



## **Council Meeting**

### MEETING MINUTES

December 4, 2025  
10:00am – 2:00pm  
Harford County Public Library (Bel-Air)  
100 E Pennsylvania Ave, Bel Air, MD 21014

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#### **In attendance:**

Councilors: Ruby Lopez Harper, Albita Rivera, Marva Jo Camp, Monique Walker, Kathy Beachler, Senator Cheryl Kagan, Tonya Miller Hall, Midge Ingersoll, Janet Stanford, Gerry LaFemina, Nicholas Brown-Cáceres, Shelley Morhaim, Paige Hernandez

Staff: Steven Skerritt-Davis, Ryan Patterson, Ryan Koons, Abby Neyenhouse, Emily Sollenberger, Laura Weiss, Derrick Quevedo, Chad Buterbaugh, Elizabeth Morales, Alysha Suryah, Nora Howell, Elli Hernandez, Cathy Teixeira, Brad Bittner, Kirk Amaral Snow, Tammy Oppel, David Mitchell, Leslie Gillard, Jess Porter

#### **Call to Order**

Ruby Lopez Harper called the meeting to order at approximately 10:03 a.m. and reviewed the guiding documents.

#### **Welcome**

Annie Kovach, Senior Branch Manager-Adult Services of the Harford County Public Library (Bel Air), provided the welcome and information about the library. Meg McReynolds, Cultural Arts & Community Outreach Coordinator of HCPL, provided the welcome and history of the local arts board and how it utilizes MSAC funding for grants and programs.

#### **Creative Assignment**

Nora led a creative exercise where Council members were presented with works from eight Maryland-based artists. Members discussed which artist they would select for a hypothetical community public art grant to foster engagement and awareness of the state's artistic diversity.



### **Chair Remarks**

Ruby lauded the MSAC staff for their work, advised us to celebrate the little wins, and suggested we need to be inspiring to other arts councils around the country. Ruby welcomed new council members, Gerry LaFemina and Nichola Brown-Cáceres.

**Marva Jo moved to approve the September 4, 2025 minutes. Albita seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**

### **Executive Director's Report (Skerritt-Davis)**

- Steven provided the following updates:
  - Continued engagement with the Governor's Office and the Department of Commerce
  - Staffing updates amid a statewide hiring freeze, including active recruitment efforts
  - Grant program activity and application volume across multiple funding categories
  - Federal updates, including National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) State Arts Partnership funding and America250 public art initiatives.
  - Progress on the Arts Incubator Working Group and the Maryland Public Art Commission
  - Ongoing strategic plan implementation and communications improvements
- Chad provided an update on Professional Development, focusing on entrepreneurship and connecting the arts sector with other resources in state government
- Staff were acknowledged for their sustained work and responsiveness.

### **Executive Committee Report**

- Ruby provided updates from the November 17, 2025 committee meeting:
  - Review of the National Endowment for the Arts procedural audit and corrective action plan
  - Discussion of Council leadership succession planning
  - Recommendation to begin the nominating process earlier to ensure continuity



### **Governance Committee Report**

- Paige provided updates from the December 2, 2025 committee meeting to include a review of proposed bylaw amendments addressing:
  - Nominating committee responsibilities
  - Grant approval processes
  - Officer succession procedures
  - Alignment with current laws and practices
- Additional discussions included counselor engagement strategies, mentorship revitalization, and updated talking points for Council representation.

### **Fiscal Report**

- Marva Jo provided updates from the Fiscal Report as of November 20, 2025, including:
  - Overview of FY26 revenues and expenditures
  - Grant payment status and remaining obligations
  - Confirmation of fiscal compliance and sound financial controls
- The Council expressed appreciation to staff for financial stewardship.

### **Program Policy and Evaluation Committee Report**

- Albita presented policy recommendations related to the Grants for Artists Program, including:
  - Expanded allowable use of funds
  - Updated proof-of-artistry requirements
  - Adjustments to ensure geographic representation across counties
- The Council discussed clarity around acceptable documentation formats and staff committed to refining public-facing guidance.
- The Council agreed to the suggestion of allowing the committee to review the policies before being sent to the Secretary for approval.

### **Nominating Committee Elections**

Following discussion and a revised slate, the Council elected the FY27 Nominating Committee: Albita, Janet, and Shelley

**Gerry moved to approve the revised slate. Midge seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**



## **Maryland Citizens for the Arts**

- Nicholas Cohen, Executive Director of MCA, presented an overview of statewide arts advocacy efforts, including:
  - Legislative priorities for the upcoming General Assembly session
  - The role of Council members as ambassadors and advocates
  - Strategies for engaging lawmakers and participating in Maryland Arts Day
- Councilors discussed inclusive language and representation in advocacy.

## **New Business**

- Shelley raised early planning considerations for MSAC's 60th Anniversary in 2027
  - Steven suggested working with the Executive Committee on brainstorming ideas for a celebration around the State.
- Announcements were shared regarding upcoming arts events by Council members and community partners

## **Public Comment**

- Comments were made from the following:
  - Bob Willenbrink - Maryland Center for the Arts
  - Carol Thompson - Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra
  - Gary McDaniel - Rogue Swan Theatre Company
  - Chuck Hamrick - River Stone Theatre Company

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 1:02 p.m.

Cat Butrim, Economic Development Coordinator with the Town of Bel Air, provided an overview of the Bel Air Arts & Entertainment District prior to an optional guided tour.