



CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC ART COMMISSION DECEMBER 2021 | MINUTES

Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Veranda Room / City Hall

PRESENT: Miriam Manda (Vice-Chair), John Brown, Charlotte Caldwell, Tim Goldsmith, Megan Ledbetter, Virginia Anne Sharber, Lindsey Willke

ABSENT: Aaron Cole, Justin McBath, John Petrey, Ric Morris, Rachel Reese (Chair)

STAFF: Kat Wright, Public Art Director

CITY ADVISORY: Morgan McCormick (Parks)

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Welcome
- B. Approval of October 2021 Meeting Minutes.

II. ITEM FOR VOTE

1. MLK Underpass Activation Final Design
 - A. Staff stated that this multidisciplinary project is the last of the 2015 Art in Neighborhood Grants, proposed by the MLK Neighborhood Association.
 - B. The commissioned artist is Cecilia Lueza from Florida, who is working in partnership with her husband, Rick Munne, on the technical aspects.
 - C. Staff confirmed that the site does have existing artwork on both sides of the trestle, which was erected in 2012 by Mark Making as part of the "We Inspire" exhibition. The artwork is vinyl urethane panels that should not be removed due to the solvent impact on the bridge. However, the panels may be repainted over, and will be for this Activation
 - D. The Activation also includes a mural on the concrete bridge abutment and refurbishing of the limestone abutment. Both abutments will be down lit and LED fixtures will illuminate the underside of the trestle.
 - E. The project budget is \$90,000 through private funding. Public Art Chattanooga will be contributing \$10,000 to the lighting equipment, which will increase public safety in the area. The project does have a contingency line item and appears to have \$3,000 leftover should prices increase.
 - F. Staff reviewed the final design and mentioned that lighting equipment could not be affixed to the bridge.

- G. Staff stated that Norfolk Southern Railroad Company (NSRC) tentatively approved the repainting of the vinyl panels on both sides of the trestle, which will require cleaning of the panels before they proceed.
- H. Staff confirmed that they would make sure that the imagery depicted in the mural was released from copyright.
- I. Staff mentioned that there was much discussion by the Artwork Selection Panel on whether the limestone abutment should be painted. Both the Artist team and the Panel felt that it was best to restore the limestone, remove the foliage coming through it, and seal the abutment with an anti-graffiti coating.
- J. Staff discussed the lighting system further in that it slowly oscillates between colors. The lighting was approved by EPB and the City's Smart Cities division. The lighting can be pre-programmed digitally, and for no additional cost, includes the option to program the lighting for different holidays/occasions. Staff expects Public Art staff to maintain programming.
- K. Commissioners asked about the proximity of the light shining into nearby homes, and Staff affirmed that there aren't residences in the immediate area. Moreover, the light will provide a softer wash, and can be programmed to start and stop at a determined time.
- L. Commissioners asked how the lights interact with the mural in which Staff confirmed that the lighting color palette is the same color palette as the trestle panels, and will accentuate the colors in the mural.
- M. Staff stated that there is a possibility the lights could be denied by NSRC and that they may have to examine uplighting the mural from the sidewalk, but that will impact the type of lighting and equipment that could be used, and would require Commission approval for that design modification.
- N. Staff stated that Norfolk Southern contracts out their approval, right of entry and license transfers, which adds time to the project timeline.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS VOTE TO APPROVE the MLK Underpass Activation Final Design as presented. Commission will reconvene to approve any design modifications as needed by Norfolk Southern Railroad Company.

2. Bessie Smith and Blue Goose Hollow Artistic Marker Final Design: "Unearthing Boldness: An Artistic Marker Honoring the Legacy of Bessie Smith and The Souls of Blue Goose Hollow"

- A. Staff acknowledged that the Artist (Rondell Crier) is present, and thanked him for his patience while the Commission evaluated the MLK Underpass Activation.
- B. Staff stated that her presentation would be somewhat high level given that the review material was emailed in advance, but if anyone had questions after the presentation, they could defer to Crier.
- C. Staff explained that although Blue Goose Hollow Park has two large scale sculptures ("Resurgence" by Albert Paley), some in the community do not feel as though the sculpture's abstract symbolism to the industrial past adequately reflects the history of the area. Blue Goose Hollow was once the site of a thriving Black Community who were eradicated by urban development efforts.
- D. Staff stated that this project is privately funded through Lyndhurst Foundation and must be completed by the end of 2022.

- E. Staff stated the Bessie Tribute Committee, which is composed of many of the same entities a part of the MLK Underpass Activation Artwork Selection Panel (Urban League, RISE Chattanooga, ArtsBuild, etc.) felt that an African American artist should be commissioned for this project. However, as City of Chattanooga procurement policy does not allow for RFPs to only be open to one ethnic group (opportunities must be open to all), the fiscal agent/contract holder for the project is the Bessie Smith Cultural Center, and the Marker will be donated to the City.
- F. Staff stated that there was a semi-finalist design competition in Fall 2020 with 4 applicants selected to develop a concept per a stipend, but one had to drop out. Crier was awarded the commission in January 2021.
- G. Staff mentioned the rising price index on supplies and materials impacting construction projects at this time. Staff addressed the inflation with Bessie Smith Cultural Center by agreeing to allocate an additional \$1K to the project from the maintenance line item set aside for a revised project budget of \$43K. As such, the maintenance line item will be slightly below the standard 10% when the piece is donated to the City, but Staff projects the maintenance costs for this piece to be limited.
- H. Staff reviewed the design and explained how community engagement was conducted to impact the interpretive text on the Marker's base. Josiah Golson was subcontracted by Crier to write text exemplifying the spirit of the Marker, and the Community provided feedback on the text. Staff read text aloud for the Commission.
- I. Staff further explained the Land Development Office's (LDO) role in permitting the project, and that a meeting would be conducted in advance of pulling permits. Staff stated that a June install is projected; and as the location is a publicly accessible park, she will work with Crier to ensure any closures/work zones are limited in time.
- J. Staff clarified that although the final design package has a \$15K quote from Yerbey Concrete to perform the concrete work, she was just notified today that Crier intends to perform this scope himself. She will consult with LDO on the matter.
- K. Staff then opened the floor for questions to Crier. Commissioners asked if the corner joints of the Marker interlock. Crier explained that the pieces slide up to each other and further explained how each piece fits on the Marker.
- L. Staff mentioned that the wood would be sealed, but would need to be resealed every 5 years with Tung Oil.
- M. Crier explained that he's looking to use African Black Wood, but has been considering a substitute for it given the availability of materials and the challenge it has posed. Crier further added that other materials are also either unavailable, or more expensive given the current state of economy.
- N. Commissioners raised concerns about the wording in the interpretive text from Golson, in which Crier stated that he will get clarification. The size of the text was asked, and it was noted that it will be about 2.5-3 inches high.
- O. Staff noted that the Marker is all black, but given the constraints of the budget, it will not be lit at night. The Park does have lighting, however.
- P. Commissioners asked about the difficulty in replacing the black glass in the Marker. Crier said that it is somewhat challenging to replace the glass, and that

the last quote had the glass at roughly \$3,500.00. However, the glass is thick and laminated, which should reduce the likelihood of damage.

- Q. Staff interjected with concerns about repairing the glass at the Parks Maintenance level, as Parks does not likely have the skill set to perform this work. The Bessie Smith Cultural Center and PAC will have to make sure the Artwork Conservation and Maintenance form addresses who can perform this work-either the Artist or a third party Conservator.
- R. Commissioners asked if it was possible to work out a contract for maintenance with Crier since he lives here. Staff responded that the conservation form could indicate that Crier has to perform repair work if needed, but preventative maintenance generally falls to the City to perform, as it is most cost effective in the long run.
- S. Crier questioned his responsibility if he is confronted with material procurement challenges. Staff responded that it is the Artist's choice to value engineer the material selection in order to stay within budget, so long as the structural integrity is not impacted.
- T. Crier also raised concerns regarding the timing for getting the project done as certain pieces have to be casted in place, and he has to wait 28 days before he is able to proceed with the Marker installation; therefore, he projects the installation will be complete in August. Staff stated that she is able to put orange construction fencing around the perimeter, so she isn't as concerned about the issue as the closure is small, and does not require leaving heavy equipment on site; however, that continued communication would be needed between PAC and Crier on the progress of the installation. Parks Maintenance in attendance further stipulated that Crier should let Staff know when he intends to have work done at the site, so that she can block reservations for that area, leaving only regular traffic as an option.
- U. Commissioners asked if Crier would consider a black gravel border around the concrete, so the grass doesn't just grow up on the concrete. Staff reminded all that the Crier is responsible for site restoration, and that this border suggestion is welcomed. Crier responded by saying that it is something he would consider if the City could take it on in, which Staff suggested that there was little possibility of that due to limited available City funding.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS VOTE TO APPROVE the Bessie Smith and Blue Goose Hollow Artistic Marker Final Design ("Unearthing Boldness: An Artistic Marker Honoring the Legacy of Bessie Smith and The Souls of Blue Goose Hollow") as presented provided that Crier explore adding black gravel and cording ONLY IF the project budget allows for it.

III. REVIEW AND DISCUSS

- 1. "Moonrise" at Wheland Foundry Trailhead
 - A. Staff stated that this project was commissioned in 2018 through private funding and needs to be complete by the end of 2022.
 - B. The work is a sculptural pavilion made of aluminum metal by Mark Fornes of THEVERYMANY, who is responsible for the artwork and its foundation footing,

but that the Commission approved \$80K of public art funds back in either FY20 or FY21 to procure the design's seating, additional concrete, electrical and landscaping.

- C. Yerbey Concrete was subcontracted by Fornes to pour the concrete footing in May, but a delay in permitting did not have the concrete poured until October.
- D. Staff had attempted to get a project timeline from Fornes since September in order to procure the City's scope, but had not heard back from him until November 16th; in which she was notified that due to the rising cost of aluminum, they could not proceed with the current budget, and would need an additional \$75K.
- E. Staff engaged in email correspondence with Fornes to discuss alternatives without additional funding to no avail, which left Staff to find private funding.
- F. The additional grant funding will impact THEVERYMANY's contract-both the revised contract amount and grant funding will need to be approved by City Council.
- G. Commissioners asked about Fornes' ability to make changes to the design. Staff stated that the size and scale have been considered, and that if further design revisions are needed, it may require a whole new design, which is not feasible given the time left to complete the project.
- H. Staff displayed a rendering in which Commissioners discussed the current design appearing to be different from the original design. Staff stated that the original design had voids which were too low to the ground, making it easy to climb so the design was revised where the voids were higher.
- I. Staff said her familiarity with the design development phase was limited as she was new with the City at the time, and the former Director of Public Art led the project. She said she would do some research and follow up with specifics via email to the Commission.
- J. Commissioners asked how many other projects there are in development that are going to encounter material inflation. Staff stated the issue is universal and impacts the Marker, "Moonrise" and possibly the MLK Underpass Activation if approval from NSRC is delayed, impacting Lueza's ability to begin procuring supplies. All other projects are still in the planning phase.
- K. A Commissioner asked if it was possible to pause the Marker project if Crier's materials become cost prohibitive or unavailable; and secure more funding next year. To Staff's understanding, the project must be complete by the end of the year, or the Bessie loses Foundation funding, and the project will have to seek funds for the entire project.
- L. Staff said it has been challenging to guide Crier, as PAC does not hold the contract, and the Bessie's expertise is limited; therefore, the project has been delayed in achieving milestones and deliverables since the commission was awarded in January 2021. The project was expected to be complete in Fall 2021.
- M. Staff maintained that the Artwork Selection Panel provided options to explore during a video conference in October in order to stay within the project budget, which included decreasing the size of the Marker, changing the shape of the base, and incorporating the text into the Marker. Crier was provided a recording of that session to guide him forward, but minimal design changes followed.

- N. A final design package was not received until last Friday, which was first emailed to the Artwork Selection Panel to secure approval before advancing to the Commission on this Wednesday.
- O. Commissioners stated that they hope the Crier will communicate better with Staff moving forward.

IV. UPDATES

1. Staff mentioned that “Composite Wing” by Jon Sherain was recently decommissioned, and that she intends to present the other pieces approved for decommission from the permanent public art collection to the City Council at a later date.
2. Staff stated that she did talk to Councilwoman Hill about decommissioning “Chattanooga Music Man” and that Councilwoman Hill had no objections. The site is private property, and has a large sculpture pad and landscaping to support the work.
3. Staff intends to see if another entity would like to work with the property owner to place a sculpture there before removing the existing pad to ensure the Northshore still has a large-scale sculpture there.
4. Staff stated that the Ed Johnson Memorial was approved for donation by the City Council. It has already seen some damage to the story wall plaques which the Ed Johnson Committee paid for repair by conservator Lucinda Linderman. Staff stated that the quality of the plaques are sub-par, and that Lucinda recommends floating clear acrylic over each plaque to prevent premature damage and ensure overall cost savings with this integration. Staff will evaluate this recommendation.
5. Staff stated that River City Company will not carry temporary liability insurance on “The Scramble” Interactive Streetscape as was presented to the Commission in October’s meeting. The Artist, Michael Singer Studio, will carry liability insurance for 2 years. All liability will fall back to the City afterwards.