

MINUTES

Wisconsin Arts Board Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Meeting Location | Via Zoom and In Person

Baird Center

400 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI

Board Members Present

Brian Kelsey
Lynn Richie
Dinorah Márquez Abadiano
Marcela “Xela” Garcia
Jayne Herring
Karen Ann Hoffman
John W. Johnson
Susan Lipp
William Mitchell
John Potter
Tyler Marchant
Jennifer Schwarzkopf
LaShawndra Vernon
Matthew Wallock

Staff Members Present

George Tzougros
Karen Goeschko
Kaitlyn Berle
Dale Johnson
Vivienne Timchenko

Guests

Christine Hojnacki, Director, Imagine MKE

Welcome and Introductions_____Kelsey

Chair Kelsey called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm.

Approval of the Agenda_____Kelsey

Hoffman moved to approve the agenda; Garcia seconded. Motion passed

Minutes_____Herring

Approval of the December 12, 2025 quarterly board meeting minutes: Vernon moved to approve the minutes and Mitchell seconded. Motion passed.

Presentation: Imagine MKE_____Christine Hojnacki

The Executive Director of Imagine MKE introduced the WAB to the 6-1/2 year old organization. The organization is considered the champion of Arts and Culture for Greater Milwaukee. She explained the work behind the organization’s pillars of Advocate, Amplify, Convene & Connect and Advance.

Budget Committee Report_____Potter

FY25 has been closed by the Department of Administration and WAB Executive Director Tzougros. We are looking at a balanced biennial budget for FY 26-27, which has been aided by salary supplements. At our meeting today, we authorize final grant expenditures for FY26: America 250, Woodland Indian Arts, and the Regranting program.

The Poetry Out Loud competition was just held, so the POL expenses aren't included in this budget update. Riley Saenim, a junior at The Prairie School in Racine, won for the 4th time in a row and will go to DC to participate nationally.

Tzougros and Potter expressed gratitude that we are now on the DOA calendar so that reports are prepared and can be shared with the board at its quarterly meetings.

Standing Committee Updates

External Relations _____ Garcia

Garcia reported that the committee has focused recently on setting priorities, such as increasing relationships with elected officials. Board members have expressed the need for more tools to use when establishing and growing those relationships. To that end, the Committee will be working on developing data visualization/story telling tools. The committee may grow by bringing non-WAB Board members onto the committee. Chair Kelsey will consider future appointments as nominations are made.

Accessibility _____ Mitchell

Mitchell reported that the committee is conducting some self-assessment work to determine its next priorities, too – considering questions such as “What story are we trying to tell? How do we reach out?” As those priorities clarify, the committee may need to grow with people who have specialized expertise in the areas of identified need.

Approve America 250 Grant Recommendations _____ Goeschko

The grant proposal review peer panel was comprised of 4 of the 5 people who are also serving on this year's Creative Communities – Local Arts panel. Their scores reflected grant award recommendations for 18 of the 27 applicants (see below). This leaves \$5,000 of the original \$50,000 available for these grants. We had originally set the grant award at \$2,500 to allow for funding as many as 20 projects. Once the panel had determined that only 18 projects were strong enough to merit funding, staff made a recommendation for the remaining funds, to spark board discussion. After lengthy board discussion, Marquez moved and Vernon seconded to divide the \$5,000 among each of the 18 successful grant projects. (Staff appended the criterion that the applicants be able to match that increased amount, in keeping with the program requirements.)

Approve Woodland Indian Arts Grant Recommendations _____ Hoffman/Berle

Hoffman reported that while there were fewer applicants this year, the pool of 5 included a new organization, the Milwaukee Intertribal Circle. The panel recommended that all five receive funding.

Hoffman identified a conflict of interest with the College of Menominee Nation. Marquez moved to approve the remaining four grant recommendations; Vernon seconded. Motion passed. Hoffman left the Zoom screen/virtual space. Johnson moved to approve a grant to the College of the Menominee Nation; Schwarzkopf seconded. Motion passed.

Approve Wisconsin Regranting Recommendations_____Goeschko

Goeschko announced that the Community Foundation of North Central WI has officially withdrawn from the Regranting Program. The dollars typically granted to this organization will be split amongst the remaining regranting agencies that have requested additional funds. The new grant amounts bring each partner's award closer to its pre-2011 funding.

The following conflicts of interest were identified:

St. Croix Foundation: Potter

Madison Arts Commission: Johnson

Milwaukee Arts Board: Marquez, Garcia

Marquez moved to approve a grant to each applicant except the St. Croix Foundation, the Madison Arts Commission and the Milwaukee Arts Board. Marchant seconded. Motion passed.

Potter left the virtual space. Richie moved to approve a grant to the St. Croix Foundation; Wallock seconded. Motion passed. Potter returned.

Marquez and Garcia left the room. Vernon moved to approve a grant to the Milwaukee Arts Board. Herring seconded. Motion passed. Marquez and Garcia returned.

Johnson left the room. Vernon moved to approve a grant to the Madison Arts Commission; Hoffman seconded. Motion passed. Johnson returned to the room.

A brief break was taken by the Board from 2:56 to 3:02pm and the meeting was reconvened with wishes for a happy birthday for board member Susan Lipp.

Old Business

Chairman's Report_____Kelsey

Kelsey, aided by Tzougros, reported on the status Social RX (formerly known as the Art Pharmacy). Social RX is offering three webinars—one directed at higher education; another for health professionals; and a third one for arts organizations. Thanks to NEA funding, the WAB has made it possible for this work to begin in Wisconsin soon. WAB is partnering with many other organizations (including First Stage Children's Theater and the Children's Theater of Madison which catalyzed this conversation in Wisconsin) to activate Social RX in WI.

Executive Director's Report_____Tzougros

Tzougros, aided by Richie, updated the board on the May 12th Arts in the Micro-Community gathering that will occur in Land O' Lakes. This event will bring together artists, community leaders and elected officials from communities located north of highway 8, with a population of 2500 or less. Its focus is on how micro-communities are engaging with the arts to thrive.

Tzougros and Goeschko have interviewed the top 5 candidates to fill the position that will be left vacant with the retirement of Dale Johnson. They will interview 3 of those 5 in person later this week. All are strong candidates.

Board members congratulated Johnson on his retirement, celebrating all the knowledge and hard work that he brought to the WAB over his almost 30 years with the agency and wishing him the best in his retirement.

New Business**Kelsey**

Kelsey asked board members to share their impressions of the WIGOT conference. Impressions included the creativity of the WAB booth in the Marketplace in drawing people in. Participants could add to a poster which asked, "What is your favorite art form in which to participate?" Board members also expressed appreciation for the two sessions on AI, and the WAB's public art panel.

Tzougros announced the good news that Garcia has been named Secretary of NASAA. She will serve on the Executive Committee. It is exciting to have Wisconsin's voice at that level.

Johnson announced that the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission is going through leadership changes. The two new co-chairs are Reggie Finlayson and Abayomi Animashaun. Current WI Poet Laureate Brenda Cardenas has been doing great work all over the state.

Johnson also announced that DPI's Wisconsin Arts Celebration, begun as a component of WAB's 50th Anniversary celebration, will continue in the coming year. The centerpiece poem was written by Cardenas, and this year's focus is "collaboration."

Adjournment

Marquez moved that the meeting be adjourned at 3:30 p.m. Motion passed.