



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, September 11, 2024

A meeting of the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) Board of Trustees was called to order at 4:05 pm at the Cleveland Public Library, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor Conference Room B, 325 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

The roll call showed that Trustees DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor and Vernaci were present. It was determined that there was a quorum. Trustee Blakemore arrived at 4:09pm.

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

1. OATH OF OFFICE

Gina Vernaci was sworn into office. Trustee Isenhart shared a summary of her biography.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: To approve the minutes of the April 17, 2024 Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Motion by – Trustee Vernaci

Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Vote to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2024 Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Ayes: Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor, Vernaci.

The motion carried.

Action: To approve the minutes of the April 29, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Vote to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Ayes: Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor, Vernaci.

The motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public comment on today's agenda.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Paulsen thanked everyone for joining her and the Board. Ms. Paulsen's remarks can be found [here](#). She also noted that the arts and culture levy that funds CAC will be on the ballot November 5, 2024 as Issue 55. Additional facts on public funding are on [CAC's website](#).

5. FINANCE REPORT

Trustee Blakemore provided an update on the 2023 audit. He noted that CAC received its 17th consecutive clean audit; each year since CAC's inception. CAC received the Auditor of State Award, which is awarded annually to fewer than 10% of public agencies. Thanks to the audit committees and Meg who has overseen all 17 years of the audit.

Ms. Paulsen stated that tax revenue through July was \$5,070,570. This is \$270,503 (5.1%) below budget and \$780,794 (13.3%) below the same period in 2023. She stated interest revenue was \$337,940 and that non-grant expenditures through July were \$582,550. Non-grant expenditures are under budget due to timing of payments. Grantmaking is under budget due to a number of 2024 grants being withdrawn by applicants.

CAC invests its general fund with two different entities – STAR Ohio, which is essentially a high yield money market account managed by the Ohio Treasurer of State and Red Tree Investment Group which is a company that works only with public agencies and diversifies investments for longer term investments.

6. GRANTMAKING ITEMS

Mr. Jake Sinatra, director of grantmaking strategy and communications, provided an update on the [Grantee Connect Series](#), a listening and learning initiative undertaken by CAC to ensure that grant recipients share feedback, connect with one another, and help the agency plan for future grantmaking. The project was initiated in response to Board requests and staff interest in gathering updated data to inform agency work.

- CAC's Grantee Connect Series has three components: 1) anonymous survey of grantees conducted by an independent third-party (75% response rate, reflecting diversity of grantee organizations); 2) Grantee Meet-ups, five gatherings to review survey results and probe further on key findings; and 3) a forthcoming funder scan, which will provide snapshots of other similar arts funding agencies nationwide.
- Headlines from initial work include:
 1. Grant recipients highly value multi-year and flexible funding from CAC.
 2. Grantees are satisfied with communications about the grantmaking process and find CAC staff helpful.
 3. Some grant recipients do not understand how their grants are calculated.

4. There is confusion about CAC's role in fundraising and/or diversifying revenue for the nonprofit arts sector. CAC must clarify its role as steward of current tax resource vs. entity that "expands the pie," a role for others.
 5. There is no consensus on how CAC should distribute funds or evolve its grantmaking, despite need for more resources. Nonprofits want what benefits their organization (organization budget, grant program, etc.)
- CAC is already acting on what we learned in the Grantee Connect Series, introducing several technical improvements to our work. The agency launched a new communications toolkit; introduced videos, visual aids, and other tools to make our grantmaking process clearer; and set up ongoing feedback mechanisms (online forms, site visits, and continued grantee meet-ups).

The Board thanked staff for their work and asked to receive updates on the project at future meetings to guide its policy discussions for 2026 and beyond, pending a successful levy.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jeremy Johnson, president and CEO of Assembly for the Arts, provided an update on the levy campaign, encouraging people to engage directly with Assembly for Action to learn more.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT ON CAC BUSINESS

No public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Trustee Scott Taylor, seconded by Trustee DiCosimo, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: all Ayes. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 pm.

Attest:

Leonard DiCosimo, Secretary, Board of Trustees