

**Washington Art Association & Gallery
Minutes - Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 9, 2020; 4:00 PM**

Board Members Attending:

President: Jay Kaplan
Treasurer: Mark Zerbe
Secretary: Ramsay Turnbull

Chairs of Standing Committees Attending:

Exhibition Chair: Hugh O'Donnell
Special Events Co-Chairs: Maryellen Furse and Bruce Glickman
Membership Chair: Anne Marie Foran
Education Chair: Patricia Fogle
Publicity Chair: Stephanie Johnson
Building Chair: Eliot Johnson

Trustees Emeritus: Abdo Ballester

Absent:

Barbara von Schreiber- Executive Director
Rich Pomerantz- Vice-President
Holly Russell- Volunteer Co-Chair
Trustees at Large: Mark Mennin, Katie Ré Scheidt, Barbara Talbot, Guy Peterson, Donna Wright

President's Welcome

Jay Kaplan called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. Jay welcomed all present and specifically thanked WAA staff members, Ginger Nelsen and Tricia Anderson. During Barbara von Schreiber's medical leave, the staff had gone above the call of duty, and WAA owed them enormous gratitude for doing a very hard job with dedication and professionalism. Trustees and volunteers were commended for WAA's accomplishments over the past year. Jay highlighted the activation of committees, increase in membership, terrific faculty, successful events, and outreach efforts to the community. Challenges included the required installation of a new and costly security system due to local burglaries, as well as necessary building renovations. Jay announced that WAA was now open on Sundays from 10am – 2pm and requested that board members volunteer on Sundays to help build awareness of WAA.

Director's Comments

Barbara von Schreiber was absent due to a short medical leave following surgery. Ramsay Turnbull read aloud a letter from Barbara in which she welcomed the five new trustees and wrote that WAA was off to a good start this year. The letter highlighted recent successful events, the Holiday Gift Fair, increased membership and a recent sales record for the Members Show. Staff members Ginger Nelsen and Tricia Anderson were praised for their hard work, countless hours and keeping WAA on track. All in attendance were collectively thanked for their good wishes.

Jay commented that everyone was looking forward to her return. "For most of us, Barbara is WAA. Her presence here is what makes this place so gracious and so welcoming to the general public. We count on her for that every single day. Even in absentia."

Review and Vote on Approval of February 10, 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes as Presented

Jay Kaplan requested that a motion be made, motion by Diane Stevens, second by Anne Marie Foran. Passed by acclamation.

Review and Vote on Slate of Officers and Committee Chairs

Jay Kaplan presented the 2020 slate. With no motions or questions in respect to the slate, Jay requested that a motion be made to accept the slate as presented. Motion by Anne Marie Foran, second by Jack Rosenberg. Passed by acclamation.

Jay welcomed new members and introduced the five new trustees individually: Audra Viehland, Diane Stevens, Judy Jackson, Souby Boski and Joe Austin.

Committee Reports

2019 Review and Budget for 2020

Treasurer's Report: Mark Zerbe

Mark Zerbe submitted a written report and spoke to its highlights as follows.

The Washington Art Association & Gallery had solid financial performance in 2019 driven by improvement in the four key operational segments of WAA – Exhibitions/Art Sales, Education, Special Events and Development (Fundraising). The operating performance produced cash flow in 2019 that, unlike 2018 and 2017, was not deployed for major building improvements such as the new entrance, and major special events. Therefore, the liquid assets as of December 31, 2019 was (net of debt) \$71,000 greater than at the end of 2018. The difference this year is that WAA did not have any major outgoing expenditures.

The Treasurer's Report showed the operating performance of each segment and the overall WAA performance. The presentation also showed a proposed "2020 Plan" which was designed to project the expected revenues and expenditures in 2020. The intent of the budget planning was to help to successfully work toward WAA's stated objectives as an organization. Each performing area was reviewed in detail. Mark indicated that the Sculpture Walk was not included in those numbers. It was a very good year for the Sculpture Walk last year but it was a separate category.

Mark concluded that it had been a very strong year for WAA and praised everyone involved in the great effort. Key areas of growth were highlighted, and Mark indicated that membership (which had been identified last year by Dan Colton as an issue) was up by 59%.

Mark noted that the budget was conservative so that WAA could operate within its means, and that copies of WAA's 2018 tax return (form 990) were available for review upon request. Two significant 2020 Plan (budget) items included \$10,000 in advertising for a branding campaign and \$16,000 for building improvements, principally a new fire/security system mandated by the Town of Washington. Mark opened the floor up to questions.

Review and Vote on the Proposed Three Amendments to the By-laws of the Washington Art Association & Gallery

1. Article III Officers, Section 4 Duties of Officers: Treasurer section shall be modified as follows:

In the second clause the word "sign" shall be replaced with the words "oversee the signing of" and in that same clause the word "endorse" shall be removed and replaced with the words "oversee the endorsement of".

2. Article IV, Section 1 Standing Committees: The Finance section shall be modified as follows:

In the last sentence of the Finance section the words "\$500" shall be replaced with the word "\$1000".

3. Article IV, Section 1 Standing Committees: The Finance section shall be modified as follows:

The next to last sentence beginning with the words “no” and ending with the word “Committee” shall be removed and replaced with the following sentences:

Contracts (including leases) involving the expenditure of up to \$1,000 shall only be agreed to with the prior approval of the Executive Director, while contracts \$1,000 or greater up to \$7,500 shall require the prior approval of the Finance Committee and contracts exceeding \$7,500 shall require the prior approval of the Board of Trustees. Contracts of \$7,500 or greater must be reviewed and evaluated by the Finance Committee prior to approval by the Board of Trustees. All contracts of \$500 or greater shall be reported to the next Board of Trustees meeting following the authorization of said contract.

Jay Kaplan requested that a motion be made, motion by Diane Stevens, second by Pat Loeven. Passed by acclamation.

Committee Reports

Building Chair- Eliot Johnson

Eliot gave an update regarding the state of the WAA’s building. Deferred maintenance, landscaping, terrace clean-up, repairs and improvements were addressed. Eliot referenced the budget for these items as reviewed by the Finance Committee. WAA had a two-year deferral to get up to speed with the Fire Marshall and install a new alarm system and Eliot announced that he had an affordable estimate from a commercial company. Eliot remarked that the staff did a fantastic job keeping up with building maintenance.

Jay commented that with resources, WAA could tackle other concerns and wants, e.g. clean-up of the garden and additional space to expand the Solstice event. Abdo commented that during the Solstice event, the Studio was packed with people. Abdo questioned whether it would be possible to install French doors to open up the back terrace and seat people at tables there during the event. Jay responded that yes, this had been proposed and it was an embellishment WAA would like to pursue. First, WAA had to be sure to have the means to prevent leaks in the building, address gutter issues, etc. Jay opened the floor up to other questions or comments.

Exhibitions Chair- Hugh O’Donnell

Hugh announced that the Members Show had been successful and was in the process of de-installation. Two upcoming mixed exhibitions were previewed in detail- a Monoprint show curated by John Thompson and Nancy Lasar as well as an Ornithology show. Hugh remarked that the Monoprint show had the potential to generate sales due to the unique nature of monoprints. Hugh mentioned that, in conjunction with the Ornithology show, WAA could have talks about various species in the area, and survey who was working with birds locally. Following a discussion of trees as subject matter, it was suggested that WAA present a nature show each year.

In addition to the annual Members, Faculty and Atelier shows, Hugh presented additional 2020 exhibitions: Howard Schatz photographs of Pilobolus dancers, works by sculptor Ralph Derby, and a show with Brian Catling + Caroline Ullman. Hugh described the concept of two big mixed and three focused exhibitions and provided the background of each artist. Ginger announced dates and details for the Faculty Show and encouraged attendance of the opening reception.

Education Chair- Patty Fogle

Patty reported a fine start in 2020, with classes very well attended at 177 students. WAA’s financial report shows 2019 at \$82,265 and 2018 at \$77,065 for Education. Averaging these two years, the 2020 projection was \$76,500, which the committee hoped to beat by expanding classes and workshops. Patty described in detail the background of St Petersburg museum

professional, Vavara Sevova and the topic of a potential lecture: "American Painters from the Russian Empire."

Outlining new and recurring spring classes, a watercolor class with Peter Cusack and potential printmaking class were highlighted. Patty noted that starting May 1, Bob Lenz would offer plein air class on Monday afternoons, while Souby Boski was starting a new, 6-week ceramics class, "Clay is the Way" on Mondays beginning April 13. Perhaps Xenia Hodza would return to do portrait and collage workshops; they were well received last year. Patty reiterated that any questions or suggestions regarding Education were always welcome.

Volunteer Co-Chair- Diane Stevens

In Holly's absence, Diane announced that WAA had purchased new volunteer management software – SignUpGenius - to efficiently schedule and communicate with volunteers. Diane remarked that it had made a positive impact and been a worthwhile investment, which could only get better as a tool for WAA. A community outreach effort was described which had provided the added benefit of introducing people to WAA. WAA participated in the 2nd annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service with the Town of Washington. The Studio was open to the public with tables set up for creative art projects/letters intended for military personnel overseas. The CT chapter of the non-profit Hearts of Hope provided WAA with art supplies to send uplifting messages for the Susan B. Anthony Project in Torrington. The event was particularly well attended by young families and high school kids.

Diane announced that a volunteer instructional handbook was in the works for gallery sitting. Additionally, every board member should receive an email request to volunteer at the front desk on a Sunday rotation schedule. The committee was creating a separate email for volunteer opportunities at WAA to be featured on the website, and via SignUpGenius and e-blasts. Jay discussed the need for WAA to open on Sundays and referenced the benefits.

Membership Chair: Anne Marie Foran

Anne Marie Foran spoke to the positive state of membership as a result of all the programming described. It was announced that the membership brochure had been sent out in mid-November and an email reminder would be sent out in February. The need for a volunteer to be positioned during events to collect information via iPad was emphasized.

Anne Marie remarked that she was interested in sending a list of upcoming events and exhibitions for the year to the entire membership and potential members as part of the next mailing. The goal was to encourage membership and spread the word about WAA. In response to a question by Hugh as to whether members had been consulted generally about their priorities for WAA, Anne Marie described the survey that was sent out to members last year. Hugh presented the aforementioned building improvements for Solstice as a high priority for members.

General discussion ensued about promotional opportunities, targeted fundraising campaigns, and a list of websites of WAA members. Abdo announced the Summer Solstice event would take place on Saturday, June 20. Anne Marie appealed to meeting attendees to give WAA membership as a gift and pass along brochures available at the front desk. There was general discussion regarding options for membership renewal and billboard advertising/signage.

Special Events Co-Chairs- Maryellen Furse and Bruce Glickman

Bruce and Maryellen presented the profitable and outstanding major events of the past year. Summer Solstice was highlighted as a fabulous and sold-out event. The Co-Chairs thanked Rod Pleasants and Steve Godwin for hosting the annual TAP Party at their home and graciously covering the cost of the event. Bruce announced that they had agreed to host again this year. Fiona Donovan was the guest of honor and gave a talk on Jasper Johns. "Cabin in the Woods" had been the theme for the very successful Holiday Gift Fair. Bruce and Maryellen thanked volunteers and praised Ginger for a great job. Jay complimented Bruce on the fantastic design of

the Holiday Gift Fair. A small, cocktail event co-hosted at Bruce and Wilson's home to attract new members was described. Art consultant friends of Maryellen's had given a talk and 6-8 new members signed up.

The Co-Chairs announced that WAA will likely host similar events in 2020. Events that coincide with specific exhibits at WAA will also be planned in concert with local organizations. Bruce provided an example: new trustee Joe Austin is affiliated with the Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, who have agreed to collaborate with WAA for the upcoming Ornithology Show - perhaps organizing a day trip for kids or painting on site. A potential event with Pilobolus dancers to coincide with The Five Senses Festival this summer was also referenced. It was noted that Jay was in dialogue with Pilobolus. A Doodle-Do event idea was also discussed which Bruce described as a casual event with beer, pretzels and pens. Jay opened the floor up to questions.

Publicity Chair- Stephanie Johnson

Stephanie noted that she had a background in graphic design and her focus at WAA had been to improve print materials and increase social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. Stephanie remarked that it was an easy way to promote WAA's mission. WAA employed Facebook, Instagram and Google Ads for the Holiday Gift Fair and while it was yet to be determined how this went, the increased sales were a good sign. Stephanie recommended that members and their friends follow the WAA social media accounts and repost images.

Stephanie indicated that she planned to gather information about members' websites and their Instagram handles in a more coherent way to best promote their work. Multiple design projects were presented, including exhibition postcards, and the membership and education brochures. Stephanie described cross-pollination efforts between WAA and ASAP, Marty's, and the Wassaic Project, as well as an advertising campaign. Stephanie remarked that website development dollars were needed and appealed to members to like and share posts on social media.

Other Business

The Establishment of the Talbot Family Award for Artistic Excellence (***or Promise?***). Jay described how WAA had long benefited from its association with the Talbot family. Peter and Barbara, Peter's mother and father, and their son had given very generously of themselves, their talents and their resources to ensure the success of WAA. WAA owed the Talbot family an enormous expression of gratitude. Rich Pomerantz (who was supposed to be at the meeting but unfortunately could not) came up with a wonderful idea during an Executive Committee meeting suggesting that WAA honor the Talbot family by establishing an award in their name. In recognition of all that they have done, WAA will establish the "Talbot Award for Artistic Excellence (***or Promise?***)." Jay noted that the award wouldn't be grandiose, that it was within WAA's means to award \$750 on a yearly basis. The award would go to a high school student with a future career in the visual arts, to be selected by WAA and awarded hopefully by a member of the Talbot Family at a ceremony. Jay concluded that this was an appropriate way to recognize a contribution over many, many years that had benefited this organization.

Jay Kaplan requested that a motion be made to support this award, motion by Diane Stevens, second by Audra Viehland. Passed by acclamation.

Jay opened the floor up to questions or comments on any subject matter.

President's Thank You

Meeting adjourned at 5:00PM.