

Richmond Art Center
Informational Meeting
April 20, 2006

Please note: A list of RAC's business members, as requested, can be found at the end of these notes.

The meeting began at 7:05PM. Approximately 33 people attended, including Board members Sandie Huston, Anne Austin, Julian Waller and Toph Woodward, and staff members Suzanne Tan and Kato Jaworski. Three or four people came late and did not sign the sign-in sheet. The remainder are as follows:

Ann Schnake, Shannon Flattery, Jessamyn Lovell, Alice Johnson, Kitty Zahradka, Carrie & Karl McDade, Betty & Don Hardison, Jan & Byron Brown, Susan Greene, Elizabeth Sojourner, Nancy Lane, Gene Erickson, Annette Goldberg, Laurel Eber, Cintra Harbach, Josie Jurczenia, Catherine Waller, Mike Warner, Cherrie Williams.

The meeting began with presentations by staff and Board members.

Suzanne acknowledged the presence of Betty Hardison, former Board member, then reviewed the assessment report of RAC's status by consultant Margaret Kadoyama and indicated cutbacks that had been made and that city and foundations are seriously considering both short term and long term funding. The future now looks much more positive than it did at the first informational meeting.

Sandie then spoke and said help is needed from those present for promotion of RAC at this time and for activities during the 70th anniversary events. A signup sheet was passed around for people to indicate if they were willing to volunteer their help.

Anne discussed the tour program for the past year (Runnymede, Paulson Press, Traywick Gallery, individual studios, Oakland Art Gallery, di Rosa Preserve) and activities planned (Clos Pegase, second di Rosa tour).

Toph reviewed the exhibition program, its financial problems, and the fact that we are putting together a curatorial committee, a volunteer exhibition committee and hiring a part time exhibitions manager to assist them. More volunteers are needed for the exhibitions committee. The donation box for exhibition visitors is being given greater visibility.

Kato said that classes are being shortened from ten to eight classes, that a series of artist lecture/demonstrations has been started, that *Connection* catalogue is being ended for now and classes will be advertised through the web and a briefer, simpler, less expensive flyer, and that scholarships for now will be limited to children, all with the intent of reducing costs and raising income.

Sandie went over the 70th anniversary activities – the exhibits, the auction which will be under the planning direction of Carrie McDade, and the fact that volunteers are needed to help out in late September and early October. The meeting was then opened for questions and comments.

Katharine Verrinder – How much income comes from tours? Do they pay for themselves and bring in much money? Most local businesses don't know that RAC exists. (Suzanne mentioned the recent Chamber of Commerce mixer at RAC.) Can we make use of people who have been assigned by the courts to community service? (We are already doing so.) Soroptomists may be interested in helping us. They are a funding source. We must improve outside safety and remove the dumpster. A docent program might be useful.

Ann Schnake – How will the new gallery program work? Toph reviewed the committee/part time manager approach and indicated that artists will be asked to install their own work. Suzanne said there will be fewer but longer shows and that the community gallery probably will be used for student shows.

Laurel Eber (works for Clay People) – A list of local businesses is needed for students to contact for support. Can the ceramics students hold a sale to raise funds for RAC? Sandie said other classes may also wish to hold student-run sales of their work for this purpose. Laurel wants cuts restored when our funding is on more solid ground. Both Suzanne and Julian indicated that is our intention.

Annette Goldberg – People can send fundraising letters to their physicians, dentists, lawyers, other professionals. A standard packet about RAC and a suggested letter might be helpful. Suzanne said she can prepare this.

Catherine Waller – Didn't realize we are in such dire straits. A letter should go out to all members informing them of the situation.

Susan Greene – Get Chevron to give more money.

Elizabeth Sojourner – Give donation/membership decals to businesses to display in their windows. Can we put posters in art stores and other businesses? Will businesses carry our flyers advertising our classes?

Jan Brown – The dumpster is a big turnoff. The city's strategic plan for the building needs attention. Suzanne said we are awaiting the city's assessment report. Can we have a gift shop, an art rental gallery for homes and businesses?

Betty Hardison – All ideas mentioned have been tried before in RAC's history and can be done again. We need to promote memberships and she is willing to establish a membership committee.

Don Hardison – What percent of membership dues is tax deductible? He is under the impression it is low and should be much higher. Sandie said she will have her husband Lee look into it.

Suzanne spoke about the \$70 for 70 years donation idea, the money to be pledged by students and others with payments over three months beginning in June. By evening's end some checks had been handed in.

Gene Erickson – He is upset by the shortening of class time and wondered how this decision was made. Julian and Kato reviewed the process and said that we were already offering more for less despite no outside funding than are other school programs in other cities and we didn't want to increase fees because that would leave out too many people who just can't afford to pay more. That left only one option – to shorten classes.

Laurel – Students should be involved earlier in the decision process.

Annette – 70 for 70 should be promoted widely, not just to students.

Betty – Do we need a student council?

Kitty Zahradka – donors should be prominently listed near our entrance.

Cintra Harbach – There should be a “thermometer” of donation funds sought and funds received.

Laurel – Bumper stickers would be a way to advertise RAC. (John Wehrle told Suzanne afterward that he knows where we could get an excellent price on bumper stickers.)

Gene – Our outside area looks shoddy. He will start this week trimming bushes and pulling weeds. Suzanne said the city had promised to do this and she would discuss it with Gene later. Gene’s effort was heartily supported by all.

Mike Warner – He now has about a dozen people in an online Friends of RAC group. This could be the starting point for a student council.

Elizabeth – What about our outreach program? Suzanne explained that we have a commitment through the end of this year to do a program in five high risk neighborhoods and we want to keep doing outreach but cannot continue to do so without outside funding, e.g. from the schools for in-school activities. The Art of Living Black and the student show for the school district are already activities we have done for several years as outreach. Elizabeth said we need a marketing strategy.

Suzanne – We need greater transparency, but it is hard to achieve with a very limited and vastly overworked staff.

Ann Schnake – Government sources have been cutting funding in recent years for all cultural programs, not just for RAC. Our problem is widespread in the community.

The meeting ended at 9PM.

Julian A. Waller, M.D.
Secretary Pro Tem

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