

Arts and Cultural Events Council

June 5th, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 PM

In attendance is Mayor Brad Belt

Arts Council Chairman David Wohl

Arts and Cultural Events Program Manager Caroline Wall

Communications Manager Meredith Blair

Approval of Minutes

a. Arts & Cultural Events Meeting Minutes of May 1st, 2025

The minutes from the May 1st, 2025 meeting were approved. The chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes, stating "All in favor, please say aye." The motion was approved with a chorus of "Aye" from the members present. The chair noted that they should have asked if there was any discussion before the vote, but no further discussion took place.

Old Business

The chair mentioned that they had made a mistake on the agenda and sent the wrong draft. The old business should have been the review of the current season's financial report. The chair indicated that this information was included in the members' folders.

Caroline had presented the financial information for the Arts Council from their two funds: the Cultural Events fund and the Arts fund. The chair proceeded to review the financial reports for both funds.

For the Cultural Events budget, there were five events with a budget of \$182,000 and an estimated expense of \$142,000. The chair noted that they were close to where they were in terms of expense budget.

The Arts budget was presented on a two-page stapled report, which included total spent, box office revenue, and return on investment. The chair explained that the return on investment was calculated as how much they put into an event minus the box office revenue, expressed as a percentage.

The chair highlighted that no-shows for free events were up to 35-45%, sometimes 50%. There was a correlation between ticket price and no-shows, with more expensive events having fewer no-shows.

The bottom line for both budgets was close to projections, with the Arts budget being about \$1,000 off from estimates.

The chair encouraged members to examine the estimates versus the actuals, noting that they were doing better on that aspect. He mentioned that going forward, they would start tracking the proposal estimate versus the actual expenses, as many changes can occur between planning and execution.

Discussion ensued about specific line items and reimbursements. Joan mentioned that some expenses for food were not accurately reflected in the report. The chair advised members to review the line items, especially on their proposals, and to inform Caroline of any mismatches.

The chair also mentioned that they had met with Dorota and Stephanie regarding carrying over box office revenue to the next year's budget. They took in about \$87,000 in total box office revenue, and between \$45,000 and \$50,000 was estimated to be left over.

New Business

a. 2025-2026 Season Update

Caroline provided an update on the upcoming season. She reported that they were doing well with contracts, with about half of them already received. Mayor Brad Belt and Caroline were planning to review and finalize

these contracts soon. Caroline was trying to enforce a deadline for the remaining contracts by the following Friday, with the goal of starting promotions by June 30th.

The chair presented a spreadsheet prepared by Caroline that showed the estimated costs and actuals for the upcoming events. He explained that they were starting to track the proposal estimates versus the actual expenses to better understand any discrepancies.

There was a discussion about piano rental costs. Caroline explained that she had used an average amount of \$2,000 for piano rentals, as weekend rentals were more expensive than weekday rentals.

The chair encouraged members to review the numbers based on what they had proposed and to inform Caroline of any discrepancies or issues.

b. 2024-2025 Season Financial Review

This item was discussed as part of the Old Business section, as the chair had mistakenly sent the wrong draft of the agenda.

c. Venue Updates: Holy Spirit Catholic Church and The Sandcastle

The chair reported that Holy Spirit Catholic Church had notified them last month that they couldn't use the venue for a couple of planned events. This change affected their ability to charge for a Lyubov Petrova concert, which would now be held at another church where they couldn't charge admission.

The chair and program manager planned to visit Holy Spirit to present a check and ensure the relationship remained positive. They noted that there had been changes in leadership at the church, which might have affected the availability of the venue.

Regarding The Sandcastle, there was ongoing discussion about KICA's new policy on guests. Joan had approached Seabrook as an alternative venue, but they required a list of attendees, which would affect the open nature of the events. Joan was also exploring the Church of Our Savior as a potential venue.

David suggested having a further conversation with KICA about The Sandcastle, noting that they do allow outside people for events like weddings. He proposed exploring the possibility of paying for the venue use, similar to how they handle wedding rentals.

The program manager mentioned that renting The Sandcastle would cost a significant amount of money for the entire Piano series, which wasn't factored into their budget. Alternative venues such as Bishop Gadsden were suggested, with the chair noting that they would be delighted to discuss programming and collaboration.

d. September Meeting Date Change

The chair announced that due to a scheduled event on the first Thursday of September, the meeting would be moved to September 11th instead of September 4th. This would be their first meeting of the season.

The chair also discussed the process for new proposals, as they had held back some money for this purpose. He estimated they would have between \$30,000 to \$35,000 in extra funds, possibly a bit more. Given that their average event cost was about \$17,000, they were likely looking at adding two or three events.

The chair outlined the priorities for new proposals:

- Filling gaps in the schedule, particularly noting that they only had one event each in January and February.
- Considering genre balance, noting they already had several classical and jazz events.
- Taking advantage of routing possibilities, such as booking acts that might be passing through the area at a discounted rate.

The chair asked members to limit themselves to one proposal each and emphasized that proposals were not mandatory. He also mentioned that they were working on a revised proposal form that would be sent out later in the month.

The deadline for new proposals was set for September 1st, with voting to take place at the September 11th meeting. The chair also tentatively scheduled September 18th as a backup meeting date if needed.

Correspondence

The chair received another letter from Bob Hill, a former Arts Council member, requesting consideration of booking the Charleston Men's Chorus. The chair had initially thought it might be good for Christmas, but given the two December events already scheduled, he was less optimistic. He invited any interested members to contact Bob if they wanted to pursue this option.

Chairman's Comments

The chair made several announcements:

- He mentioned that he had "unretired" again and taken a new full-time job as the director of the arts administration graduate program at Winthrop University through December. This position would be fully remote.

Mayor Brad Belt was invited to provide an update on the design process for a new venue. The Town has issued an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) and held an on-site meeting with 12 different firms attending. The chairman expressed surprise and enthusiasm about the level of interest. The firms came from various locations including DC, Columbia, and the Charleston area. He noted that everyone seemed excited about the project and thought it was feasible. He also mentioned ongoing conversations with organizations such as the Charleston Library Society, Gibbs Museum, and Charleston Museum about potential programming opportunities with Kiawah. The chair and Mayor discussed the increasing traffic issues affecting travel times to Charleston, noting that this might increase the desire for more local events.

Public Comments

There were no public comments recorded in the transcript.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by member Kristin Thompson and seconded by Chairman Wohl. The motion carried unanimously. The chair announced that the meeting was adjourned at 2:50 PM.