

Hastings Arts & Culture Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 6:00 PM

Hastings City Hall – Volunteer Room

1. Call Meeting to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Commission Chair Hollenbeck; Vice Chair Read; Commissioners Humphrey, Maner, McCoy, Tribe; Staff Representative Lee

Absent: Commissioner Wagner

Others Present: Parks and Recreation Director Chris Jenkins; Deirdre McGinn

2. Approval of Agenda

Vice Chair Read motioned to approve; Commissioner Humphrey seconded.

Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes – December 13, 2023 Regular Meeting

Commissioner McCoy motioned to approve; Commissioner Tribe seconded.

Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

New commissioner Rylee Maner, and reappointed commissioners Barb Hollenbeck and Steven Read, were sworn in.

Hollenbeck and Read were re-elected Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Motion carried unanimously.

Introductions were made by all in attendance.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION – LAKE REBECCA MASTER PLAN

Parks and Recreation Director Chris Jenkins was invited to present information on the Lake Rebecca Master Plan.

He led by stating that a couple of years ago, the city received a \$1 million grant from the Environmental Natural Resources Trust Fund to complete a project at Lake Rebecca. The first step, which is now underway, is the master planning process that focuses on environmental resources on the land portion at Lake Rebecca that helps the water quality. A secondary focus is on passive recreation improvements including the boat launch, parking lot (and one other associated lot, meandering trails, and fishing piers. Jenkins displayed a map of the area (similar to the one included in the meeting packet) and provided an overview of things that may be accomplished in accordance with Department of Natural Resources and Army Corps of Engineer guidelines and requirements.

For the commission specifically, Jenkins asked the group to generate ideas on how the city could bring art, reference, and interpretation and/or education about cultural resources that were once in

this area. A caveat, he said, is money through the grant probably is not going to pay for that, though this should not deter the process and ideas—noting the city should look at how to implement.

He explained the environmental side is focused on habitat enhancement, restoration, wildlife habitat, and expanding/changing habitats. Discussions have taken place across agencies—the Department of Natural Resources and Army Corps of Engineers, as well as Hastings Environmental Protectors, Friends of Mississippi River and more.

Commissioners posed questions about specific areas on the map.

Jenkins defined passive recreation as the parking lot and fishing pier, birdwatching, and hiking. He said nature trails, in tandem with education, are needed. He noted the city does a great job of getting people around nature, but does not lead them *into* nature, and offered the idea of soft surface trails on the Flint Hills property as an example.

Commissioner Humphrey told Jenkins she may reach out to him about having a conversation with the Prairie Island community regarding opportunities in this area since this was primarily their land. She said they have garden/nature/restoration person in their community that would be a great resource on native plants, animals, and the like.

Vice Chair Read stressed the importance of nature interpretative trails in that area. He would like to see a sculpture garden and soft surface trail to create an amazing experience. Jenkins reminded that the River Flats area is city property. Discussion led to the use of the city-owned piece of the old blue bridge in some elevated fashion, though noted that comes with challenges.

Jenkins asked commissioners to submit ideas to him (via email) that can be incorporated into the master plan. Ideally, he would receive this information in February, as the master plan must be completed by March. He noted that those funds then must be spent by June 30, 2025.

He also welcomes ideas beyond the Lake Rebecca Master Plan Project.

Jenkins brought up the Hastings Civic Arena. He said they have a current nuts and bolts project in the works which nobody will probably even see—refrigeration plant, new electrical service for the building in that plant, new roof on west rink, and solar on top of that roof.

Still to be considered, though, is the entire exterior façade, particularly of west rink. The size of the interior is roughly 200 feet long and 80 feet wide; exterior is 100 feet by 250 feet, and the wall is approximately 30 feet tall. It's been suggested to paint, but concrete was not made to be painted, and would lead to much maintenance. However, things could be bolted to the exterior. He asked the commission to consider ways to create placemaking art, tied in with branding so people can identify the building. He said they have nearly completed a future visioning renovation project as well, with about a \$7 million cost for ideas generated so far. (He did not bring the plans because Parks Commission has not yet seen them.) If that project is approved, interior renovations will happen as

well—which would lead to more opportunities for this commission. Funding options for collaborative efforts would likely be available.

Commissioner Humphrey asked about branding and what Jenkins foresees as the vision—is it hockey or Hastings’ culture? Jenkins foresees room for both. Of importance on the exterior, though, would be for people to know the building is a civic arena, as there is currently no signage. He said staff would also like digital signage to advertise games and events. Both of those things, Jenkins said, can live with exterior art in the right spots. He foresees the arena interior to be a hockey theme with history, but there will be places for other things as well.

Jenkins offered additional opportunities to consider, saying there are all sorts of public spaces for arts and culture:

- Hastings Aquatic Center, particularly the one exterior wall that faces the parking lot.
- Parks system contains 37 parks, 30 miles of trails, and 2 playgrounds—consider opportunities like basketball courts (backstops currently all white) and sculptures along trails and in parks.
- The 2024 trail project is Malcolm Trail (also known as Three Rivers Trail) that runs from Tuttle Drive through Three Rivers mobile home park up to East 31st Street, though there is no plan available yet.

He encouraged commissioners to think of the civic arena, parks system, and city projects as canvasses and to reach out with any questions or comments.

Commissioners thanked Jenkins for all the information and ideas.

OLD BUSINESS

4. Subcommittee Updates

a) Policy & Procedures

Subcommittee has not met.

b) Finance & Fundraising

Subcommittee has not met.

c) Outreach & Communications Update by Humphrey and Tribe

Commissioner Tribe said everything, including the mission statement, has been updated on the city’s website. She will reach out to Communication Coordinator Skelly with save-the-date language for the May 9th Creative Convergence for inclusion in the spring quarterly city newsletter. They would also work on securing a location for the event prior to submitting the information to Skelly.

Commissioner Humphrey has been working hard on a calendar to choose events and track them within certain timeframes, allowing enough time to get things completed. For example,

now is the time to consider events for spring. Hollenbeck suggested moving this discussion to the New Business section of agenda.

Humphrey invited Brandy Wentzler from Pleasant Hills Library to our next meeting to talk about the garden project with Dakota County.

5. Updates from Commissioner Liaisons with City Commissions

None

6. Update on Google Calendar

Commissioner McCoy provided an update on the Google calendar project, with a comprehensive overview for new Commissioner Maner.

He has begun making a Google event submission form and will write policies and requirements for those who will use the calendar. The next step will be inviting people to be a part of it.

Maner asked if there would be analytics with calendar, such as tracking number of views. She also suggested posting a QR code that links to the calendar at the Confluence and other venues around town to make events discoverable for both visitors and residents.

7. Update on City Hall Tour – January 20th – update by Barb

Hollenbeck explained the upcoming tour to Maner.

She explained there are two separate scripts—one for mobile folks (first and second floor), other for those with mobility challenges (first floor only). Tours will be done on the hour from 11:00 to 2:00, with tour guides throughout. They did a dry run this afternoon. She encouraged any commissioners to be a part of it. There is no way to know how many people will show up for the event.

She said perhaps a second tour will be hosted in May to recognize Historic Preservation Month to tie into the Heritage Preservation Committee's contest and award.

NEW BUSINESS

8. Set Benchmarks or Timeline to Accomplish 2024 Goals

Persistent arts—

- Sculptures: Add another artist on Riverwalk; renew Dale Lewis sculptures after one-year lease expires

Hollenbeck sent an email to sculptors James and Ryan Pedersen asking their terms for leasing art, but she hasn't heard anything back yet. She noticed on their website that they've created a piece for the Confluence.

Maner asked how the commission procures art—does it require a Request for Proposal, or does the commission just choose? Thus far, the commission has chosen the leased art. This will be a future discussion.

- Mural artwork on exterior of civic arena

After hearing Jenkins' presentation, Vice Chair Read said he would prefer to do a Request for Proposal for this project. Discussion was had about what this process would entail. In this case they may specify size and the Hastings name element, but otherwise leave it open for interpretation. This topic will be addressed by the commission in the near future to start the process this year.

They also discussed strategies for the commission budget and funding for various projects.

They then circled back to the 2024 Malcolm Trail Project introduced by Jenkins and discussed putting benches along the trail and what that would entail.

Regarding Riverwalk, they discussed artist Patty Stajcar, who would be a good fit for sculpture leasing, specifically an eagle. Read will send her an email. Additionally, they discussed lease renewal of the recently installed Dale Lewis art. Read also noted that the current lease includes a lease-to-own option.

Performing arts—

- Work with Paige in Parks Department on scheduling and programming Performance in the Park segment

Hollenbeck has had discussions with Recreation Programming Specialist Paige Marschall-Bigler about partnering on a Music in the Park event and found out that booking needs to be done in January for the summer events, though the commission could have its choice of her scheduled dates.

Hollenbeck directed Vice Chair Read to seek information on Shakespeare in the Park. He reported that the performing group, Classical Actors Ensemble, performed here in 2018 but had a bad experience because the noise of the trains and riverboats interfered with their voices-only performance. They would like to come back and perform, but in a different space. They also usually perform on weekends, rather than the Tuesday dates for Music in the Park.

Read said the pricing fits the commission's budget for the two-hour performance, but a new venue must be found. Commissioners would need to be mindful of noise, athletic events, accessibility, parking, and availability when choosing. The commission would also

need to find its own audience, since they'd be sacrificing the built-in audience of a Music in the Park event. They discussed bringing in other local arts organizations for the event to set up booths for promotion.

The commission selected Sunday, June 30th at 6:00 or 6:30pm as the date and time, and Vermillion Falls Park as the venue. Staff representative Lee was directed to reserve the park on that date. Hollenbeck will figure out what needs to be done on the city's end for contract approval, payment, etc.

- Walking tour with musicians (and possible plein air painting by local artist) where participants interact with nature, arts, and community

Hollenbeck asked about time of year and location for such an event. Commissioners agreed on late September because weather is more consistent. Location will ideally be a park with a loop. Hollenbeck will reach out to Jenkins and ask the best location to suit the event.

Music will be determined, possibly a quartet from the River Valley Band. The commission liked the idea of forming that partnership.

Hollenbeck asked about tying in a plein air painting. Read said it will depend upon the location chosen. Tribe suggested partnering with high school art students. She will reach out to the teacher to develop a relationship with the program.

- Ideas include a puppet wagon for kids, a classical actors' ensemble, and a walking play

Given the approval of above events, this idea will not be explored at this time.

Cultural activities—

- Rivertown Days

Rather than having its own booth at the event, the commission would like to offer Arts and Culture Commission literature in the booths of other arts organizations.

Read said HPAC will be offering music at the arts and craft fair this year, as well as more food trucks. He is proposing a tent that offers free arts activities for kids led by the various arts organizations. He will convey commission's interest in participation.

- Project with Dakota Tribe (as discussed earlier in meeting)
Commissioner Humphrey had to leave the meeting early. In her stead, Tribe said that, for whatever reason, Humphrey has been struggling to make connections with Prairie Island. She will instead be talking with Simone at Artspace.

Tribe reminded that Brandy Wentzler from the library has been invited to the February commission meeting to discuss the garden project they will be working on with Dakota County. The commission will find ways to contribute.

Read said partnering on that project could prepare the commission for the idea of a healing garden on city property that highlights Native plants. He suggested the ponding basin off Pleasant Drive, between Honeysuckle and 14th Street West, as a possible location.

- Creative Convergence – building connections with arts and culture communities

Commissioners gave new member Maner a comprehensive overview of the Creative Convergence event.

Hollenbeck stressed the importance of personally inviting people to the event this time. Read added that the commission needs to do a better job of following up with participants after the events to hold ourselves accountable. The group also discussed inviting cultural organizations. Read would like an update on BR4R, the work the organization has been doing, and ways the commission can be involved with that organization.

- Commission Calendar (carried from earlier in the meeting)

In Humphrey's absence, Tribe brought up the commission tracking calendar. She stressed that the planning for spring events needs to happen now—for example, Thai Lao Cambodian New Year Festival or Cinco de Mayo to tie in with Downtown Business Association.

At minimum, Read would like to see the commission craft a response for holidays like Juneteenth, as it would be nice for the Arts and Culture Commission to say something and have some sort of social media messaging.

She will ask Humphrey to send the calendar to all.

- Miscellaneous

The group then discussed to-do lists from the meeting, the possibility of holding commission workshops outside of monthly meetings, and open meeting laws as they relate to the commission.

They turned to discussion on ideas inspired by the presentation Jenkins gave earlier and how those would be conveyed to him per the timeline he gave.

Hollenbeck brought up an email she received from Mark Vaughn from the City of Eagan. They have an art house in that community, and she is wondering if we could do something similar by leasing vacant HEDRA properties where artists can offer classes, for example.

11. Announcements

- Saturday, February 3rd – Hastings Art Center is hosting Fiddles and Griddles fundraiser
- Black Dirt Improv's first show is Friday, and they've secured a new venue
- River Valley Band just started rehearsal for their next performance
- Black Dirt started rehearsals at middle school for the winter show and had the largest group of kids audition ever; shows will be held the last Thursday and Friday in January
- Native American Family Gathering will be held on Tuesday, February 7th at 5:00pm at Tilden Community Center
- A group commission photo will be taken at the next meeting on February 14th
- McCoy will be singing at an event on February 13th at the Arts Center
- HPAC will be curating art in a space at the Confluence, which is a great opportunity for art literature and events calendar

12. Adjourn

Commissioner McCoy made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Tribe. Motion carried.

The next Arts and Culture Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 14th at 6:00pm in the Volunteer Room at City Hall.