

Imagine Maryland

Capitol Regional Meeting – July 23, 2008

Date: July 10, 2008
Location: Strathmore Mansion
Music Room
Forum: Capitol Regional Meeting
Facilitator: Morrie Warshawski, Theresa Colvin, Carla Dunlap
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Summary of Major Themes:

About Maryland, people appreciate:

- geographic diversity
- forward thinking sensibility
- ethnic diversity and tolerance
- wealth of creativity

Major Issues:

- funding, creating a culture of philanthropy
- reaching youth
- leadership/governance
- space [rehearsals, dance, community use]

Future Vision Themes:

- increased funding from private sector
- marketing of Maryland as an arts destination and better marketing of its art offerings
- greater involvement of arts in education and with youth
- better support/involvement from public officials

Advice to MSAC:

- come out to see the state's art more often
- play a more frequent role in convening across the state
- be more aggressive about promoting and expanding awareness of the arts

Some Sample Quotes:

"As a resident of Baltimore, I appreciate the sense of forward thinking. It's very positive despite setbacks of making it a better place to live."

"The creativity that's here, the variety of cultural expressions just in Maryland, you can find it all close by. And that's what's kept us here."

“... what I really like about this region is the boundless opportunities. If you open your eyes, there’s something to do. I can expose my kids to so many, many things I think it’s a real gem.”

“In addition to the diversity, it’s the acceptance of the diversity.”

“What I like about it is that it’s not overwhelming. There’s a high standard of living and it’s actually fairly easy. I have time to do my work, it’s close enough to NY that I can show in NY and not have to partake in the hardships of living in NY.”

“The landscape. I had to go to Frederick today, and there’s a moment where you come to a little rise and “gasp!”

“Funding. There’s no bigger issue for any organization than funding. With downturn in economy, funding is down, ticket sales are down. Funding is just so frightening. [most of room agrees] I’m not sure if it’s measurably worse yet, but I’m planning for it.”

“I’m of a mind that when times get hard, people run to the arts. So I’m not so concerned about tickets. I believe that the money is a real issue in Western MD and Eastern Shore, but here the wealth is unimaginable. But we have not created a culture of philanthropy among our individuals. Building a culture of individual and corporate philanthropy is key to this plan.”

“Leadership. So many organizations I work with struggle with getting good, savvy board members. The challenge we’re facing is developing programs kids are attracted to. We find we need to go to them – they won’t come to us. And trying to come up with exciting, challenging programs that kids want to be involved in. It’s a different language and culture and way of engaging.”

“Despite the tremendous efforts of the humanities and arts councils, there are still many at the local and state level who are incredibly naïve about the value of the arts. Not just as engaging and important, but as an economic engine.”

“One challenge we face here is the 800 pound gorilla down the street of the Smithsonian. People come here to spend the night while they visit DC. Strategizing on tourism statewide, we need to engage tourists. “

“Come out of your offices.”

“Think big, connect, robust persuasive leadership.”



RAW TRANSCRIPT NOTES

Greeting from Theresa

Greeting from Morrie

WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT LIVING IN MARYLAND? WHAT ABOUT MD IS SPECIAL? WHY MD?

- Diversity. I live in Takoma Park, and it's how everybody helps one another out. When I was in PG County, I didn't want to be here. But when I moved to Takoma Park, I got used to being able to talk to my neighbors.
- As a resident of Baltimore, I appreciate the sense of forward thinking. It's very positive despite setbacks of making it a better place to live. It reminds me of N.E. because of the energy.
- I live in Takoma Park. It's funky and weird and they don't like pate because of how they treat the ducks. They're passionate and everyone gets a voice.
- It's a brain center and center for activity. I have to say, it's a great creative center. You run into people who are deep thinkers, or are just thinking. They refuse to take a pat answer for anything.
- I've lived in West Africa and Latin America, and the thing that attracted me to Silver Spring is that I could get all the foods I used to eat. The creativity that's here, the variety of cultural expressions just in Maryland, you can find it all close by. And that's what's kept us here.
- It's progressive, and I don't mean it just in a political light. It's not accepting status-quo. Whether it's including people, it's forward thinking.
- Having been a real native of D.C., I think "I really do live in the suburbs" now that I'm in Rockville. But it's incredibly diverse in terms of the people, socio-economically, my daughter gets food from people from all over the world.
- I lived in Buffalo, and I like the weather here much better. But I also lived in Ann Arbor, but what I really like about this region is the boundless opportunities. If you open your eyes, there's something to do. I can expose my kids to so many, many things I think it's a real gem.
- In addition to the diversity, it's the acceptance of the diversity.
- I was born in Bangladesh, and then after 20 years I moved to the U.S. My first state, I lived in CA and then moved to the DC area in 1990. I lived in Silver Spring for 6 years. Then went to South Africa and India for 10 years. And during my travels I've been training in music with a guru. It's a really intense experience. The thought of moving back to the US I thought, "how will I survive here?" But I've been very happy living here for the last 2 years. And I can't believe how much the Indian arts have grown here since 10 years ago. There are performance opportunities and opportunities to teach.
- What I like about it is that it's not overwhelming. There's a high standard of living and it's actually fairly easy. I have time to do my work, it's close enough to NY that I can show in NY and not have to partake in the hardships of living in NY.
- More towards a business perspective, I've lived in CA, TX, and NY, and there's an access to the people who make the decisions here that, maybe because of the size of the states, never happened in these other states. I've met the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and that never happened to me living in these other states.

WHEN PEOPLE COME TO VISIT YOU, WHERE DO YOU TAKE THEM?

- Strathmore!
- I've always thought and appreciated the free museums we have on our doorsteps. Basically, we can see world-renowned shows and not have to pay. Basically it's all paid for.
- Children's theater is kicking butt in this area.
- I'm from North Jersey originally, which is considered a suburb of NY. And here I've felt that even though we're a DC suburb, we have our own identity here.
- Eastern Market.
- The landscape. I had to go to Frederick today, and there's a moment where you come to a little rise and "gasp!"
- You have the oceans, the mountains, the river. You've got it all.
- There's a lot of gems landscape-wise, urban outbacks, that go all the way through Maryland that are basically right here.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ISSUES FOR ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS STATEWIDE? DO YOU HAVE STORIES THAT BACK THAT UP?

- Funding. There's no bigger issue for any organization than funding. With downturn in economy, funding is down, ticket sales are down. Funding is just so frightening. [most of room agrees] I'm not sure if it's measurably worse yet, but I'm planning for it.
- To piggyback on that, the challenge is that we're all competing for the same dollars from the same organizations. We're really working on collaborations because there's only so many blueberries in the pie. Whether it's direct or indirect competition...
- About those blueberries, we can't live without government support. I'm of a mind that when times get hard, people run to the arts. So I'm not so concerned about tickets. I believe that the money is a real issue in Western MD and Eastern Shore, but here the wealth is unimaginable. But we have not created a culture of philanthropy among our individuals. Building a culture of individual and corporate philanthropy is key to this plan. It should be going to everybody. If you want quality of life, and want to see it sustained, you're what's left.
- Leadership. So many organizations I work with struggle with getting good, savvy board members.
- A major issue that we face is transportation for seniors. If we want to get seniors out into the community, we need transportation.
- Overcoming the No Child Left Behind program.
- Conversations I've had with artists and galleries – the whole issue of cultivating the next generation of art collectors. One thing that concerns me is how do we get younger people interested in investing in art. And how do you create next generation of supporters of the arts, especially music. One son of mine is interested in classical music, and one in hip-hop. How do we get support for institutions that support/encourage youth?
- We give out public funds. It seems like a larger issue is the gross inequality of how funds are distributed – the types of organizations receiving funds. Folk, traditional artists, non-501C3 organizations, small grass-roots organizations who are key to communities, it's difficult to get

them economic support. How do we address these inequalities? If you purport to support a diverse group, you need the funding to reflect that.

- We have a challenge on staff: we need to recognize that we're not reaching the teenage population. We're trying to rethink how we can provide programs for that audience. The challenge we're facing is developing programs kids are attracted to. We find we need to go to them – they won't come to us. And trying to come up with exciting, challenging programs that kids want to be involved in. It's a different language and culture and way of engaging. Kids have a very different world from us, but we've had some wonderful successes. But training staff and taking risks for this has been a challenge for our staff and department.
- Providing a central database and total list of funders to organizations in the state. There needs to be an easier way of accessing that data for organizations. The councils need to provide a better access point, creation of awareness, and promotion of funding opportunities. The easier it is to find, the better.

IS SPACE AN ISSUE IN THE STATE?

- I'll say this – rental space for smaller organizations that don't do something every weekend is a very difficult situation. And there is very little dance performance space.
- Changing the subject, one issue I think we have is engaging multiple generations. What I see as important is working across generations. It's a national issue and occurrence. Elderly are being housed in assisted living, and youth being segmented by marketing, I see this segmenting as being risky. Unless you have the good fortune of having access to your grandparents. We're losing a lot by not having connections between generations. The arts needs to create programs and spaces where cross-generational activities, planned and spontaneous.
- Despite the tremendous efforts of the humanities and arts councils, there are still many at the local and state levels who are incredibly naïve about the value of the arts. Not just as engaging and important, but as an economic engine.
- Balancing the arts and the business. But while people might cringe, you have to be in the black. Keeping that dialogue open, musicians and organizations need to understand the balance between the business and the art. There's a business perception about non-profits, too, that they don't need to be in the black. Not only does your art need to be communicated, but it needs to be done in a fiscally responsible way.
- I think leaders of arts and humanities organizations need to think about earned income – chasing earned income. Organizations need to be more collaborative with one another, and realize by coming together the pot grows. There's a real opportunity to get more creative about this.
- One challenge we face here is the 800 pound gorilla down the street of the Smithsonian. People come here to spend the night while they visit DC. Strategizing on tourism statewide, we need to engage tourists.
- DBED is Tourism, which is across the hall. They view the arts as festivals. Night after night stuff doesn't get their attention. That's the hard part.

FIVE FUTURE VISIONING IDEAS FROM 4 DIFFERENT GROUPS:

Group 1 –

1. Gas has got to get cheaper, fast.
2. Got arts? Giving campaign. 5 years, 20% private non-profit giving to arts.
3. MD Corporate Arts Giving Club – peer enforced, seal of approval
4. Statewide arts marketing initiative
 - a. Promote art NIMBY (now in my back yard)
 - b. “Maryland – creativity spoken here”
 - c. Statewide space inventory
5. Economic slump? Make hay – arts are here in good times and bad.

Group 2 –

1. Make MD a destination for the arts (5 year plan)
2. Recognition for the importance of the arts throughout life; educate and understand how arts affects them cradle to grave
3. Collaboration across all sectors
4. Enlightened political leadership
5. More arts throughout the community

Group 3 –

1. Infuse arts into all grades levels, will create arts consumers, and will engage all levels of family
2. Increase accessibility of arts to people of all levels, particularly lower SES
3. Have public officials speak for giving to arts, purchasing arts (legislators arts advocates), will increase giving and buying of art
4. Arts market center; farmers market for art close by in Maryland
5. Create unique arts identity for our region

Group 4 –

1. Arts Education in schools is high priority
2. Public spaces for community arts, more free spaces for expression, uncurated, spontaneous art
3. Shared office space, shared organizational space,(offices, rehearsal spaces, recording studios, etc.)
4. Collaborative marketing of arts organizations
5. Reach 10% for the arts (counties 8%/2%)

HOW CAN MSAC PLAY A ROLE IN THIS FUTURE?

- A statewide arts education dialogue on all levels (state, elected officials, arts orgs, etc.) have MSAC facilitate this
- MSAC advocate for art market spaces in communities
- Have MSAC see more art.
- Have students/citizens/officials see more art
- Open studios

- Put people of different power, ages, backgrounds, etc. on same tour
- Council facilitate roundtable about arts policy, involve diverse group of people
- Have MD Traditions expose people to traditional arts in context (temples, etc.) in a decentralized manner, statewide. Facilitate understanding in a manner that works with expanding demographics of the state.
- Expand funding, space, education, and awareness of arts. Centralize data on those areas.
- Increase awareness of economic impact of the arts in the state.
- Creating arts campaign that focuses on what makes MD unique artistically and culturally, consider ways of creating ways of making it more unique (making the state more livable/engaging for artists)
- Advertise loft spaces in places like Baltimore
- Why doesn't MSAC have more convening opportunities across the state? Not just arts to power, but arts orgs to arts orgs (peer to peer, rather than arts to power).
- MSAC facilitate greater mentoring opportunities for large organizations to teach smaller, or older organizations to teach newer ones
- Cross-pollination is important – exposure to other ideas in other organizations can diffuse insular worldview

FIVE LAST WORDS

- Maryland is a great place for arts
- Partnerships, inclusion, diversity, funding, and more
- Nice to see you all
- Thank you for sharing and listening
- Thank you for your interest
- Outdoor art markets
- Turn GenX into arts consumers
- I hope something comes of this
- Can you do it again?
- Affordable artists living space
- Help artists be better entrepreneurs
- More multidisciplinary funding for arts
- There will be more children than seniors soon
- Funding space awareness diversity
- Convene Collaborate
- Arts Ed is the Key
- Baltimore Symphony goes beyond Baltimore
- Come out of your offices
- Dance exchange trains teens
- Think big, connect, robust persuasive leadership
- Convene, collaborate, share, thank you
- It's time to go home
- More designated public performance spaces