the expectations heading into the grant year.
- CAC may conduct an anonymous grant survey again in 2026 to gather additional feedback which can be used for 2027 and future funding opportunities.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by – Trustee Blakemore  
Second by – Trustee Vernaci

Ayes: all ayes.

The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 pm.

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at the Cleveland Public Library's downtown branch.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leonard DiCosimo  
Secretary, Board of Trustees