



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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April 13, 2018

The Honorable Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

RE: Arlington Commission for the Arts 2017 Annual Report

Dear Chair Cristol,

It is with great pleasure that I submit this 2017 Annual Report to the Arlington County Board on behalf of the Arlington Commission for the Arts (ACA).

As you are aware, the ACA is governed by the *Arlington County Policy for the Support of Arts Organizations and Artists (Policy)*, which was adopted by the County Board in 1990. This policy recognizes the important role that cultural activities play in determining quality of life and expresses in the following goals:

1. To create a climate within the County that is conducive to the growth and development of Arlington's artists and arts organizations through public and private support.
2. To foster the development of excellence and diversity in the arts insuring that a varied program of cultural activities is available to satisfy the interests of Arlington's citizens.
3. To guarantee to all artists and arts organizations an open and fair policy which assures equal access to County arts resources.
4. To encourage development of a public/private partnership in support of the arts.

As stated in the Commission's Charter, adopted July 24, 2014, the duties of the ACA include assisting the County in the development of cultural policy; undertaking the responsibilities allocated to it in the *Policy* -- which includes distributing County resources available to Arlington artists and cultural organizations for facilities, financial support, administrative services and technical support. In addition, and importantly, the Charter explicitly highlights that it is ACA's responsibility keep County and community leadership apprised of issues and actions regarding the development of cultural policy; support Arlington's artists, arts organizations and programs; and continue the growth and development of the cultural life of the County.

Key Accomplishments for 2017

1. **Adoption of Arts and Culture Strategy** -- In early 2017, the ACA took its responsibilities to heart and, after many months of facilitated community input, unanimously adopted its first Strategic Plan entitled *Enriching Lives: Arlington's Arts and Culture Strategy*. This critical action signaled a new broad and collaborative approach to show how the whole Arlington community can benefit from an enriched arts and culture sector and to articulate the Commission's role in guiding, monitoring and planning for cultural life in Arlington.

The vision, values and goals contained in *Enriching Lives* are inclusive and overarching. They are meant to represent and catalyze the whole Arlington community – artists, organizations, residents, workers, visitors, businesses, educators, children, elderly, disabled and others – so that Arlington benefits from a thriving artistic and cultural community that supports Arlington's sense of place and quality of life. Specific strategies are intended to stimulate ideas and provide a foundation that will enable the County, Arlington's arts community and others to focus and prioritize their commitment to -- and investment in -- facilities, programs and services.

The Commission is working formally and informally to engage a very broad array of stakeholders in the implementation of *Enriching Lives* and is using its goals and strategies to frame important issues and opportunities that may arise.

Accordingly, Commission members made a formal presentation of *Enriching Lives* at the June 2017 meeting of the Economic Development Commission. Additional conversations/dissemination of the report have taken place with the leadership of the Planning Commission, the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission and other public and private stakeholders.

2. **FY 2018 Arts Grants Recommendations** – The Commission received 54 grant applications for FY 2018. Of the \$215,810 available for distribution, the Commission recommended that three Individual Artists receive grants of \$5,000 each. The Commission also recommended that 18 organizations be awarded Projects Grants totaling \$200,810 and that 25 organizations be awarded Space and Services Grants. In making its decisions and recommendations, the Commission followed the guidelines outlined in the *Policy* and oversaw a fair and comprehensive process for the distribution of the County's arts grants resources.
3. **Youth Arts Ambassador** – The Commission appointed its first Youth Ambassador whose role is to participate as a non-voting contributor to the Arts Commission, regularly attend Arlington County arts events and help promote those events to other young

Arlington arts enthusiasts. In addition, the Youth Arts Ambassador is encouraged to make suggestions to the Commission, the County, and to Arlington arts organizations about how to make arts programming more visible, appealing, and accessible to County youth. Finally, Ambassadors are also encouraged to conduct a project of their choosing and is mentored by an Arts Commission member.

Activities in 2017

The Arlington Commission for the Arts held 10 regular meetings in 2017. Topics discussed at meetings included modifications to the Arts Grants Program, communication about and implementation of the Arts Strategy, as well as reviews and approvals associated with various Public Art projects. Jeff Zeeman served as Chair and Marsha Semmel served as Vice Chair.

The ACA was organized around three committees -- Executive Committee, Grants Committee and Public Art Committee – as well as several task forces to conduct its work. Arts Commission members also served on other county-wide efforts including the Four Mile Run Valley Plan and the Public Spaces Master Plan (POPS).

In 2017, official correspondence with the County Board included a request to provide funds for the FY 2018 Challenge Grants Program and comments on the Virginia Square Black Box Theater.

Looking Forward

For 2018, the Arlington Commission for the Arts has formulated a work plan that will focus on:

1. Communicating and collaborating with stakeholders about the *Enriching Lives* strategy, including meeting with other Commissions (), arts organizations and artists, and outreach to others in the community to discuss the shared vision for the arts and how to achieve the goals and strategies.
2. Formulating a framework that will help guide Arlington's future investment in and management of cultural facilities.
3. Identifying areas and actions to address cultural equity in the arts.
4. Continuing to support CAD's efforts to build capacity in Arlington Arts Organizations.

5. Expanding conversations at Commission meetings by inviting outside experts and arts leaders to inform the Commission on issues and opportunities that affect arts and culture in Arlington.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with the 2017 Arlington Commission for the Arts Annual Report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha Semmel". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Marsha Semmel
Chair, Arlington Commission for the Arts

cc: Arlington County Board Members
M. Schwartz
C. Mitten
V. Hoskins