

STERLING HEIGHTS ARTS COMMISSION
Minutes of Tuesday, January 7, 2025 Meeting
Location: City Hall, Conference Room 028

Members Present: Ron Bindle, Barbara Chudzik, Jessica Conti, Wendy Popko, Sue Rhoten, Lisa Stout and Elizabeth Vincent

Members Absent: Jan Burns, Patrick Michalski, Krystina O'Toole, Zachary Overman and Jeanne Schabath-Lewis

Representing the City: Sue Giallombardo, Community Relations Specialist and Melanie Dave, Community Relations Director

Guest in attendance: Diana Bledsoe, African American Coalition, Chairperson

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the minutes of the November 2024 Arts Commission meeting; made by Popko; Seconded by: Stout Ayes: all Nays: none

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Community Garden Public Art

- Davis announced that the city will be making major improvements to James Nelson Park, located off 15 Mile between Ryan and Dequindre Roads. The City will be installing a Community Garden that will include garden plots that residents can purchase, a children's garden, butterfly garden, seating areas and public art.
- Davis added that public art will be a large part of the new garden, with the first pieces being a bench and a swing, made from upcycled wind turbine blades. The swing will sit under a rounded arch, and the bench will serve as an artistic focal point to be placed at the entrance of the park; and has a base that is double-sided for signage. Both pieces will be delivered primed and ready for painting.
- Davis is looking for suggestions for painting the pieces, with the possibility of community engagement. She added that the Grand Opening will take place on May 1st and the goal is to have the pieces ready by this date.
- Popko suggested an artist lay out the design, and residents could carve out sections to complete, adding that the artist would have control over the project and monitor the progress.
- It was suggested that Arts Commission members could collaborate on a design.
- Conti suggested utilizing the UCS teachers and suggested that students create separate tiles of artwork that would be pieced together for the final project. Giallombardo stated that the park is located in the Warren Consolidated district, so if we went this route, we should reach out to the WCS art teachers as well.

- Giallombardo stated that she would send photos of the pieces that were ordered and welcomed additional ideas. She shared the pictures on her phone. She added that she would run the ideas by Kyle Langlois and follow up at the February meeting.
- Giallombardo introduced Diana Bledsoe, who is the Chairperson for the city's African American Coalition for four years. Bledsoe thanked everyone for allowing her to attend the meeting. Bledsoe stated that Coalition will be hosting their inaugural Black History Month Dinner at the Community Center, on Monday, Feb. 24 at 6 PM. In connection with the dinner, the Coalition is having a student art contest with the students attending the Utica Academy of International Studies, with the theme of African Americans in Labor. The teachers will pick their top three favorites, and Diana would like members from the Arts Commission to attend the dinner to be judges and select the first-place winner. Tickets are \$30. Popko stated that she is interested.
- Vincent asked Diana to send her the information for tickets and sponsorship and she will share it with the Macomb County Bar Association.
- Diana said that she would like some guidance and assistance on having an African American themed mural or sculpture installed in Sterling Heights. She suggested a sculpture to honor the first African American voter in the city, and possibly having it installed at the Community Center. Davis suggested the circle drive outside of the Library and the Court building, adding that City Admin has been wanting something in that area for some time.
- Popko stated that an African American artist by the name of Tiff Massey currently has an exhibit at the DIA titled "Seven Mile & Livernois", she may be someone to reach out to. Bindle asked who would pay for the piece and Davis stated that the expense would come out of the public art fund.

B. Election of 2025 Officers (Chair & Vice Chair)

- Popko nominated Schabath-Lewis for Chair, Giallombardo stated that she would accept the nomination on Schabath-Lewis' behalf; Seconded by Chudzik.
- Popko nominated Chudzik for Vice Chair, Chudzik accepted; Seconded by Conti. Ayes: all Nays: none

C. Memorial Day Grand Marshal

- Giallombardo stated that while it's still early, Commission members are welcome to nominate individuals to serve as Grand Marshal for this year's Memorial Day ceremony and parade.
- Popko stated that she would like to nominate her neighbor, who is a Veteran and added that she would prefer not to ask him unless we're sure that he would be selected. Giallombardo stated that she doesn't think anyone else has been mentioned but she would confirm that with Melanie Davis and get back to Popko as soon as possible. Giallombardo thanked Popko for the recommendation.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Giallombardo stated that Fire Chief Edmund decided on two separate designs to replace the broken panels of the clock tower. She will follow up with the Facilities Maintenance crew for installation in the Spring.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Giallombardo stated that she asked Zachary Overman to resign from the Commission, and he did so effective immediately. She added that if anyone would like to recommend someone to be appointed, let her know and have the individual apply online. Giallombardo stated that the artist that won first place at Sterlingfest, Lenny Sadro, is interested in joining the commission and she will follow up with him.

NEXT ARTS COMMISSION MEETING: Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 6 p.m.