**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District**

**Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners**

**Cultural Arts Advisory Committee**

**July 7, 2021**

**12:00pm**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a special meeting on

July 7, 2021, at the Jack Benny Center, 39 Jack Benny Drive, Waukegan, Illinois 60087

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 12:05pm by Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts, who directed a call of the roll and made introductions.

1. **Roll Call & Introductions**

In attendance: Errick Beverly, Superintendent of Recreation; Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts; Bryan Escobar, Cultural Arts & History Specialist; Debra Carl, Cultural Arts Specialist; Jo Dooly; David Motley; Betsy Stiles; MaryFran Troha

Absent: Josh Bill, Maria Calderon, Jack Dudley, Dave Fletcher, Myra Gaytan, Dave Johnson, Rich Ribando, Jane Waller

Being that there was no quorum of the board, no official business was conducted.

1. **Review, Discuss, Decide**
2. **Covid-19 Recap – Ty Rohrer**
   * The WPD is proud to report that no layoffs occurred due to COVID-19. All Cultural Arts full-time staff kept employment and worked throughout the pandemic. Our facilities were closed from mid-March through July 2020, however, the WPD continued to pay part-time staff for lost wages. Contractors lost pay as their contracts are performance based. Programs resumed virtually in early April 2020. In July 2020, some classes and instruction resumed in person while keeping the virtual option available. The Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus lost one and a half seasons due to the pandemic. The Music Director, support staff and principals continued to be paid for the remainder of the 2019-20 season. No wages were paid for the 2020-21 season. Approximately 25 performances by other contracted artists were cancelled.
   * Number of Members/Participants/Students Impacted - Nearly 9,000 Cultural Arts participants and students were impacted by COVID-19. This number reflects participants/students in our numerous arts programs, special event attendees, symphony and chorus concert attendees, and participants/students who benefit from our history programming.
   * The Cultural Arts team is proud of the various ways that we creatively pivoted to still provide opportunities in the arts. Virtual platforms were utilized for private music instruction and history programming for the schools. Debra organized Facebook posts called Arts at Dark for nearly a year and a half. Bryan and I, along with the Park District marketing team, developed “History Plots” which tells stories found in Oakwood Cemetery. I also did a bunch of Facebook live history lunch and learns and one Haunted History Shorts. We intend to continue with new History Plots and the Haunted History Shorts this fall.
   * Bryan developed a new free app to showcase Waukegan’s history and culture through self-guided walking tours. This was utilized by schools and the public, and received two awards, one was the top award in the Special Project category from the Illinois Historical Society, the other was an Award for Excellence from the Illinois Association of Museums in the field of COVID response.
   * We also pivoted to create memorable special events for those that had to be cancelled. For our annual Ray Bradbury’s Dandelion Wine Arts & Music Festival, we still wanted to do something as 2020 was the 100th birthday of the Waukegan born author. Staff worked with various Bradbury and festival friends to create a live virtual read-a-thon event of Dandelion Wine. This new unique way of celebrating Bradbury allowed supporters and participants from around the world to be a part. Traditional festival elements including showcasing the works of local artists, musicians, and thespians was a part as well. This summer, we unveiled the Waukegan Quests on the Waukegan History Museum app with a special Ray Bradbury and Dandelion Wine theme.
   * The Cultural Arts team came up with a fun solution to celebrate the Waukegan Park District’s annual Independence Day Parade with art. The new event became a virtual “shoebox” parade in which community members decorated shoeboxes as floats. Staff, pulling the shoeboxes along with string in front of a park background with emcee’s narrating, created a memorable parade for the community to experience. We were proud to see many new participants. This idea became a model that other cities around the nation duplicated. The Waukegan Park District’s Virtual Independence Day Parade: Shoebox Edition received the state’s top special event award from the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association. Great job by Debra in directing and coordinating.
   * Committee Member Comments:
     + David Motley acknowledged good work of CA staff and that numbers that we had far surpassed those numbers that others were touting in applications for IPRA awards.
     + Errick Beverly thanked staff for their hard work during Covid and reaching global audiences.
3. **Summer Arts Programming – Debra Carl**

* Arts classes are up and running again. Drawing class started this week with 6 students. Watercolor is running with 8 and is full and more students are interested in taking it.
* Miss Jan’s dance classes have started and have had at least one in person session the next one starts this Saturday, and all three children’s classes are running.
* Hip hop classes will be starting in the fall with a new instructor.
* Music lessons are still hybrid. Most new students want in person lessons but the virtual allows more flexibility for families to not disrupt their schedule, but still allow a child to take lessons. One family is military and thanks to the virtual format, this student can stay with their instructor until they outgrow the teaching ability of the instructor.  
  Arts Park started this morning, July 7, and was a good dry run to make sure everything was ready to go. We are still using supplies donated by Sharing Our Shores and there are three more dates plus Art Wauk for the summer.
* Movies in the park started last week, July 2, with 100 people in attendance. The next movie is this Friday, July 9, at Yeoman showing “The Princess and the Frog”

1. **Summer History Programming – Bryan Escobar**

* Museum visits have begun to start back up. In the past couple of weeks, staff has given tours to summer school programs from WPS60. Starting the weekend of July 10th and running until August 7, Kohl Children’s Mobile Museum will be at the museum from 1pm-4pm each Saturday. On July 24th, in partnership with Sharing Our Shores, a walking tour will be done at the lakefront. A link to the Sharing Our Shores self-guided tour has been added to the history companion app for July.
* We will be offering history programs to groups like Cool Learning Experience and Faith in Place during the summer as well. These programs will also be used as small focus groups to see what students are interested in learning, in hopes that some of the ideas can be used for the Carnegie project.
* For fall, we are working to adapt the Historic Homes of Sheridan Road walking tour to the app. We are focusing on properties that are bicentennial landmarks, National Register landmarks, and those of interest that did not make either list. We have already started to get calls and emails from WPS60 teachers eager to have history programming back in the classroom this year.
* Our big events for fall will be back this year. The Oakwood Cemetery Walk will be held on September 25th from 12-4pm at Oakwood Cemetery. The theme is “Stories from the Carnegie Library” – focusing on the early years prior to the opening of the library in 1903 and from its early period. Through the companion app, we will be using QR codes for added information and photographs. Day of the Dead will be on Saturday October 23 from 12-5pm in Bowen Park (JBC and JAC). Last year would have been the 10th anniversary of the event, so we are looking to roll that into this year. Our sugar skull workshops will run on Saturdays from October 2-16 from 10am-12pm
* In the past year, through virtual programming, we reached over 55,000 people. This includes Facebook videos, lunch and learns, and virtual school outreach programming. Another aspect of our virtual programming was through the Waukegan History Museum Companion App. From July 2020 to July 2021, there were 915 individual users, and over 28,000 views of the app. The app covers a range of topics including history of Waukegan parks, the harbor, African American history, Latino history, and more. Most recently we added a new component called “Waukegan Quests,” where we set up scavenger hunt like challenges for people to complete each month and earn a digital badge. For June, we focused on Ray Bradbury and Bradbury Park. July focuses on the Harbor. The Companion App received two big awards in the past year as well. From the Illinois Association of Museums, the museum received an Award of Excellence for educational programming and another Award of Excellence for our COVID-19 response with virtual programming including the app. From the Illinois State Historical Society, the app received the Superior Achievement Award in the Special Projects category. This is the highest award given in any specific category.
* Due to the success of the app, other organizations have asked how they can replicate something similar for themselves. I was also asked by professors in the history department at Loyola University Chicago to participate in a lecture for their graduate students to show how skills learned in the classroom can be applied to a professional setting.

1. **Waukegan Symphony Orchestra & Concert Chorus 2021-22 Season – Ty Rohrer**

* The Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus will be back for the 2021-22 season. The Waukegan Symphony will again be directed by Alexander Platt with Randy Casey directing the chorus.
* The first symphony concert is Sunday, October 3 and will be the first concert since February 2020. It will be the final concert for Michael Kleinerman, who after 15 years has announced his retirement as the symphony’s concertmaster. Michael graciously agreed to come back and play with us one last time and he got to choose some of his favorite pieces to play.
* In November, a smaller segment of the symphony will perform Mozart concertos. We look forward to this unique concert in this intimate setting.
* For our annual Messiah concert, dedicated to the late Joe Favero, we are looking at venue options. The Methodist Church is a wonderful venue for us; however, the front of the sanctuary is a little tight for the symphony. In this season where we want to have a little extra distance, we are looking at alternatives.
* We are excited again that the Waukegan Public Library will host the annual Young People’s Family Concert. This will be spring of 2022. The WSO was recognized by the Illinois Association of Museums for our last Young People’s Concert held at the library.
* And the WSO concludes the season on June 12 with a concert titled Celebrations. In this concert we will celebrate both Juneteenth and Pride Month.
* For the Waukegan Concert Chorus, the one big change is that the Jack Benny Center theatre will be the concert hall for the group this season. We think that this change will help grow the audience base of the group and hopefully soon we’ll outgrow the space and move back to a larger venue.
  + Committee Member Comments:
    - Betsy Stilesacknowledged same concerns for First United Methodist Church hosting the Messiah this year but hopes that it can return in the future.

1. Waukegan Carnegie Library – Ty Rohrer
   * Progress is going very well on the Carnegie Library, which will be the new location of our expanded history operations of the Historical Society and Park District. The Park District and Historical Society team is working with Harboe Architects on the plans. The Schematic Design Phase will be completed soon. From there we begin the Development Design Phase, anticipated to be completed this September.
   * In conjunction with the schematic and development design, the Waukegan Historical Society, along with Bryan and myself, are doing the exhibit design as well. Luci Creative out of Lincolnwood IL was hired to lead this process for us. After an extensive search, we chose Luci Creative based on a wonderful reputation as well as exciting and immersive exhibits in their portfolio at places like the Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry and more.
   * Both the exhibit design and construction design phases are scheduled to be completed in late fall. From there we hope to start construction in 2022. Construction is estimated to be 52 to 64 weeks and we’re projected to be opening the Carnegie in 2023.
   * To finish the update on the Carnegie, we are continually amazed at the support that this project has received. We just recently found out that thanks to IL State Senator Johnson, our Carnegie project is receiving $3 million in funds from the State of Illinois. With this money from the state, along with other donations and grants, we have raised nearly $10 million in non-local taxpayer funds to support the project. We have our fingers crossed for other potential funding sources as well, but all the support to this point has been great and much needed as this is a big endeavor.
2. Questions and Comments

* **MaryFran Troha** invited the other advisory members to help volunteer at the Historical Society Research Library. Hopes that the arts will be represented at the Carnegie because the arts (visual, music, and theatre) have a big role in the Waukegan’s history. The Percussion playground is so cool.
* **Betsy Stiles** asked if there was a completion date for Victory Park. Mentioned that there was deer living there now. Asked about going to two meetings again that it might get more people to come.
* **David Motley** Covid bruised the psyches of people and as artists, part of our job is to help people heal.
* **Jo Dooley** Covid has given all of us the opportunity to reimagine what we do.
* **Ty Rohrer** made a request for suggestions for new/additional board members.

1. **Closed Session – No Closed Session due to a lack of a quorum**
2. **Meeting Adjourned at 12:55pm**

Next Meeting: November 4, 2021, at 12pm