



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes

### MILWAUKEE ARTS BOARD PUBLIC ART SUBCOMMITTEE

**POLLY MORRIS, CHAIR**

*Tina Klose, Emilia Layden, Sandra McSweeney, and Tim  
Murphy*

**Staff Assistant, Yadira Melendez, 286-2775**  
**Fax: 286-3456, [Yadira.Melendez@milwaukee.gov](mailto:Yadira.Melendez@milwaukee.gov)**

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**Tuesday, May 9, 2023**

**3:00 PM**

**Virtual**

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#### **1. Roll call**

*The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm*

*Members present: Morris, Layden, McSweeney and Murphy.*

*Members excused: Klose*

*Ms. Svetic was also present.*

#### **2. Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

*Mr. Murphy moved approval of the minutes from April 11, 2023 with 3 clerical corrections. Ms. Morris seconded. There were no objections.*

#### **3. New Business**

*Ms. Morris said that Ms. Sebastian has been the central character on what is happening at the Wisconsin Convention Center. She added that Ms. Sebastian was invited to give an update of what is going on and also to talk in general to find a way to put together a policy or a best practices document.*

*Ms. Sebastian said that in this process she is finding an awful turmoil around the right questions to ask and that the right questions are about what conditions and what processes are needed to determine when and if public art is being removed and, what are the viable paths and expectations. She also said that she has put a list together of links about best practices and deaccessioning information from other cities that will be shared with the members. She added that she understands that the Arts Board is concerned about the public art but also about the stuff that directly funds. She said that it is specified on the Duties and Powers of the Public Art Subcommittee (320-12); that the public interest is part of their concern and, that it is important to start to look more broad at how the City can help to get a good perspective in our shared culture. She also mentioned that it would be a good idea to work closely with the Historic Preservation to develop policies for public art.*

*Ms. Sebastian said that she recognizes that the Arts Board has done a lot with so little, with a one part time staff person who is over stretched and that she also applauds the work done with the Conservation Fund and that as a matter of fact, one her works received funds for restoration a couple of years ago.*

*As for the Wisconsin Center District she said that, it is a semiautonomous entity with*

*its own rights and that the overseers are appointed by the Governor, Mayor and Common Council's President. She added that according to Wikipedia on February of 2020, the Common Council granted the Wisconsin Center District the approval to finance the plan for expansion and that if it goes before the Common Council, then it becomes of the public interest. She said that another example is that there are 8 murals at the Miller High Lite Theater (integrated art within the Wisconsin Center District) that are potentially at risk. She added that we need to compile information about the fate of the public art in Milwaukee. She also said that two art pieces have been removed already and that she does not know which entity is responsible for it and that for this situation particularly, people have an interest and that at certain point, people feel ownership and can call for a public process. She added that for the Woodland Pattern project, the piece was described as a work for hire from the beginning. She explained that it means that some of the protections are valid while some are not and, some cover copy writing, reputation and integrity and that there is a distinction between free standing work and what it is integrated in the architecture of the building (like this one). She said that there is no reason for an artist to take the work back after been deaccessioned (she cited the example of the 4,000 pounds of white marble from "City Yard" by Sheila Klein) and, suggested that it would be better to give some guidance, that the work could be in storage to be relocated later. Ms. Sebastian said that the Arts Board could take a look into the art deaccessioning policy.*

*Ms. Sebastian explained that Wisconsin Writing Project, the Woodland Pattern and herself made an attempt two years ago to contact the Wisconsin Center District about the stage of the writing project with the idea to be continued within the new building. She said that they were revoked and told that there would be a public process for commissioning the work for the new building. They agreed that would apply under the new direction and that when they applied, they found out that the arts committee never reviewed their original proposal (possibly a legal issue). She said that 2-3 months ago, the Woodland Pattern received a certified letter about the work being deaccessioned but that she was never contacted individually. She said that when she found out, the Woodland Pattern and she approached the Wisconsin Center District and because there it was a work for hire, they could not stop them legally from taking the work down. She said that the matter became more of a moral, integrity and reputation issue and negotiated to partially fund a book and agreed not to make a big public controversy. She said that the letters were leaked, the matter became public and that is why they decided to fight. She also said that Marti Brooks was given a bad advice from the architects this time and she was part of the design meeting 25 years ago with the same firm. She also mentioned that they have been offered \$35,000 to reinstall some of the art work (not the sculptural part of it) and that they need to find the walls. She added that they have to make a contract yet and that they are not happy but they want to keep the spirit of the work.*

*Ms. Morris said that they were not notified as well and that the Public Art Subcommittee don't get the opportunity to weigh in and wonders how they can receive notifications of this nature.*

*Ms. Sebastian said that it must be included in the contract and that the local arts board should be notified and that she will continue to advocate for it.*

*Mr. Murphy asked about the deaccessioning program.*

*Ms. Sebastian said that she will forward it to Ms. Morris to be shared with the board. She also said that there is a generational shift nationwide and that deaccessioning is going to happen more and more.*

*Mr. Murphy said that there must be a demolition permit from DCD and that the Public Art Subcommittee should interfere.*

*Ms. Layden said that the sculpture must be saved and asked if we have any idea where to start.*

*Ms. Svetic said that she will ask around.*

*Ms. Layden said that we do not have the authority and that this is a conversation to have with the board.*

*Ms. Morris said that sometimes the art panels don't know the time/place of the art pieces and that they have to find a way to put together a one page handbook to give to the Council Members to come in front of the board when things like these happen in their districts.*

*Ms. Svetic said that a resource information section can be added to the website as well.*

#### **4. Old Business**

*No old business were discussed.*

*Ms. Svetic said that Sarah has a plan for an art truck (research phase), that she is working with the people from DPW/Tow Lot and that she is also looking for organizations to host the art truck. Ms. Svetic shared a sketch of the art truck.*

*The meeting adjourned at 3:48 pm*

*Yadira Melendez  
Staff Assistant*