

Creative Capacity | Steering Committee

March 13, 2008 3-5 p.m.

Meeting Summary

Approximately 50 members of the committee were present. The meeting was held at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in Portland.

Opening Comments and Introductions:

Martin Medieros, Chair, began the meeting. Self Introductions were made.

City Commissioner Adams gave a brief summary of action to date; including listening to stakeholders, development of an initial list of cultural needs in the region, review of national best practices and focus groups and polling on what cultural experiences regional voters want. Commissioner Adams also reviewed the charge of the Creative Capacity Committee which is to determine the cultural needs of the region and if there is enough support from the public to move forward with the exploration of regional funding options.

Findings:

Dave Metz, from the opinion research firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Associates presented the findings from the focus group and polling results in a power point format. A summary of the findings has been attached to the meeting notes but some of the key point that Dave stressed include:

- Voters in the Portland region value the arts and see multiple benefits from them. Helping children learn, grow and become more creative is seen as the most important benefit of the arts.
- In principle, 2/3rds of voters backed dedicated funding to the arts – even funded by a tax increase of up to \$3 per month. Support is consistent across all three counties, however, slightly less strong in Clackamas County.
- The most compelling arguments for supporting dedicated arts funding relate to arts education. People reflect back to their own experience as a child and believe children should have the same opportunities. Respondents also believe exposure to the arts fosters confidence and creative problem solving which is viewed as critical in today's competitive, global economy.
- Again the numbers are consistent in all three counties and show that the strongest supporters are younger voters', women, and persons with a post graduate education. Those that are least likely to support dedicated funding include men over the age of 50 with a high school education or less.

Political Analysis:

Patricia McCraig, from McCraig Communication and Opinion Research, offered local political analysis. In summary she indicated that the polling shows great numbers but that a great deal of work is needed to communicate the most persuasive messages to the public over time. The benefits of arts and culture need to become should be something that is on the forefront of people's minds. She indicated that we

are years away from a ballot measure especially given the competition for funding, i.e. transportation, zoo, fairgrounds, library.

Options For Moving Forward:

After some discussion on the poll, Kathleen Cosgrove, project consultant from Skyline Consulting Group, introduced two possible strategies for seeking funding:

1. Formation of a special arts and culture district, or
2. Funding through Metro's existing taxing authority.

Both options would require going to the voters for funding, however, creating a special district would require passing legislation in Salem and obtaining voter approval for forming a special district.

Kathleen emphasized that before pursuing any option local jurisdictions and other stakeholders would need to meet and determine what they would need in such a funding package to make it work their constituents.

Discussion:

Commissioner Adams began the open dialogue with posing the question, "Should we move forward with exploring options for funding?"

Members of the committee generally agreed it was worth moving forward however people had a difficult time differentiating moving forward to determine the package and moving forward with a ballot measure of some kind. Before they agreed that we should move forward with a funding measure they felt that a lot of questions needed to be addressed first. It was explained that the answers to these questions would be developed by regional stakeholders including county and city leaders.

The mission of CAC (Cultural Advocacy Coalition) was described by Kathleen Cosgrove and the possibility of expanding CAC's focus to include a regional effort, not just statewide was introduced. Alternatively a regional advocacy group could also be formed.

Jesse Beason clarified the current funding –RACC funds 1-5% operating budgets, depending on organizational size. Our goal is to perhaps provide 5-15% to arts and cultural organizations on a regional level.

The overall consensus among members was YES to move forward to pursue, on a regional level, public funding for the arts and culture. The importance of advocacy now, with elected officials was stressed. The amount of time for a pre-campaign (two years at minimum), prior to a voting measure, was also stressed. Members discussed their concerns over past failures as well as questions about how much money and where it would go.

A remark was made about the positive outcomes of the arts community getting behind a measure that is not one of self-interest but one that would benefit the whole region and children.

The meeting concluded by distributing a short questionnaire inquiring about how people wanted to be involved moving forward.

Meeting brought to adjourn by Martin Medieros. "Get the buzz going."