City Art Board Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2019

The following are minutes for the meeting of the City Art Board held at 10:00 a.m. on May 14, 2019 at City Hall, 700 N. Main St., Las Cruces, NM on the second floor in Las Cruces Conference Room 2007A.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Rebecca Courtney, Chair
Susan Frary, Secretary
Meg Freyermuth
Edward Schmitt
Robin Hutchins
Susan McNeill

OTHERS PRESENT:
Greg Smith, City Council
Meridith McKinley, Via Partnership
Garland Courts, Museums Operations Manager
Lorenzo Zepeda, Art Program Coordinator
Leticia Soto, Recording Secretary
Christina Ballew, Board nominee
Stephanie Zorie, Senior Assistant City Attorney

I. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

II. APPROVAL APRIL 9, 2019 MEETING NOTES

It was moved and seconded to accept the April 9, 2019 meeting notes. Motion passed unanimously.

III. STAFF UPDATE
- Meridith McKinley, Via Partnership
- Garland Courts/Lorenzo Zepeda City Hall Art Project
  o New City Website
  o City Hall Art Project
  o What's Happening in Las Cruces
- Abuelo Neighborhood Park Sculpture
Meridith McKinley of Via Partnership discussed the visit that will extend through Wednesday. There will be meetings with City departments as well as stakeholders in the community. They are winding up the research phase and moving into working on the vision and implementation strategies for the plan. The survey report will be finished next week for the Board to review. There were 215 responses to the survey, and respondents used words like color, interactive, unique, large scale, culture, light and visual as preferences. Impact descriptions were impact, beauty, creative culture, unique culture and recognizable landmarks. Areas of the City that were identified for art were neighborhoods, parks, streets, and gateways. At some point, she said the Art Board needs to decide what is art vs. what is mass produced for pieces already in the City – what is the Art Board responsible for? Ms. McKinley presented some of the ideas Via Partnership has had for the Board to indicate interest or lack of interest in pursuing using numerical ranking. All the ideas were very exciting. Discussion continued regarding including pieces on the public art collection listing and how to set up maintenance schedules and promotion. Instead of the Imagine Art Here project, Ms. McKinley discussed trying to get more public input using an existing event such as the Farmers' Market or National Night Out on August 6th to involve the community in arts-related activities. Bus painting was suggested as well as having children build something out of donated wood. The Board will discuss the bus painting idea further at the June meeting.

Stephanie Zorie, a new City Attorney has represented arts in Santa Fe for about 28 years and went to art school before becoming an attorney. She was invited to return to the June Art Board meeting.

New Board nominee Christina Ballew will start officially on May 20th.

Lorenzo Zepeda reported on the new City website. It went live May 1st. There is a public art page off the Quality of Life Department. Agendas and meeting notes will be made available and there will be regular updates.

Due to a correction by the City Clerk's Office, the term limits stated in the Board's bylaws will be changed from three years to four years, beginning on April 1 to March 31 four years later to standardize the City Art Board's terms with the rest of the City's boards.

Lorenzo Zepeda reported that the City Hall art project closed on Sunday, May 12, and there were 78 total applicants. The art selection committee will have three weeks to numerically rank applicants and then they will select the top three applicants. After a public presentation by the three semi-finalists with examples/maquettes presented of a probable finished project, the art selection committee will choose a finalist. The finalist's proposal for the City Hall Art piece in the lobby of City Hall will be presented to the City Council for acceptance.

Lorenzo Zepeda reported on "What's Happening in Las Cruces." Mr. Zepeda will be e-mailing Board Members before each meeting for activities to include on a list for discussion. Today's list includes:
Rebecca Courtney will be receiving an award from Doña Ana Arts Council at their awards ceremony this evening for Art in Public Places.

Elevate Las Cruces! will be holding several public meetings beginning in May to discuss the Comprehensive Plan for the City. They will be held May 28th from 6:00 to 9:00; May 29th, May 30th, May 31st, and June 1st with an information booth at the Farmers' Market.

On May 16th there will be an artist-to-artist workshop offered by New Mexico Arts. It will be an all-day training for artists to learn how to professionalize themselves.

In the handout is a New Mexico Arts Large Purchase Initiative for New Mexico Arts 1% AIPP. New Mexico Arts sent out an all-call for artists to apply throughout the state for an upcoming large-scale purchase initiative for art that starts at $35,000 up to $125,000. There is $50,000 of Art Board funds obligated to the ACD and David Chavez, Chair of the ACD, indicated he is interested in the possibility of purchasing something from New Mexico Arts with that money. Michelle Laflamme-Childs of NM Arts has agreed to bring a list and slideshow in September or October for review. The ACD also got capital outlay funds from the State that could hopefully be used for art infrastructure. The advantage of using New Mexico Arts is that the art is already made.

Michelle Laflamme-Childs reported to Ms. Courtney that there is money coming to Las Cruces from 1% Projects. Ms. LaFlamme-Childs is sending out a Small Purchase Initiative call to artists probably starting in June. The Board encourages local artists to apply for this call and send in images and add themselves to this list. Ms. Laflamme-Childs will come in September or October to show available art for small purchases of $1,000 to $20,000 of NM Arts 1% monies.

The New Mexico State Legislature took back roughly $180,000 in 2017 from NM Arts because it had not been properly claimed by Las Cruces for their use. The Board requested that Mr. Courts and/or Mr. Zepeda find the person that will communicate with NM Arts and receive the money at the appropriate time.

Councilor Smith reported the work session for the new pool will be May 28th at 1:00 p.m. in Council chambers and the architects will present their preliminary work. The Art Board wishes to include art in the planning of the pool facility.

Lorenzo Zepeda presented a slideshow regarding the Abuelo Neighborhood Park sculpture. He was asked to look into this topic by the Director of Quality of Life, Lynn Gallagher. The artist, Peter Toth, also created the Dine in Apodaca Park which is part of his series "Trail of Whispering Giants." The sculpture intended for Abuelo Park is not a Whispering Giant but a maquette for Dine, which was dedicated in 1986. Mr. Zepeda asked if placing the maquette in Abuelo Neighborhood would be problematic. Do we need to address decommissioning? What art pieces contribute to our identity in Las Cruces? He stated Cathy Mathews, City Landscape Architect, went over details of the artist, Peter Toth, in previous board meetings. This maquette is number 57. Apodaca Park Dine is one of the “Whispering Giants.” The appeal is immediate. It was not a commissioned piece, and it was installed in 1986. The maquette is not a “Whispering Giant.” He offered an artist’s critique of the work, focusing on the work’s medium, visual content, artistic intent and its relationship to our cultural context. The maquette is
a carved wood ‘Indian’ head intended to depict generalized Navajo features. The El Paso Times reported Toth created a composite image of tribes in the area and carved his piece from this impression. Toth said he does not carve one particular person but uses a composite profile. His intent was to honor Native American tribes. Mr. Zepeda described four stereotyping traps: Romanticizing a Native American as a noble savage, using historical inaccuracies where an artist depicts what looks good rather than affirming the accuracy of a tribe, stereotyping by omission where portrayals are historical and don’t take into account that indigenous people are still existing, and simplistic characterization where generalizing features and personality becomes a caricature. Furthermore, is it problematic to carry on the tradition of a carved wooden Indians? This tradition began in the 1600’s by sailors who carved ship masts and it played a large role in creating the stereotypical Native American image. That tradition perpetuated the image of the stoic, unfeeling Indian. In addition, there are current polemics regarding sports logos and cartoon mascots without taking the point of view of the people being depicted. There is a standard argument for and a counter argument against mascots which wasn’t going on in 1986. Mr. Zepeda offered the following concerns: Can this sculpture be linked to a tradition of carved cigar store Indians due to its medium and content? Is the artist racially profiling Native Americans and therefore creating a caricature? Does this simplistic portrayal invite the same polemics associated with sports team mascots? By installing this sculpture in Abuelo Park, are we knowingly or unknowingly perpetuating these stereotypes? Finally, does this current piece have enough artistic merit to offset the above concerns?

Ms. Courtney stated this is the Art Board’s job. Is this sculpture of a Native American a representational piece of original art that could open controversial dialog which should be discussed in our community, or is this sculpture really a caricature/stereotype of a Native American that is degrading and should not be presented as a work of art in our community? The implication is if the Art Board recommends not to accept this sculpture for the Abuelo Neighborhood Park, we would have to approach Parks & Recreation and possibly suggest a replacement work of art. If we say it is a work of art, it would be installed as Cathy Matthews described in the Parks & Rec plan. She had taken the image of the piece to an Abuelo Neighborhood Park open meeting, and it was acceptable to that group. The Art Board has discussed this piece in two previous public board meetings.

Ms. Hutchins asked if anyone questioned the huge Dine sculpture at Apodaca Park. This is the same artist.

Mr. Zepeda stated Cathy Mathews contacted the artist, and he said Las Cruces could do whatever they wanted to with the maquette. The Dine is specifically referencing Navajo culture. The small sculpture, because of the feathers and unoriginal portrayal is not referencing anything in this state, it only appears to reference the Indian stereotype. He spoke to Cacique Roybal of the Piro-Manso-Tewa about Dine, and he said this sculpture does not speak to him or his people.

Ms. Frary stated we need to take this particular image, the maquette, to our local tribes and ask their opinion of this piece and not the piece in Apodaca Park.
Mr. Schmitt asked if all of the “Whispering Giants” were of Native Americans. Were any of those sculptures controversial?

Mr. Zepeda stated that Peter Toth went to every state and tried to create a composite of the Native Americans there. The only controversy he found was that the sculptures were not maintained.

Ms. Freyermuth asked if the small sculpture is a piece with artistic intent by the artist. Was this piece used for the park because it was in storage? She stated it is stereotypical and we don’t have anyone here that represents those communities.

Mr. Zepeda stated we do not have a decommissioning process yet for the Art Board. That will be in the public art master plan.

Ms. Courtney stated Parks & Rec came to the Art Board because they wanted to place this piece in the Abuelo Neighborhood Park. They thought this would be an asset to the park. They did not present this sculpture as a left over.

Councilor Smith stated the Dine appears to represent northern NM Native Americans, but he appreciates the artist’s intent. He would like for the Tortugas Manso-Piro-Tiwa and Ft. Sill Apache to be consulted about this sculpture. He does not think this maquette is a significant work of art.

Ms. McNeill stated we are too sensitive about this subject. She likes the piece.

Ms. Freyermuth stated everyone should do research and include Native Americans in the discussion. It would be damaging to these people if we present a stereotype of who they are, their culture, history and current situation.

Mr. Schmitt would like to avoid controversy. We might auction this piece and purchase another one for the park.

Ms. Courtney stated the Art Board had voted to repair the maquette but that decision could be changed. We cannot complete this discussion so we will bring it back to the next board meeting. She asked the board members to talk to the community and research the subject for further discussion.

Ms. McKinley stated that where she lives the discussion is more about Confederate sculptures and the history of slavery. What is the message being sent out with this kind of art in a public space to citizens of color? She asked the Art Board to proceed with caution.

Ms. Courtney asked what is the message to the people most directly involved or associated with that representation? We will table this discussion. Mr. Zepeda and Mr. Courts will let Parks & Rec know that we are continuing the discussion and will try to come to a decision at the June board meeting.

Ms. Frary stated there are two other Native American works of art in Las Cruces that might not represent local cultures.

Ms. Freyermuth stated the first water tank created controversy in Las Cruces.

Ms. Courtney stated we have to deal with art and controversy. Historical art often creates controversy.

Councilor Smith stated the Art Board can broaden the base of various convergent cultures.

Mr. Courts suggests the Art Board create a public statement for City Council and others to explain the value of art in public places.
Mr. Zepeda stated that controversial art is created to encourage a discussion or to question current values – it is intentional. It does not appear that this was Mr. Toth's intent and this maquette was not created to do that.

*The Abuelo Park art discussion was tabled until the June meeting.*

IV. DISCUSSION
- PAMP Elements
- AIPP and National/Local Calls - Rationales

These discussions were tabled due to time constraints. Ms. Courtney stated the board should be thinking about how to educate the public as to why it is important to spend money, time, and effort on public art.

V. BOARD COMMENTS

Edward Schmitt deleted Facebook four years ago and feels great.

Robin Hutchins was pleased with the meeting and is concerned about the public education aspect as well as controversies involving public art.

Meg Freyermuth went to Albuquerque and visited the Albuquerque Museum last weekend and discussed the controversy involving their Onate sculpture, artists, and Native American landscape artists. Their art collection is amazing and educational.

Susan McNeill said that there should be a blanket statement that the public art honors the culture of the entire state as well as our local Las Cruces culture. Her mother was an Arizona State Senator and she made meatball stew for funerals among the local tribe and their friendship was important. There is too much dissension in today's culture.

Susan Frary is overwhelmed with figuring out procedures and all the work involved, but in a good way.

Christina Ballew is pleased with the conversation on stereotyping and had no other comments.

Councilor Smith posted on his Facebook that today is focused on art and was going through his pictures and found his photo of the Camino Real sculptures. It made him think of immigration and the multicultural nature of our City. He
feels that public art can tie into that and say something about Las Cruces and our community.

Ms. Courtney thanked the board for discussing a difficult subject but it is a topic we need to be prepared for in the future.

VI. NEXT MEETING JUNE 11, 2019

Next meeting is June 11, 2019 at the normal time and place.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson

Rebecca Courtney