

Dominick Pangallo Mayor

Salem Public Art Commission 98 Washington Street

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# Public Art Commission

# January 16, 2024

# 6:00pm

Meeting held remotely via zoom

# MEETING MINUTES

**Note:** All proposals, presentations, and/or documentation to be reviewed and discussed at this meeting can be viewed online at the following link: <https://bit.ly/SalemPACProposals>

## Meeting called to order at 6:10 pm.

* **Roll Call PAC:** Norene Gachignard, John Andrews, Becky Fisher, Hannah Gathman, James Bostick, & Gwen Rosemond. Absent: Carly Dwyer-Naik. Also present: Julie Barry.

## Meeting Minute Approvals

o **November 2023 Meeting Minutes –** Norene entertained a motion to approve the minutes.   
Jim made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Hannah seconded. Motion approved.

## Budget Review and Allotment of Remaining Funds

## Julie stated that each year they prioritize and find the best way to allocate the funds. Every fiscal cycle, on July 1st, the city is given its annual budget and given a year in advance, and we are currently in the same calendar and fiscal year, 2024. Only on July 1st they will move into the fiscal year 2025, with a fresh allotment of money. Each year the PAC receives three pots of money that the board must, a Public Art (PA) fund: $25,000, Conservation & Maintenance (C&M): $10,000 that is specific to their public art collection, and Downtown Programming Funds (DPF): $15,000 given by former Mayor Kim Driscoll to be used for temporary public art, performances, window murals, etc. to activate the downtown only. The other two funds can be used anywhere in the city.

## Budget conversations began in May or June, see how things go, and then have a 6-month check-in. At the beginning of the year, they allocated $5,000 from the Public Art funds for public art mini grants and $7,500 from the DPF for performance mini grants, totaling $12,500 for Salem based arts and culture activation. They agreed that all $10,000 would be used towards signage for their permanent collection, and in November they voted to use those funds as a back-up for Charolette Forten signage. If the grant funding she applied for, at Charolette Forten Park comes through, then $10,000 will be reallocated for permanent public art collection signage. In September they allocated public art mini grants, which are done in two cycles, September, and March. In the first cycle, the awards were $3,500 out of the $5,000, and the only expenditure from the $7,500 was $1,700. For the March mini grant cycle, $1,500 has been reserved for PA and $5,800 for DPF.

## We allocated $5,400 towards Main Streets activations for Salem So Sweet, for two window murals and four performances. $1,400 was allotted for NYE activations along Artists’ Row. These targeted partnerships were an effort to bring public art where events were already happening. Some money has been earmarked for public ArtBox Project continuation, providing 5 art boxes at $500 each. There is a rotating sculpture garden at $6,000 for each loan and those funds have been allocated and expended, and they will be installed in April. There is the Artwork Archive Membership at $496, the Mural Slam People’s Choice Award at $500, the Mural Slam prizes and materials at $6,500 that have been allocated. It is a reoccurring annual event sponsored by the PAC that takes place on Artists’ Row that includes 12 murals commissioned from local artists through a call for artists. In June of 2023, $5,000 was earmarked for the 2024 fiscal cycle for the Salem Arts Fest, but their community art project proposal has yet to be received. The amount needs to be adjusted because the PAC cannot give Salem Main Streets more than $10,000, so the artists would need to be paid directly by the PAC, the remaining $2,100 in DPF funds can be allocated towards them, or because it is public art, some of the remaining PA funds could also be allocated to them. There is just over $4,000 in the PA budget that remains to be allocated. $3,000 was set aside for experimental marketing, but what to spend those funds on remains undetermined.

## Hannah arrived at the meeting.

## Becky requested more information on the Salem Arts Fest Community Public Art Project. John replied that they always try to do a community-based art project. One year they used upcycled sail material to make pinwheels that school students decorated and were strung along the light poles on Artists’ Row. Last year, due to budget limitations for professional artists, they transitioned to strong favors from artists they were working with. Last year, a high school student was interested in learning how to do public art, and stipends were given to the professional artists to support the high school student, and that is the current plan and Alexis will help source this year’s artist. The project usually lives in the vicinity of Artists’ Row for some length of time, approximately 6-8 months. The last project used albums as the medium for people to tell their story about their relationship to food. The albums were attached to stands that became semi-permanent structures for their public art exhibit. The $5,000 amount is supplemented throughout the festival, but they also seek sponsors. Julie adds that the PAC is essentially giving a grant to help support the artist. The Arts Festival could no longer provide the same level of support so the PAC started supplementing the ask. John noted that he co-manages the Arts Festival with Kylie from Salem Main Streets and if funding were voted on, he would recuse himself. This is year 7 of the community art project and the PAC has been helping for the past couple of years, and one of the priorities is that everyone who participates receives a stipend.

## Hannah stated that if the funds were to be adjusted, the public art project would be beneficial and the $5,000 discussed does make a big difference in the festival’s budget. Since there is no current plan to move forward with the experimental marketing idea, she was in favor of allocating that $5,000 to Salem Main Streets. Jim responded that the entire amount cannot be given since $5,400 was already allocated to them. Julie reiterated that it could be given to the artists directly and not to Salem Main Streets. Noreen agreed. Jim suggested planning PAC marketing soon. John didn’t believe they had the budget; he was not thrilled with the idea of a rack card but suggested creating a sizzle reel highlighting what the PAC has done. Julie suggested a reel be complied in 2025 and launch in 2026 for Salem’s 400th year celebration, noting that they can estimate costs because they are working in that now at Charolette Forten Park. She suggested putting that piece of it into the March mini grant cycle to make the public art aspect of it more robust, and to allocate July 2025 funding towards it already knowing how much they can spend and to make social media posts. Gwen was in favor of looking ahead to 2025 and 2026 giving them time to plan. Norene suggested using rack cards. Jim suggested using some of those funds for content creation for photographers and videographers. Hannah suggested $3-5,000 for content creation and was in favor of generating 2025 funds for 2026 and was in favor of spending a few hundred dollars on swag products for brand recognition for the PAC, but not rack cards. Norene agreed. Gwen was in favor of what would be in the public eye.

## Julie asked if they wanted to put the remaining $1,400 towards marketing or if any of those funds should go towards the mini grant program. Becky was supportive of swag but appreciated Jim’s comments regarding capturing content using their current budget, but who do they want to market the art to because media outlets capture a different eye than swag. John replied that the sizzle reel can be shared with the state council for advocacy to increase funding, it can advocate for tourism, and community engagement to encourage residents to explore their own city. He’s not as clear on who the audience would be as he is on knowing who the audience could be. Jim noted the various activities coming up between now and 2025, allowing that money to be used to pay people now to capture that content. Becky agreed. John questioned whether the content is used to develop the audience or if they develop the audience to create the content. Hannah suggested focusing on any “can’t miss” content and any remaining funds can go towards swag. Julie reminded the PAC that they are currently contracted with a videographer creating content for a documentary about the Charolette Forten project, and they will have licensing to include in a sizzler reel later. She was unsure if $1,000 was enough to contract with a videographer and other content can be pulled from must see moments between now and June. In July, they can discuss re-entering into a contract with the videographer. Jim raised concerns with capturing content from the Arts Fest, Mural Slam, etc. John noted that he had 5 years of content to use from Creative Collective, but mostly photography and very little video. Julie suggested partnering with Salem Main Streets to generate more content. John added that other than the Arts Festival and Charolette Forten there is much on the calendar to highlight other than documentation of the ArtBox Project. A lot of social media is capture in the moment at events and added to social media pages. Jim suggested asking the artists for content. James was in favor of the funds going to people. Jim suggested targeted distributions during the Arts Fest.

## Julie left the meeting.

## Norene entertained a motion to vote on the budget as amended. Moved by John, seconded by Hannah. Motion approved.

## Public Art & Performance Mini Grant Program Review and March Cycle Planning

Hannah believed most of the budget was used in the fall round and she assumed there would be another push from the city for the spring cycle. Becky believed that there were decisions that needed to be made regarding the mini grants. Hannah clarified that there needs to be some initial publicity, like in the fall, and for the PAC to review anything that comes in prior to the March meeting. She suggested providing a press release for the artists asking for small grants. John noted that this is an opportunity to review the language of the submission and standard criteria, and to frame the March budget and timeline. Jim noted that the headline states March 4th and should be revised. Hannah noted that they frontloaded the awards because the expenditures need to go out by June 30th making a tight timeline. Jim suggested requesting content from the three upcoming artists. Hannah argued that with $500 grants it may not be reasonable to request additional documentation and content. John disagreed with requiring additional adding addition requirements and to have clear instructions on tagging the city, the PAC, requesting to be followed on social media, etc. and letting the PAC know how to access their social media to engage with them in return.

Hannah noted typo on the second page regarding the application deadline and suggested eliminating the second line regarding considerations for the next fiscal year. Becky encouraged the artists to provide any documentation they want. John was encouraged to use similar language for Creative Collective. Becky suggested including that language as another bullet point along with the $500 grant fund amount. Hannah believed that many of these grants only fund a portion of each project. John suggested that marketing is rarely included in the non-profit art world. Hannah disagreed nothing that documentation is often included in grant funds to help with marketing. A core question from the previous year was where the spirit of the mini grants was focused. Last year, the Northshore CDC’s Punta Urban Art Museum requested $2,500 for a project that would cost tens of thousands of dollars and in their deliberations, they determined that the spirit of their funding was more about smaller projects, and the nuance of the language is important. Jim added that the expected outcome is that there is a piece of art on display in Salem for a period of time. Hannah added that documentation could create that outcome. Becky questioned whether casting a wide net was a bad idea with so little time to capture but agreed with the request for more documentation.

Julie returned to the meeting. Hannah updated Julie on the decision that eligible awards could go to documentation of a public art project, with the caveat of the PAC to decide if any of the documentation is within the spirit of the grant and to be used by the artist. Julie agreed to revise the mini-grant application to include documentation. John added that when awarded, the recipient should be given information on how to engage with the PAC on social media and to request social media that the PAC should follow as well. Julie noted that they ask for the artists handles but without a targeted marketing person it doesn’t really go anyway. The PAC agreed to assist with social media and engaging with the artists.

## Project Updates

Julie stated:

The PAC was just approved for the new round of five sculptures at Leslie’s Retreat, to be installed in April 2024.

The Charolette Forten Memorial Project is moving along but the artist is dragging her feet about setting a date to come to Salem. Her references all stated that she works in her own time but gets the job done beautifully, so she is giving her the space to work and is hoping for a date within the next couple of weeks so she can be announced. Julie stated that she will speak to Gwen soon about giving a talk at Old Town Hall about Charolette Forten. The project is ramping up with some documentation from the videographer, Steve Foley, seeking information on the history of the park. He was highly recommended by the Mayor and Governor, and the detail in his scope of work was very helpful. The way he spoke about the project was understandable and he had an achievable price point, noting that it was difficult to compare videographer quotes. She stated that if the PAC decided to use some of that budget towards content creation, she would suggest storyboarding to build out how they want to documentary to look.

They are moving forward with the exterior renovations to Old Town Hall and there are four grant applications due in March.

They will launch the Call for Artists’ Row sometime this spring, so artists will know prior to fall whether they will be moving into one of the buildings.

Underpass: The city does still have a pocket of money for the beautification of the underpass and there has been some traction with what is possible from MassDOT. MassDOT recently paused all mural approvals on all their properties, although the PEM is interested in partnering with the PAC for what could be a wonderful 2026 project that focuses on landscape and lighting due to the current mural restriction. John asked if flooding was discussed at the park because they were under water. Julie replied that they know it is a flood zone and it’s in the artists contracts that this location is a flood zone, but the water is fleeting, after a couple hours the water receded, and the damage was minimal. She will visit the site tomorrow to access the damage.

## Other Business-

## Arts Fest

## John stated that he will have numerous opportunities for applications within the next week for performers, vendors, etc.

## Salem So Sweet

## John stated that the festival will be held downtown from February 9-11th. He suggested volunteers for Salem Main Street to get an idea of how it operates.

## Special Events Coordinator

## John stated that the city hired a new and local event person, Jeremy Fisk. Norene suggested inviting him to a PAC meeting.

## Special Events Coordinator

## Julie stated that there will be some upcoming events in honor of Black History Month at the end of February.

* **Adjourn-** Norene entertained a motion to adjourn. Moved by John seconded by James. Meeting Adjourned at 7:20 pm.

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