
Arts Advisory Committee Priority-Setting Workshop - March 8, 2012

On March 8, 2012, members of the Arts Advisory Committee participated in an 8020Info planning workshop to propose a shortlist of potential issues, topics and themes that could be addressed by the AAC during its current term.

Background Presentation: The discussion followed a brief presentation earlier in the meeting by Jan Allen, former chair of the Arts Advisory Committee, who traced the history and evolution of the AAC from its genesis as an ad-hoc committee in 2006 and launch in 2007.

From the beginning, the group was seen as a source of arts expertise to help set priorities, playing an advisory role to City staff and Council as well as providing a communications channel back to the arts community. The close relationship with the Kingston Arts Council was intended to help ensure the most knowledgeable people were recruited to serve. The AAC was also an early advocate for the culture plan as a tool to guide future cultural development, and played a role in development of the Kingston Arts Fund and progress on Tett Centre issues.

Setting the Stage: 8020Info's Rob Wood also walked the group through a number of key elements that often come into play in priority-setting processes. Those points included:

□ **Assessing priorities in context with goals**

The evaluations involved in setting priorities must be made in context with your specific goals. That may involve breaking down the overall AAC mandate, which the group agreed was accurately described as: *advising the City on priorities for policy and/or action that support the sustainability and continuing growth of our artists and arts organizations in their efforts to produce meaningful work of excellent quality.*

□ **Limiting the scope to a meaningful range of issues for consideration**

To be manageable, it's important to limit the number of potential issues that might compete for the AAC's attention. Some topics might focus strictly on "the arts", but others extend into the wider sphere of all creative activity, cultural perspectives other than those of artists and arts organizations, as well as broader city and/or community issues.

□ **Considering priorities in terms of their impact as catalysts for change**

As an advisory group, it might be useful for the AAC to think of its role as an agent of change and consider its priorities as "vectors" having force/magnitude and direction.

□ **Formalizing the advisory deliverable: a report card?**

Sometimes it helps considerably to focus on the ends. In setting its agenda, the AAC might want to think in terms of delivering an annual report card to the City on the state of the arts and priorities for policy, action or change.

□ **Tools for evaluating options**

There are many ways to evaluate priorities against your goals, but often the measures involve the tradeoffs between effort/cost/do-ability of the initiatives and their payoff or importance. Some simple 2x2 matrix tools are available and may be helpful.

Proposed Issues, Topics & Themes To Be Addressed:

The following themes and issues were identified for further consideration by the Arts Advisory Committee. They were also briefly evaluated in terms of the following "payoff/effort" chart.

8020Info REAP Assessment

	High Payoff	Low Payoff
Easy to Do	R ight A way	E asy W in
Hard to Do	A pply E ffort	P ark I t

High-Payoff Initiatives/Easier To Do = "Take Action Right Away"

- Define AAC language/terms, scope, model, philosophies and roles**

While the AAC's mandate is focused on the sustainability and continuing growth of our artists and arts organizations, those terms perhaps should be understood to embrace a broader range of endeavour than traditional definitions might indicate for "artist" or "arts organization". It may also help to clarify accepted models and philosophies of how best to support/promote the arts, and to define distinctive roles for the AAC, the City, and the Kingston Arts Council, which advocates for artists and arts organizations, plays an active role on the AAC and also administers programs for the City under a service agreement.
- Future Uses of the Empire Theatre**

With the impending relocation of this important downtown theatre, the Committee wishes to better understand the facts of the situation, clarify the options, consider their impacts and make recommendations to the City on potential responses or positions.
- Recommend Approaches in Support of the City's Proposed "Walk of Fame"**

Recently Council unanimously approved a proposal to explore the creation of a "Walk of Fame" in the downtown North Blocks/Entertainment District, which would celebrate Great Kingstonians and include a significant emphasis on arts, culture and tourism.
- Make Recommendations on Development of Public Art Policy/Initiatives**

Development of an RFP and hiring resources to lead development of a public art policy is imminent. Council also recently passed a motion to pursue public art in 2013 as part of its effort to celebrate Great Kingstonians with a Walk of Fame.

High-Payoff/Harder To Do = “Apply Effort Over Time”

□ **Pursue Cultural Mapping Opportunities and Identification of Gaps**

There are many potential representations of data in a cultural map (inventory, database, GIS mapping, infographics etc.) and cultural mapping can help address questions related to the inventory of facilities and spaces, give profile to little known DIY/grassroots groups, and help identify gaps for rehearsal space, production space, live/work space, community art galleries, and so on.

□ **Answer the question: “What Do Artists Need to Prosper in Kingston?”**

The City can be most effective in responding to the needs of artists and arts organizations when it clearly understands the pivotal issues influencing their progress and sustainability. It is expected that discussion on this question will be informed in part by the cultural mapping effort and any resulting identification of gaps.

□ **Review and Make Recommendations on City Bylaws Impacting the Arts**

Decisions in many areas of City jurisdiction have impacts on the local arts community, ranging from planning policies, transportation, development (e.g. North Blocks) and city bylaws covering everything from zoning changes to regulating entertainment that “appeals to sexual appetites”.

□ **Follow Through on “Creative Cities” Research and Recommendations**

The AAC already has a group exploring the Creative Cities concept and the Committee expressed interest in pursuing this initiative further.

Ongoing Topics = “Consider When/As Appropriate”

□ **Monitor & Advise on Progress of Major Projects (Culture Plan, Tett etc.)**

While work on the Kingston Culture Plan has moved to its next phase (implementation), the AAC will have a continuing interest in monitoring its progress, advising on emerging issues and recognizing accomplishments.

The same applies to other issues, including development of the J.K. Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, and the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts.