

**CITIZEN
ENGAGEMENT +
LOCAL SUPPORT
FOR THE ARTS**



Margaret Hancock



Virginia Commission for the Arts mission:

To invest in the arts of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VCA AT A GLANCE



1968

year established

Only

*state agency
dedicated to
investing in the arts*

\$5 million+

*allocated this
fiscal year*

800+

*grants per year
across the
Commonwealth*



2

*Rosters: Touring Artist
Roster and Teaching
Artist Roster*

1

*Specialty arts license plate
available through DMV to
support the arts*

Statewide

*Governor-
appointed
Commissioners*

99%

*of Virginia's 133
municipalities reached
through operating or
programmatic support*

PANEL DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW:

- Today's panel discussion is intended to invite Virginians to learn how citizens of Virginia Beach effectively engaged with their community for a recent landmark decision to allocate local funding to the arts.
- Kate Pittman, Executive Director of VCA-grantee ViBe Creative District; Michael Berlucchi, City of Virginia Beach Councilman; Emily Labows, City of Virginia Beach Director of Cultural Affairs; and Martha McClees, Arts Advocate and Board member of arts nonprofits will collectively share the timeline, process, and outcomes that led to an additional 20% allocation (\$1.6M) of city admissions tax funding for the arts.
- Walk away with a better understanding of how you can champion the arts through citizen engagement!

VIRGINIA BEACH PANELISTS:



Martha McClees

Retired executive of
Virginia Beach Vision

Board Member at
multiple arts orgs



Michael Berlucchi

Active on Council
5+ years

Arts employee at
Chrysler Museum



Kate Pittman

Executive Director of
ViBe Creative District

Grassroots community
engagement leader



Emily Labows

Director of Cultural
Affairs, 24 years with
City of Virginia Beach

Liaison to arts groups

AREAS OF FOCUS FOR DISCUSSION

- Assembling a team of champions: Review of assembling the key stakeholder group of arts leaders and major donors who met for over a year to research, strategize and reach out to City staff and council behind the scenes.
- City Council engagement and advisory level planning to approach City Manager and council at large. Working behind the scenes in tandem with public efforts.
- Engaging taxpaying citizens with the cause: The formation of Citizens for the VB Arts resident-based database to appeal for emails, letters and attendance at in-person meetings from the tax-payers themselves. Strategic attendance and citizen / business owner support at City Public Meetings.
- The role of working with City staff, which departments work collaboratively to review requests like dedicated funding, etc. When can city staff participate and what is or isn't allowed as a City staff.
- The Why. What is the end goal outcome and how does it better your community for the future.

Martha McClees



- Engage a coalition of stakeholders
 1. Representative arts organization CEO's and board leadership
 2. Foundations
 3. Business and community financial supporters
- Research and message
 1. Quantify need
 2. Assess opportunity
 3. Develop strategic plan

Martha McClees



- Align goals with city vision
 1. Build plan of action in consultation with city's staff leadership
 2. Embrace elements consistent with city's art plan and vision
 3. Align with council's goals
- Engage citizens
 1. Demonstrate broad, vocal citizens' support
 2. Make participation easy with a repetitive message
 3. Keep supporters current and engaged

Michael Berlucchi



- City Council engagement and advisory level planning to approach City Manager and council at large.
- Working behind the scenes in tandem with public efforts.
- Working knowledge of City budget structure and past dedicated funding sources for other needs.
- Realization that arts were widely recognized by leadership and community as an essential community-building need

Michael Berlucchi



MARCH 29, 2024 RESOLUTION

Agenda ITEM: 4. Resolution to PROVIDE direction to the City Manager on the use of funds in Capital Project #100629, "Sports Tourism Infrastructure," and PROVIDE direction to the City Manager to create options re dedicated funding source for Arts and Culture using existing funding dedications

(Requested by Council Members Berlucchi, Ross-Hammond, Rouse, Remick, and Schulman)

Michael Berlucchi



JULY 2, 2024 RESOLUTION

K. ORDINANCES:

2. Ordinance to DIRECT the City Manager to proceed with a plan for distribution of Arts and Culture dedicated funds and to AUTHORIZE two full time positions (Requested by Mayor Dyer, Vice Mayor Wilson and Council Members Berlucchi, Hutcheson, Remick, Ross-Hammond, Schulman, and Wooten)

Kate Pittman



- The formation of Citizens for the VB Arts resident-based database to appeal for emails, letters and attendance at in-person meetings from the tax-payers themselves.
- Strategic attendance and citizen / business owner support at City Public Meetings.
- Sharing talking points and knowing who will attend in advance of the meetings--Creating a clear case for support.
- The importance of personal stories that impact decision making.

ATTENDANCE AT IMPORTANT CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS – PUBLIC INPUT

- City Council Retreats (August 2023)
- City Virtual Surveys (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024)
- City of Virginia Beach Budget Meetings (Jan-April 2024)
 - Sign up a list of qualified speakers to attend and speak
 - Share personal success stories of how the arts impact individuals
- Utilize existing networks you might already have
 - Arts Groups – executive directors and board lists
 - Affiliate Business Associations or Civic Groups
- Citizens for VB Arts was able to provide nearly 100 points of contact at in-person meetings and an additional 100 points of contact virtually over the course of one fiscal year

ONLINE GOOGLE FORM TO CREATE DATABASE



Citizens for VB Arts

B *I* U ↻ ✕

This form is intended to be only for residents or businesses located in Virginia Beach.

Mission Statement: The Citizens for VB Arts is a group of community leaders committed to advocating for dedicated, sustainable funding for public, visual and performing arts in Virginia Beach.

Statement of purposes: Through education for the community, research on arts funding models and focused meetings with City Council representatives, the Citizens for VB Arts will advocate for increased funding for the Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission and Cultural Affairs Department budget to sustain and grow both public art access and private arts groups.

Questions?

Email citizensfortheartsvb@gmail.com

How would you like engage with Citizens for VB Arts?*

Add me to your email database to receive advocacy updates

I would like to attend strategic meetings with a core group of advocates 4-5 times a year

Invite me to write a letter or email to City Council about why I support the arts in VB as needed during advocacy efforts

Invite me to endorse advocacy letters from Citizens for the VB Arts to City Council as needed throughout the year

Invite me to speak at City Council meetings to advocate for the arts

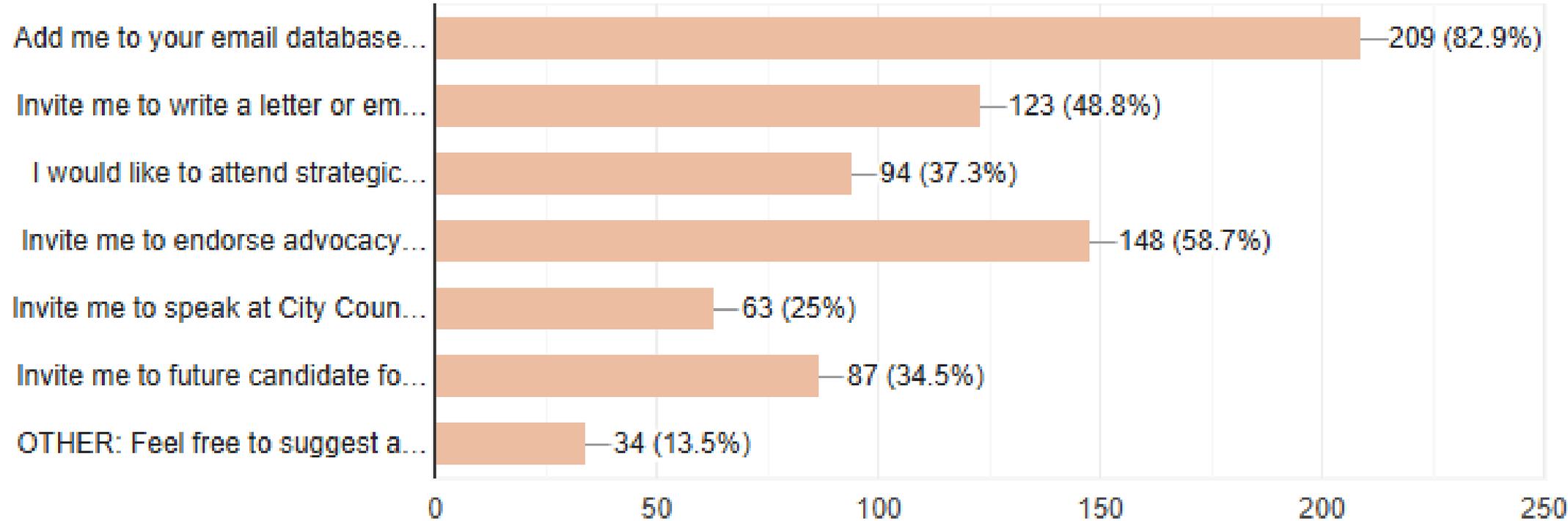
Invite me to future candidate forums on arts support during election season

Email: CITIZENSFORTHEARTSVB@GMAIL.COM

SUGGESTIONS WHEN ACTIVATING YOUR GROUP

How would you like engage with Citizens for VB Arts?

252 responses



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH
 "COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME"

CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR ROBERT M. "BOBBY" DYER, At Large
 VICE MAYOR ROSEMARY WILSON – District 5
 MICHAEL F. BERLUCCHI – District 3
 BARBARA M. HENLEY – District 2
 DAVID HUTCHESON – District 1
 ROBERT W. "WORTH" REMICK – District 6
 DR. AMELIA N. ROSS-HAMMOND – District 4
 JENNIFER ROUSE – District 10
 JOASHUA F. "JOASH" SCHULMAN – District 9
 CHRIS TAYLOR – District 8
 SABRINA D. WOOTEN – District 7



CITY HALL BUILDING 1
 2401 COURTHOUSE DRIVE
 VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA 23456
 PHONE: (757) 385-4303
 FAX (757) 385-5669
 EMAIL: CITYCOUNCIL@VBGOV.COM

CITY COUNCIL APPOINTEES

CITY MANAGER – PATRICK A. DUHANEY
 CITY ATTORNEY – MARK D. STILES
 CITY ASSESSOR – SUE CUNNINGHAM
 CITY AUDITOR – LYNDON S. REMIAS
 CITY CLERK – AMANDA BARNES

CITY COUNCIL
 FORMAL SESSION AGENDA

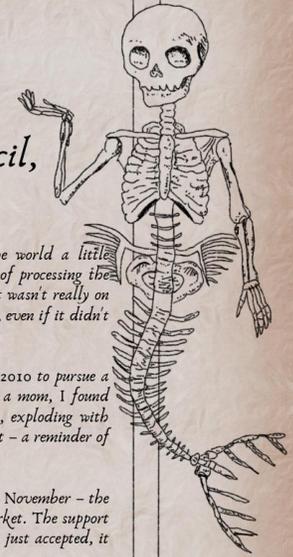
April 23, 2024

MAYOR ROBERT M. "BOBBY" DYER
 PRESIDING

I. CITY COUNCIL'S BRIEFINGS	- Conference Room -	12:00 PM
A. VBCPS TECHNICAL & CAREER EDUCATION AD HOC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS Sara Lockett, Ed. D., Director – Office of Technical & Career Education (Requested by Mayor Dyer and Vice Mayor Wilson)		
B. TAX DEDICATIONS CAPACITY & ARTS FUNDING OPTIONS		1:00 PM
Kevin Chatellier, Director – Budget & Management Services		
II. CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFINGS		
A. PENDING PLANNING ITEMS		2:00 PM
Kaitlen Alcock, Planning Administrator Kevin Kemp, Zoning Administrator		
B. FY 2024-25 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (BUDGET) OPERATING AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT		
1. MAGISTRATE		2:15 PM
Andrew Truitt, Magistrate		
2. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION AND CITIZEN SERVICES		2:30 PM
Jada Lee, Director		
3. HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION		2:45 PM
Ruth Hill, Director		
4. AGRICULTURE		3:00 PM
David Trimmer, Director		
5. PARKS AND RECREATION OPERATING		3:15 PM
Michael Kirschman, Director		



Dear Virginia Beach City Council,



I'm Rebecca, and for the first time, I'm publicly identifying as an artist.

Growing up in VB, in a busy, multigenerational Puerto Rican home, I always saw the world a little differently. I'm neurodivergent – I have autism and aphantasia. Creativity was my way of processing the world, making sense of things. But in my family, the idea of becoming a professional artist wasn't really on the table. It was about finding a stable career, following a path that felt safe and expected, even if it didn't fully align with my heart..

I left Virginia Beach after graduating from the First Colonial Legal Studies Academy in 2010 to pursue a more stable career path. But after a decade of exploration, and especially after becoming a mom, I found myself drawn back to VB in 2023. This time, the city felt different. The ViBe District, exploding with colorful and welcoming murals, ignited something in me. It was inspiring, but also bittersweet – a reminder of what I'd set aside.

But this time, VB seemed ready to embrace artists like me. I started selling my art online in November – the dark, witchy, alternative stuff I'd always loved creating. Then, in March, my first art market. The support was overwhelming! For the first time, I found my community, a place where my art wasn't just accepted, it was celebrated.

As a freelancing mom, I benefit from the resources VB offers to achieve my goals. The small business center helped me turn my art into something sustainable, the library provides everything from books to image projectors – tools that actually elevate my work.

Art isn't just about creating pretty things. It's about expressing unique perspectives, building communities, and nurturing the creative spark within us all. It's about seeing the world differently, just like I do.

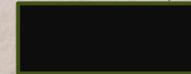
That's why sufficient funding for the arts is crucial. That's why I'm here today, advocating for more resources so every artist, established or emerging, has a chance to create, to share their vision, and to enrich our city.

My kids are in VB public schools, and I want them to experience the power of art. Our walks along the oceanfront together, taking in those murals? It fuels my creativity, and hopefully it fuels theirs too.

That's why arts funding matters so much. It's about nurturing that creative spark, building communities around shared passions, and showing people that their wildest artistic dreams are possible.

I have a big goal: one day, I want my own mural on the Oceanfront. Until then, I'll be here advocating for resources so every artist has a chance. And when I get there? I'm bringing other artists with me, because that's how we do it in VB.

District 8 Resident,



DOCUMENTING YOUR EFFORTS & SHARING



Advocates for a dedicated fund for arts and culture and Virginia Beach stand up during a council meeting on March 19, 2024 (Courtesy of City of Virginia Beach)

Kate Pittman



SUGGESTIONS WHEN ACTIVATING YOUR GROUP

- Inform, Acknowledge & Thank
- Inform, Acknowledge & Thank
- Inform, Acknowledge & Thank

Emily Labows



- Inclusion of arts funding in city council's planning retreats and strategic plans
- Working as a resource to citizen arts advocacy committee
- Providing research such as:
 - Arts funding and policies of comparable national cities and regional cities
 - Examples of dedicated revenue streams used by other cities
- Working inter-departmentally to model options for dedicated funding sources



INITIATIVES *(cont)*

- 3.13** Enhance the reach and distribution of arts throughout the city
- 3.14** Explore dedicated funding opportunities that comparable municipalities use to support culture and arts

Emily Labows



ONCE FUNDING IS APPROVED, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- Navigating expectations with practical options
- Structuring recommendations based on Council priorities
- Assessing needs and new opportunities
- Impact of increased funding

CITY COUNCIL ADOPTED ORDINANCE 7/2/24

Possible Funding Options for Council's Consideration: \$1.6 M Breakdown

- Grants to Individual Artists and Bring Arts to Neighborhoods Grants (Pilot): \$200,000
- Increase funding to Arts and Cultural Organizations and Strengthen Arts Community: \$896,839
 - Additional funding to Arts and Humanities Commission and sustainability funding for major arts institutions
- Increase Public Art, Placemaking, Programming into Districts: \$350,000
- Two Additional Staffing to Make Initiatives a Reality: \$166,685 total (salaries, benefits, computers, phones for two staff)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:



Martha McClees

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Michael Berlucchi

mberlucc@vbgov.com



Kate Pittman

kate@vibecreativedistrict.org



Emily Labows

elabows@vbgov.com



THANK YOU!



