

Public Art Commission Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the City of Germantown Public Art Commission was held at GPAC on Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 5:00pm.

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Amanda Littlejohn called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of a Quorum:

Present:

Alderman Mary Anne Gibson, JD Graffam, Ben Guthrie, Amanda Littlejohn, Albert Pope, Christopher Schmidt, and Kevin Young

Absent:

Mary Burrows, Mindy Fischer, Cara Sievers

Staff:

Cat Peña and Sheila Pounder

Guests:

Adam Slovis

3. Approval of the Minutes from the August 10, 2023:

The minutes from the August meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. A motion was made by Christopher to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Kevin and passed unanimously.

4. Citizens to be Heard:

There were no citizens in attendance.

Amanda reviewed the citizens to be heard guidelines with the commission.

5. New Business:

a. Initial review of application of public art at private development project The Standard

Adam Slovis, owner of Slovis Commercial and developer of The Standard, presented the latest renderings of The Standard and shared his vision for including public art within its publicly accessible spaces. Mr. Slovis shared images of artwork by local artists as well as from his travels from which he draws inspiration.

Chairman Littlejohn thanked Mr. Slovis for his passion for the arts, commitment to local arts, and exploration of how other cities and developers are incorporating public art into their designs. She reminded Mr. Slovis that while he has great personal taste in art, the commission wants to make sure that the artwork speaks to the space, speaks to the Germantown community, engages everyone, and takes into consideration the artwork's impact on foot and vehicular traffic. This sentiment was echoed by several other commissioners. Commentary and discussion then took place between the commissioners and Mr. Slovis. Alderman Gibson, Christopher, and Al shared their thoughts on how an iconic piece could transform the space and set the tone for the western

gateway into Germantown and shared some of their ideas. Alderman Gibson stated that a single statement piece or a very limited number of artworks would be preferable to keep maintenance on the projects, approval meetings, etc to a minimum and help to simplify the overall process of incorporating public art into The Standard. Cat noted that engaging the façades of the buildings would be a great way to incorporate art without taking away valuable vehicular and pedestrian traffic spaces. When water features as art were mentioned, Cat also reminded everyone that fountain in the traditional sense do not constitute public art.

Mr. Slovis was receptive to all comments and suggestions, and the commission thanked him for his presentation.

5. Project Updates:

a. Shelby Canopy: Our Shared Connection – (NEA Grant)

Cat shared with the commission members via an infographic the results of the online public survey which was used to determine how to best reach Germantown citizens through public art. The following findings were shared:

- Most people find out about local art through social media – a huge opportunity to amplify Our Shared Canopy across channels
- Most respondents who have recently encountered public art in Shelby County have done so in parks, which is differentiated by nature.
- Most respondents like to encounter art on their own throughout the city, which lends itself to discovering Our Shared Canopy
- Half of respondents strongly agree that public art contributes to a higher quality of life, and over half agree that public art fosters a deeper understanding of the issues facing our community
- 84% think that environmental education is important to community wellbeing.

The media/promotion plan by We Are Memphis, including WAM social media, newsletters, earned media, and paid media, was shared with the commission. Cat stated that, additionally, GPAC is supporting this project by offering social media support and by promoting it via their digital billboard space at Poplar and 240. Cat thanked Paul and Nevada of GPAC for this invaluable support, and the commission echoed her thanks.

Cat reviewed the Our Shared Connection detailed schedule.

Cat shared updates specific to the Blue Trees Project:

- Family Fun Day will take place on Saturday, November 11 by the Germantown Public Library. For this event, the Wolf River Conservancy will be lending approximately 50 saplings to be tinted by participants. After the event, the saplings will be transferred to the Highland trail head in Memphis where the West TN Urban Forestry Chapter will lead planting efforts.
- Visiting artist, Konstantin Dimopoulos, will visit Riverdale Elementary School, Farmington Elementary School, and Dogwood Elementary School and work with small groups of students to tint trees on their campuses.
- The Blue Trees Artist Talk will take place at Germantown Community Library on Thursday November 16 at 6:30pm. This location and time was selected as it is open late, is publicly accessible, and usually has good engagement during that time.
- A FAQ section has been added to the Shelby Canopy portion of the Germantown Public Art website. Highlights include addressing concerns about funding, materials, and purpose of the project. The site specifically notes that the colorant is chalk and that it contains no binders and is not harmful to the trees, insects, animals, or other parts of the ecosystem in which this project will take place. Cat mentioned that she spoke with members of the West TN Urban Forestry Chapter who asked, “Would it be more effective to just donate \$38k to deforestation?” Cat shared that the overall impact through education, experience, and bringing people to our city will far exceed the initial cost. Alderman Gibson stated the importance of such conversations and the importance of

being open, hearing concerns, and encouraging engagement with the artist, commission members, and Cat herself. Cat stated that encouraging citizens to read the FAQ page would be a great first step in addressing concerns. Cat also suggested that commissioners view and share tree equity map information as it relates to the new Glasgow subdivision.

- Volunteer opportunities will be available for the Blue Trees install as well as Family Fun Day. Commissioners are encouraged to volunteer and share with their personal networks and other connections in the community. Cat will be reaching out to local artists and suggested that we consider reaching out to Leadership Germantown. Alderman Gibson will reach out to the Kiwanis and Rotary Club, if needed. Chairman Littlejohn noted that she could reach out to the Mississippi State University Department of Art. Christopher will reach out to the Germantown Education Commission.
- Citizens who would like more specifics on the project that are not listed in FAQ are encouraged to reach out to Cat as she has the MSDS safety sheets as well as environmental checks and review information from other cities who have taken part in the Blue Trees project.

Cat shared updates specific to the Tree Tones Project:

- All engagement has been completed. A workshop during which artists B+C discussed their process and led students in constructing chimes took place at Crosstown High. An additional workshop took place at Carpenter Art Garden with Lamplighter Montessori during which students made tree ID guide books. Cat shared images from these workshops and further information about the artists' process of calculating tree tones on computer software from 1996 and creating strikes and sails for the chimes. She stated that students enthusiastically participated.
- Caleb of B+C is compiling and editing audio from the community engagement portion of the project.

6. Reports

a. Chairwoman's Report: Amanda Littlejohn

Chairman Littlejohn reported that she met her son's art teacher, Mrs. Ardrey, at a recent school event at Dogwood, and relayed her excitement about the Blue Trees Project and her students' participation in it.

b. Alderman Liaison Report: Mary Anne Gibson

Alderman Gibson reported that

- Today, the city celebrated its employees.
- Germantown Police Chief Richard Hall has retired, and Mike Fisher is the new Germantown Police Chief
- This coming Monday, the initial findings from the independent reporting on the city's water crisis will be available to the public
- The commission celebration was a great success. She stated that our commissions are why we are a city of excellence.

c. Beautification Liaison Report: Albert Pope

Albert reported that

- The city's holiday lighting contract was given to Illuminate and will have new features this year, including two stand alone features for photo ops
- The holiday lighting contest will be taking place again this year. The Beautification Commission will select winners. Alderman Gibson suggested that the city also do a Halloween lighting contest as Germantown citizens also create some elaborate displays for Halloween.

d. Design & Review Liaison Report: Christopher Schmidt

Christopher reported that the city is working on updating its post-pandemic sign ordinance. He noted that it is an ongoing process and the city is addressing “reserved” and other unauthorized signage.

e. Parks and Recreation Liaison Report: Kevin Young

Kevin reported that, thanks to a \$500k grant, Municipal Park will be getting a makeover. Construction is set to begin in January.

6. Announcements:

a. Cat shared changes to the Public Art Commission meeting schedule for 2024 and that this meeting will be the last art commission meeting to take place at GPAC. All future meetings will take place at ECD in the Klein Conference Room.

b. Chairman Littlejohn announced that the next meeting will take place on Dec. 19, 2023 at 5pm.

6. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes approved by:



Amanda Littlejohn, Chair

Date: 12/15/2023