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MAYOR

Salem Public Art Commission
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Public Art Commission

October 17, 2023

6:30pm

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 6:38 pm.**
- **Roll Call PAC:** Norene Gachignard, Janine Liberty, Hannah Gathman, John Andrews, James Bostick, & Gwendolyn Rosemond. Absent: Carly Dwyer-Naik. (Janine Liberty has stepped down and there is a vacant position.) Also present: Julie Barry.
- **Meeting Minute Approvals**
 - o **September 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes** – Norene entertained a motion to approve the minutes. Jim made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Janine seconded. Motion approved.
- **Charolette Forten Memorial Recommended Artist Review & Approval –**

Julie notes that the memorial has been an on-going community lead initiative for the past 4+ years and the PAC is poised to select an artist from the four semi-finalists. They convened an advisory group that lead the process up to a call for artists', an artist selection committee was also convened and included people from the advisory group and SSU staff with familiarity in sculpture, and that group selected four semi-finalist artists that presented their concepts to the community that cast their votes. After the community voting period closed, the artist selection committee reconvened and evaluate feedback from the technical review team and additional information provided by the artists, comments from the public, results of the community vote, and how well the artists proposal aligned with the goals and values of the Charolette Forten Memorial project. Artist Ai Qiu Hopen of Humanity Memorial was identified unanimously by the selection committee and made a formal recommendation to the PAC to be the artist selected to create a bronze statue in the likeness of Charlotte Forten Grimke, to be on permanent display at Charolette Forten Park, 289 Derby Street.

Noreen asks who the public selected as their first choice. Julie replies that a sculpture called 'Fortitude' by David and MJ Clark was the community favorite; however, the advisory group felt that because Charolette was three generations free and never enslaved the symbolism of the chackle would misrepresent her life and legacy. The advisory group felt that the proposal by Ai Qui Hopen was a better representation of Charolette as a person and her history.

Noreen asks how many votes were cast. Julies replies over 300, approximately 100 were cast in-person and over 200 on the website. It was a robust engagement process, Alphonse Wright from the committee is in attendance tonight, and PAC member Gwen was also a panelist. Jim states that the in-person presentations were very effective. Noreen agrees.

Noreen opened public comment.

Alphonse wishes that Gwendolyn was able to provide input given that she is the resident authority on Charolette Forten. He notes that the decision to move away from the popular vote was not one that they came to easily. but they ultimately felt that 'Fortitude' did not fit the legacy or values of Charolette. When the artist was questioned regarding why a shackle was proposed, he felt it was troubling that they dodged the question by responding with "I can't be responsible for how people interpret my art." The artist selected had a passion that was bar none and outstanding and she scored the highest using their voting system. He's glad this was the outcome and hopes the PAC will continue the promotion of this artists work. He thanks the PAC for such a great experience and looks forward to seeing the sculpture at Charolette Forten Park.

Jim and Noreen agree with the panel's decision.

Norene entertained a motion to approve the panelists selection of Artist Ai Qiu Hopen of Humanity Memorial for the Charolette Forten sculpture. Moved by Hannah. Seconded by Jim. Vote: Norene, Janine, Hannah, John, James, & Gwendolyn. Motion carries unanimously.

- **Other Business-**

- Jim asks if the proposals reviewed for Artists in Residence and Public Art Projects have been contacted. Julies replies yes, they are currently being contracted, and once contracts have been signed a press release can be sent out highlighting the projects that have been funded. They are happening are different times so they can be promoted closer to the time of each event. The Public Artists in Residence is also being contracted and there will be a big press push in February to promote Julia who won't start until May, while also not take away from Claudia who is ending her residency at the end of January. John asks if a wrap-up press release will be promoted for Claudia. Julies replies that they haven't done one previously, but it is a nice idea to reflect upon her activation. It could be put together prior to her final exhibition to advertise the opportunity for people to engage with her. John agreed to make the effort to highlight a simplified version of Claudia's work. Hannah agrees with John's great idea to use for future marketing and to show how the artists advanced. She acknowledges the importance of Gwen's role in the Charolette Forten selection process where she provided useful and relatable context about Charolette's life and legacy, and the recording of that session should be available online through Salem Access Television. This process raises an interesting question regarding requestion Request for Qualifications (RFQ's) to select semifinalists, since the concept that won the popular vote was not in line with the vision, goals, and values identified by the evaluation committee. It was interesting to see that

process play out, which resulted in an interesting pivot when the artists were pre-vetted and not their proposals. Julie replies that concept proposals aren't requested initially because it is unfair to ask artists to do that level of design work for free and past credentials are needed to contract the artists to pay them to develop a concept. An additional step would be to vet the concepts before they go public but that would need to be articulated in the call for artists. They were surprised to see which concept won the public vote, which they believe were gut reactions vs. an understanding of Charolette's history and the symbolism of the shackle. Hannah agrees that the proposal with the shackle was visually stunning. She asks if tonight's Charolette Foten vote, mini-grants, and Artists in Residence were still meant to remain confidential as stated in the memo given that tonight's meeting is public. Julie replies that anything up to this point was meant to remain confidential.

- **Adjourn-** Norene entertained a motion to adjourn. Moved by Jim, seconded by Noreen. Meeting Adjourned at 7:02 pm.

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