

This meeting summary was produced by City Bureau Documenters, in accordance with our editorial independence policy, with financial support from the City of Chicago. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email City Bureau at [documenters@citybureau.org](mailto:documenters@citybureau.org) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.

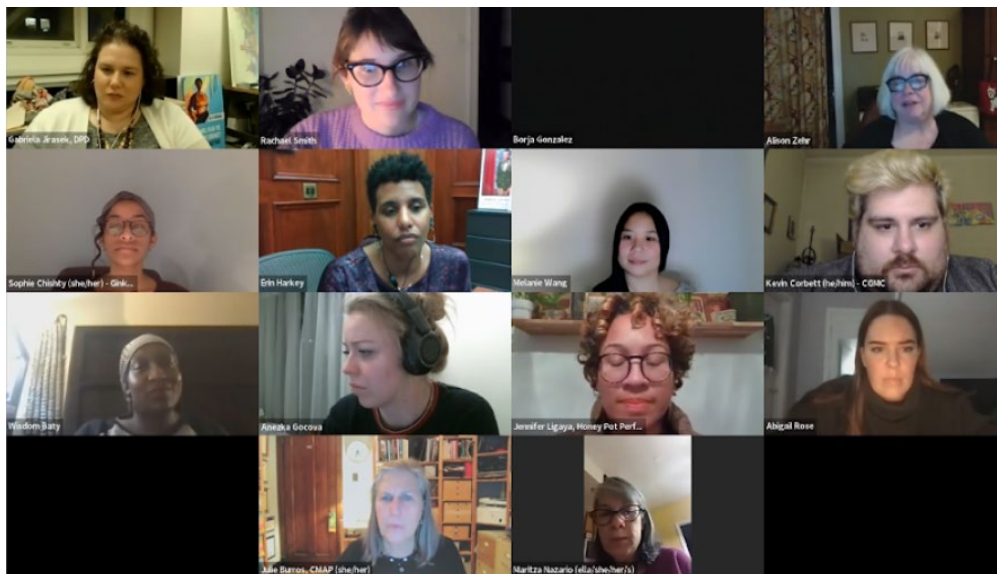
## Arts and Culture Meeting #7

November 29, 2021, 4:00PM | 2 hours

Documented by: Stephen Yoshida

### ATTENDEES

- Abigail Rose
- Rachael Smith
- Alison Zehr
- Sophie Chisty
- Anezka Gocova
- Borja Gonzalez
- Enrique Morales
- Lynn Basa
- Erin Harkey
- Gabriela Jirasek
- Julie Burros
- Peggy Stewart
- Melanie Wang
- Wisdom Baty
- Jennifer Ligaya
- Sophie Chishty
- Clevan Tucker
- Dawn Posey
- Maritza Navaro
- Devonta Boston
- Henry Wishcamper
- Kevin Corbett
- Max Grinnell



## MEETING GOAL

*To discuss and refine the Arts & Culture pillar's guiding questions and the related proposed objectives, based on feedback from the Advisory Committee. They also tweaked the in-progress outlines of the pillar's goals that will inform policy research in Phase 3.*

## WHERE WE ARE



Step 1

### **We Are**

*Setting the Stage*



Step 2

### **We Have and Need**

*Develop A Policy Toolkit*



Step 3

### **We Will**

*Set Policy Framework*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

This meeting highlighted **the need to increase arts and culture presence in a variety of neighborhoods, not just downtown**. Potential policies based on these ideas range from the idea of art skills and educational opportunities as a widely useful workforce development tactic, to how the city could work more with not-for-profit organizations and developers to bring art spaces (galleries, studios, public art, etc.) to Chicago's South and West Sides. This is seen as a way to increase the city's livability and retain artists and creative workers struggling with opportunities and affordability.

2

**Another critical point is how artists and creative workers are under-valued and under-studied as laborers in the economic sector**. For instance, Wisdom Baty's presentation at the top of the meeting underscored how a society that figures out how to economically support its most marginalized groups (in this case Black, women, caregivers, artists) will be able to support all of its people. Melanie Wang also pointed out that the first step to ensuring equity for creative workers is developing more quantitative data on the demographic and economic status of the arts and culture industries.

3

The meeting also brought up the **city-wide need for a group devoted to advocacy, networking, mentorship, and support for art workers**. Attendees pointed out at various times that workers in other industries access support through unions, professional organizations, etc., but that no comparable resource is available to artists as a whole. Though organizations that deal with smaller subsets of the arts do exist, a sense developed that having a more generalized organization would help the city support their artists.

## CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

*“How can artists and art organizations get in front of things that might feel like more of a Planning and Development initiative? For example, finding capital for a studio space—areas that might not be within the purview of [the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events]... but are absolutely relevant and important resources ... that other agencies might be well-positioned to execute.”*

**Melanie Wang** | 3Arts, Director of Development and Partnerships

*“Creating arts space is essential on the South Side in particular ... to create mixed-use, live-work, collectively-owned property or buildings for creatives. I’m focused right now on the Southeast Side, but to create an opportunity to not only develop or do a feasibility study so the city can see the people want this. We’ve been trying to do this for 40 years and ... one of the biggest challenges is the city has buildings and the city has land; but the city needs developers. And the challenge is, as a small developer, they [the City of Chicago] want these big, bang-for-their-buck kind of developments. They want 100 or 200 units. But to really create sustainable community, it needs to be more intimate.”*

**Kiela Smith-Upton** | Artists Design the Future, Co-Founder & Project Manager

*“If you think about watering the root, it will seep into other communities. Black women, brown women, white women, we have a lot of the same concerns, a lot of the same issues—especially mothers. However, because of systematic issues, Black women get the least amount of help. But we still have the same kind of mental, physical and hormonal things to go through; we still have to figure out school and raising kids. Be generous. Be fair. When we think about equity we really have to think about what it means to support populations that have not received that support historically and systematically.”*

**Wisdom Baty** | Wild Yams: Black Mothers Artist Residency, Founder and Creative Director

## NOTES

- Arts and Culture Co-Chairs: Erin Harkey, DCASE; Melanie Wang, 3Arts
  - Artist-Organizers: Honey Pot Performance—Aaliyah Christina, Jennifer Ligaya, Wisdom Baty
- Findings about needs so far:
  - Equal access and opportunity for the creation and display of art
  - An organized, citywide assessment of cultural facilities to help understand neighborhood inequities
  - Additional public and private funding to support professional artists and arts students to ensure diversity within the City's economy
- This is the final meeting of the pillar's second phase developing subject matter reports on We Will Chicago's seven individual pillars. In terms of total meetings, this is the initiative's halfway point running from July 2021 through June 2022.
  - In the next phase, the working groups will begin to consider policy best practices and performance assessment metrics before compiling the final pillar reports.
- Meeting #7 involved the pillar group work:
  - Listening to presentations from artist/activists, We Will Chicago community partners, and pillar co-chairs giving report outs from the We Will Chicago Advisory Committee.
  - Working in breakout groups to discuss a list of 1-3 objectives per each guiding question drafted by the Advisory Committee and the City's consultants based on discussions of the working group.

## Presentations

- Kevin Corbett, executive director of Chicago Gay Men's Chorus, hosted a meeting on November 11th with 15 attendees using the "Meeting in a Box" resource provided by We Will Chicago.

## **Advisory Committee Report—Co-Chairs Melanie Wang and Erin Harkey**

- They got to hear back from other pillars for the first time and talked with representatives from the Lifelong Learning and Environment, Climate and Energy pillars.
  - They resonated with themes the Lifelong Learning pillar team is exploring
- Wang: "We've done a lot of work within our group to ensure that our articulation of [the Guiding Questions] is substantive and broad—so not just thinking about the arts as an add-on but the integral way in which the arts integrate with policy and policy issues. A lot of the traditional efforts to support the arts tend to focus on arts organizations. We're starting to think about artists individually—the 'creative workforce' so to speak—and arts businesses."
- Advisory Committee Feedback for the Arts and Culture Pillar
  - Incorporate pathways to entrepreneurship among artists and creatives

- Make sure the full breadth of those working in the creative economy are represented
- Consider how to connect artist-led businesses with other economic development initiatives and supports
  - “How can artists and art organizations get in front of things that might feel like more of a Planning and Development initiative (e.g. finding capital for a studio space), areas that might not be within the purview of DCASE or the Arts Department but are absolutely relevant and important resources and paid commissioning and support opportunities that other agencies might be well-positioned to execute?”
- Advisory Committee Cross-Cutting and General Comments
  - Arts and Culture overlaps with Lifelong Learning in terms of apprenticeships and specialized careers in the arts
  - Make sure learning materials and engagement materials are accessible for people with disabilities and diverse learning needs
  - There are opportunities to increase language capacity (translation and interpretation services; train native speakers)
  - How can we change the community engagement process to ensure greater neighborhood participation and representation?
  - Solution-based community engagement with testing/prototyping
  - We need budgeting evaluation in the community engagement process
  - Cities want large companies to be good corporate citizens—this message has been diluted partially as a result of globalization
  - We Will Chicago plan can communicate our city’s ideals to the private sector
  - Megadevelopments should be addressed in the plan
  - Consideration of infrastructure bill funding and how the city prioritizes funding
  - The city has been unsuccessful in addressing crises through pouring money into nonprofits that do the direct services to respond to crises. As we receive American Rescue Plan funds from the federal government, how can we get it right and create a framework/model for the future?
  - Private-sector—how to engage and leverage government tools?

**Artist-Organizer Report—Wisdom Baty with Aaliyah Christina and Jennifer Ligaya**

- Presented the Arts and Culture Pillar mission and goals along with statistics about how South and West Siders are about half as likely to feel their neighborhoods are well-served by arts compared to downtown and the North Side, referencing a 2014 survey conducted as a follow-up to Mayor Rahm Emanuel's 2012 Cultural Plan.
- "What we were thinking about is, 'is art attainable on the South Side?' The answer is no."
- Wisdom Baty: "Our themes were the challenges; I just want to note that."
  - Challenges/themes: Access to art spaces and safe spaces, resources that are equitably funded, fair compensation, seats at the table for community residents (multiple tables), health and wellness, healthcare for Black communities, harnessing energy, healing from trauma and mental health inequities, Social Security funding and misallocation of funding.
    - Wisdom Baty: and "all the red tape that one has to go through to get funding [or access to spaces], be it minimal or not, culturally competent services from the government, and affirming our existence in the world."
- The artist-organizer team hosted a total of 11 events on the South East Side from July to November, including various creative needs assessments and dialogues with relevant thinkers and organizations. For example, Inger E. Burnett-Zeigler, author of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen: the Emotional Lives of Black Women." Baty also shared video of Kiela Smith-Upton presenting "Arts Space, Placemaking and Placekeeping," a cypher with (Un)Common Grounds, and "Affirming a Safer South Side Community: Community Walk and Plant Day."
- Erin Harkey: Talk about how to take the experience of being a Black mother and make it relevant by drawing connections to other communities.
  - It's all connected in a holistic sense. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman. By supporting a historically unsupported group things will be better for everybody.

### **Breakout Groups and Round Robin Reviews**

- Facilitator Alison Zehr explained that pillar consultants and co-chairs have revised the objectives from previous meetings using the feedback from breakout groups. She then discussed process and tips for revising the Proposed Objectives in breakout groups: "consultants and co-chairs will work on the wordsmithing." She asked attendees to focus on relevance and clarity.
- Breakout Group 1: Workforce & Reimagining Funding
- Breakout Group 2: Access, Benefits & Barriers
- Breakout Group 3: Arts Education & Promotion

### **Closing**

When participants returned to the main room, Alison Zehr commented that the round robin review did not go as smoothly as hoped for but that this group were the "guinea pigs" and that the other pillar meetings scheduled for this week would run more smoothly.

## RESOURCES

### **ERIN HARKEY IS NEW ACTING COMMISSIONER OF CHICAGO'S DCASE**

[This Chicago Tribune article discusses Harkey's new role as DCASE Commissioner. Harkey has been appointed by Mayor Lightfoot following Mark Kelly's retirement.](#)

### **2012 CHICAGO CULTURAL PLAN**

["These recommendations seek to address gaps in cultural service delivery; expand participation; broaden the impact of culture; identify new opportunities; and stake out the City's identity through cultural expression."](#)

### **STATE OF THE ARTS (SOTA) IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORTS**

[A series of annual reports conducted by Ingenuity, Inc.](#)

### **ARTS EDUCATION REPORT: MORE TEACHERS AND PROGRAMS, BUT INEQUITY REMAINS**

[A 2014 Chicago Reporter article about the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan and SOTA reports \(some in-line links are broken, use above links\)](#)

### **WE WILL CHICAGO MEETING-IN-A-BOX TOOLKIT**

[A toolkit for community groups, stakeholders and residents to host their own We Will Chicago planning forum.](#)

## NEXT STEPS

- Wisdom Baty made a suggestion for Phase 3: Invite artist/community partners to sit at the research table in 2022 and participate in community events and "be intentional about supporting these events and showing up within the community." Ask what's needed and support community initiatives.
- Think about potential guest speakers to serve as subject matter experts in Phase 3.
- Research and facilitation liaisons (Rachael Smith and Alison Zehr) and co-chairs (Melanie Wang and Erin Harkey) will continue to refine and clarify objectives based on notes so ideas are expressed as short, clear sentences.