



Donovan Richards
Queens Borough President

Community Board No. 2

43-22 50th Street, 2nd Floor
Woodside, New York 11377

(718) 533-8773

Fax (718-533-8777

Email qn02@cb.nyc.gov

www.nyc.gov/queenscb2

Anatole Ashraf
Chairperson

Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager

March 11th, 2025

Arts & Cultural Affairs Committee

This meeting was teleconferenced using Zoom

Attendees:

Karesia Batan, Chair
Eric Narburgh, Vice Chair
Anatole Ashraf
Ann Marie Baronowski
Kenny Greenberg
Ryan Smith

Absentees:

Lisa Charles
Stephen Cooper
Akello Thomas

Public Member Absentees:

Edjo Wheeler – Culture Lab LIC

Community Board 2 Staff:

Guests:

Melinda Wang, Research and Advocacy Manager, Dance/NYC
Lucy Sexton, Executive Director New Yorkers for Culture and Arts (NY4CA)
Andre Irving, Cucula Dance Company
Diane Kolack
Justin Martinez
Hugh P. Klitzke
Zehra

Karesia Batan welcomed everyone to the Arts and Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting.

Karesia Batan introduced Melinda Wang from Dance/NYC (<https://www.dance.nyc/>).

- Melinda Wang described the organization and discussed several initiatives to advocate for an increase in the city budget for arts and cultural affairs. She made the following points:
- Dance/NYC works to serve the dance industry by using values of justice and inclusion. Its advocacy work through the Dance Work Resilience Initiative seeks to increase economic justice for the dance workforce and the larger art workforce.
- A 2023 Dance Industry Census, which surveyed a quarter of 1,700 dance entities and 6,000 dance workers, discovered that dance worker wages are 15% below the NYC living wage. These findings are helpful for Dance/NYC's advocacy work.

- The City government is finalizing the city budget, which is expected to be completed in June 2025. On March 13, 2025, the City Council's Education Committee will hold a hearing on Arts Education and its importance to communities — people will have the opportunity to testify.
- On March 18, 2025, a City Council Cultural Affairs Committee meeting will take place, and there will be a rally at 10:30 AM in support of Cultural Affairs initiatives.
- Melinda Wang provided a testimony template that includes a request from cultural organizations seeking a \$75 million dollar increase, baselined for the Department of Cultural Affairs, as well as other talking points.
- People who applied for CDF funding should complete the CDF Impact Survey before its deadline on March 19, 2025. Completing the survey will help Dance/ NYC create a more compelling advocacy campaign for stable baseline funding in the city budget.
- Dance/NYC launched a free Dance Workforce Directory (<https://hub.dance.nyc/directory/>) that connects musicians, dancers, and organizations with available space for rehearsals or performances.
- On March 26, 2025, the NYC Dance Campaign will launch. It's an advocacy campaign that will include a discussion of 4 advocacy priorities that impact dance workers and the arts workforce.

Karesia Batan introduced Lucy Sexton of New Yorkers for Culture and Arts (<https://www.ny4ca.org/>).

- Lucy Sexton described the organization and efforts taken to increase the budget for Arts and Cultural initiatives at both State and City levels. She made the following points:
- New Yorkers for Culture and Arts is a coalition of about 400 organizations, arts workers, and arts supporters.
- The New York State Budget is expected to be passed by April 1, 2025.
- Lucy Sexton shared an automatic email that people can send to their elected officials at the state level to advocate for increases in Arts and Cultural Affairs funding. Additionally, she shared a letter for organizations to sign and support increased funding for arts and cultural affairs at the state level.
- On March 18, 2025, the City Council's preliminary budget hearing on the Department of Cultural Affairs will occur. There will be a small rally that day, with a larger rally planned for May 2025. People will be able to testify at the hearing via Zoom. She shared a supporting document to help guide people on how to testify, and it included a link so people can sign up to attend the hearing.
- Lucy Sexton sets up Zoom meetings with elected officials to encourage them to advocate for increases in their respective legislatures' budgets for arts and cultural affairs, including the New York City Council.
- Every Thursday until June, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts holds a standing Zoom advocacy call.

A discussion took place on NEA requirements and how executive orders affecting DEI and the DEIA Directive particularly impact the arts. Part two of the NEA deadline has been extended to April 7, 2025.

Committee members provided an update on plans for the Bliss Theater and made the following points:

- The Historic Districts Council selected the Sunnyside Shines application for Sunnyside to be part of its Six to Celebrate Program (<https://6tocelebrate.org/>). Sunnyside is one of six neighborhoods in New York City to receive this recognition for the year. The Historic

Districts Council will provide resources throughout that period to support Sunnyside's economy and provide other forms of assistance.

- Karesia Batan stated that she had an informal conversation with the developer who purchased the Bliss Theater to express the community's desire to preserve the theater or some part of its history. The committee chair noted that it's possible that the developer hasn't entered the design stage for the Bliss Theater.

Karesia Batan expressed her desire to talk with Sunnyside BID property owners to gauge or encourage them to have murals on their property. She wants to connect property owners with local artists.

Angel Hart from LIC Partnership said that LIC Partnership is working with DOT on a project to install artwork on a wall that belongs to DOT. Additionally, the organization connected a local artist to Infotech High School and installed a mural there. LIC Partnership continues to connect the artist to other properties within Long Island City as the artist has funding for projects.

Karesia Batan provided additional updates:

- There is a call for muralists to submit proposals for the waterfront, with a deadline at the end of March, 2025. Ottomanellis will be installing murals around the deck area of the waterfront as part of this project.
- A 53-page report from the Arts Culture Queens Town Hall - an initiative by the Borough President that took place in December 2024 has been released. The report is available through the Arts Culture Queens Instagram account and can be accessed by joining their mailing list (and [here](#)). A follow-up conversation will take place on April 10, 2025, at Borough Hall from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- The Bric Art Media website has uploaded an Arts and Cultural Mayoral Forum to their website: <https://bricartsmedia.org/event/mayoral-candidate-forum-on-culture-and-arts/>.
- Karesia Batan stated that the Asian American Arts Alliance provides funding and artists' work opportunities.
- Flushing Town Hall is holding a series of roundtables with artists about their experiences with funding and opportunities, as well as a discussion on what the arts sector needs in Queens, New York. Additionally, Flushing Town Hall offers professional development workshops and meetups for artists.

Andre Irving shared that Cucala Dance Company has added more class options, including tango and cumbia. For more event information, visit www.cucaladance.com.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rafael Nava