

Attendance

Board: Christal Brown, Taylor Ho Bynum, Amy Zell Ellsworth, Geoff Hargadon, John Henry, Doug Keith (*via phone*), Karen Mittelman (*via phone*), Barbara Murphy, Chip Newell, Julie Richard, Randy Rosenbaum, Larry Simpson, Ann Smith, Pam Tatge, Ted Wendell, Marco Werman, Lisa Wong, Carrie Zaslow

Guests: Ephrat Asherie (NDP Grantee), Amy Lam (Celebrity Series) Bob Lynch (AFTA), Anita Walker (MCC)

Notetaker: Steven Fenton

BOARD CHAIR LARRY SIMPSON CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 12:05 PM

Call to Order & Welcome

Larry Simpson called the meeting to order. He shared his excitement to be back together after a productive and rewarding retreat in June. Larry led the room in a round of introductions.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Cathy Edwards reported on recent activity at NEFA informed by the strategic plan. NEFA's solid financial standing has enabled the organization to invest in the priorities identified within the plan. Cathy cited two examples: creating a fund for professional development for NEFA staff and a working group tasked with managing how those funds are used, and initiating program activities and partnerships that further underscore and help realize NEFA's core value of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

In September, the organization completed a process to build a new system and process for individual staff growth and development. As an outcome of the strategic planning process NEFA seeks to make room for, and bring greater transparency to, how and when staff may be eligible for growth or promotion opportunities. The new system establishes two new position levels and senior titles for individuals who have demonstrated mastery within their current role. It also allowed the organization to establish compensation ranges for each position level, which helps to increase transparency around compensation internally and externally. Upon ratifying the new frameworks, the organization made 10 promotions and compensation adjustments across the organization as the first step of implementing this new policy. Additionally, after hearing from the board in June, the organization prioritized funding the discretionary employer contributions to staff 403b plans for FY17 and 18.

Cathy reflected on the most recent season of Center Stage which brought artists from Egypt and Ukraine to tour the US. NEFA is working closely with partners Lisa Booth Management to consider next steps for reapplying for additional funding from the ECA at the State Department. She reported that NEFA also has major proposals pending at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, to support three more years of the National Dance Project, and The Boston Foundation to support a next iteration of NEFA's Regional Dance Development Initiative (RDDI) in New England.

Cathy asked Jane Preston and Amy Ellsworth to share notes from their recent trip to the Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) Conference in Oakland, CA, which had the tagline "Race, Place, Space." Oakland recently completed a cultural plan and mapped where arts organizations and artists are located. The conversation started as creative placemaking but shifted toward thinking about place-keeping and sustaining the cultures and communities that created those places, which resonated with the work NEFA is doing. GIA has been working on raising equity as the focus of their work, which was reflected in the conference, both in terms of the participants and topics presented throughout.

Approval of Minutes from June 2018 Retreat

Larry Simpson presented the minutes from the June 2018 Board of Directors Retreat. He asked for questions or corrections, but none were offered. The chair entertained a motion to approve the minutes.

Carrie Zaslow motioned to approve the June 2018 board retreat minutes. Pam Tatge seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Finance & Audit Committee Report

Board Treasurer Doug Keith reiterated Cathy's point that NEFA's finances have been healthy. Risks remain and always will, but Cathy and the leadership team have been proactive in recognizing them. The finance team will complete the annual audit in November, which will be just in time to begin an audit from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Jug Chokshi, Director of Finance & Administration, shared his priority for the year is to create a standard internal reporting format and timeline, which will be a collaborative effort with the staff. Jug will also focus on increasing transparency and will be working with the committee to produce information in different ways to deepen their understanding of the finances.

Jug walked the board through the financial statements and pointed out the projections were from quite early in the fiscal year. Jug flagged the currently projected \$300K surplus would most likely decrease, but if in January that number is still high the organization will reinvest that money to cover gaps in strategic priorities.

Investment Committee Report

Investment Committee Chair Ted Wendell shared that the committee has discussed whether to redirect some of NEFA's investments into a more socially responsible strategy in order to align with our policies. This would involve resolving legacy issues with the Fund for the Arts investments.

Trustees Committee Report

Trustees Committee Chair Randy Rosenbaum shared when the committee met in September most of their conversation focused on how NEFA's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility might inform their priorities for board development over the next year. After reflecting on the deep learning at the retreat, the committee decided they would need a better understanding of who is already on the board before they could identify recruitment priorities for candidates for the Class of 2022. In order to avoid making assumptions about current board members, the committee will send out a survey to establish current baselines, identify gaps, and solicit nominations.

Special Board Election

Trustees Committee Chair Randy Rosenbaum presented the special election slate to the board. The Trustees Committee recommended the nomination of Kristina Newman-Scott to the class of 2021 for a 3-year term to begin immediately.

Randy Rosenbaum motioned to approve the nomination of Kristina Newman-Scott to the Class of 2021. Taylor Ho Bynum seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Development & Communications Committee Report

Development & Communications Committee Chair John Henry reminded the board the annual appeal had just kicked off and expressed his hope that the board would continue to have 100% participation in the annual fund. The committee also discussed other ways the board can participate in the organization's fundraising strategies. They developed some discussion points that would provide an outline for conversations between individual board members, Cathy Edwards and Development Director Sharon Timmel, to think through how everyone can use their unique skills to contribute to various projects.

National Dance Project Grantee Spotlight

Deputy Director Jane Preston introduced and welcomed National Dance Project grantee Ephrat Asherie and Amy Lam the Artistic Programmer for Celebrity Series. Ephrat received a 2017 production and touring grant to create and tour *Odeon*. Ephrat spoke to the board about her experience creating the work which was her second opportunity to collaborate with her brother who is a jazz pianist who composed the music for the piece. With *Odeon*, Ephrat felt ready to take on a larger scale production which the National Dance Project grant made possible. The grant also made it possible for Ephrat to take on her first national tour. Ephrat spoke about the different collaborators she worked with and the various and unique perspectives they brought into the structure and form of the piece. She was excited to bring a piece that is deeply rooted in both traditional and contemporary dance forms and music to different audiences across the country.

who will ask different questions from, and in, different contexts. She continues to think about how to make the work accessible, engaging, and inclusive for all audiences.

Arts Advocacy – Presentation & Discussion

Board Chair Larry Simpson introduced Bob Lynch, President & CEO of Americans for the Arts (AFTA). Cathy shared some of the ways NEFA's work intersects with AFTA, most significantly NEFA's participation in Arts Advocacy Days in March, which offers constituents an opportunity to connect with their representatives to discuss the impact and needs of the creative economy in the United States.

AFTA was founded in 1960 to serve, advance, and lead a network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America. AFTA is committed to three goals – increasing resources for the arts, setting policy that supports the arts, and bringing awareness to and advocating the importance of the arts to America's communities and economy. Bob briefly described AFTA's strategies in each of these areas before opening the discussion for questions.

Board members asked about working with current leadership at the National Endowment for the Arts, the importance of advocating for the arts at the state and local levels, and the ways they could connect to AFTA's work. Bob reminded board members the most important thing is to keep their eyes on the issues they had discussed and that small steps help at every level. He invited board members to join the [Arts Action Fund](#) to stay connected to this work and reinforced the importance of their participation in the arts, as advocates, patrons, and donors.

Operationalizing Our Values: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Board Chair Larry Simpson reflected on the summer retreat which grounded the board in the importance of deepening the organization's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. The Trustees and Executive Committees both met to conduct debriefs on the retreat, which included conversation about what the board's next steps should be to inject NEFA's commitment to these principles into the cellular level of the organization.

The board were invited to revisit the conversation maps that were created at the retreat and asked to consider a topic or question they would like to address. Board members acknowledged the great and skillful work of the team of facilitators from Equity Quotient. They appreciated the conversation was grounded in the history of the creation of race, which established an appropriate baseline knowledge to navigate the rest of the conversation. Many described an appetite to learn even more about that history and its impact on the contemporary United States.

The conversation turned toward questions about what NEFA needs from the board to tackle such important issues. The board broke out into their committees to discuss the ways in which they can infuse the organization's commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, into their work.

The Finance & Audit and Investment Committees spoke about their hope to diversify the membership of the committees. They also shared they would like to engage all of NEFA's investment managers in conversation about moving to socially responsible investments and explore diversifying the funds by moving toward groups owned or operated by individuals from marginalized communities.

The Trustees Committee agreed as a small subset of the board that they shouldn't dictate the recruitment priorities that will be used to identify new board members. They shared their desire to think more expansively about diversifying the board, focusing on intersectionality, and breaking away from the impulse to find individuals who simply "check a box."

The Development & Communications Committee spoke about engaging with staff on the website redesign to help improve the site's accessibility. They also discussed NEFA's reach and visibility and spoke about their desire to figure out which audiences and communities NEFA should be, but isn't, reaching and consider how to change or adapt the organization's messaging to reach them.



Minutes for Approval

NEFA Board of Directors Meeting
October 26, 2018

The Executive Committee volunteered to ensure these topics and this kind of conversation remain on the board's ongoing agenda. They discussed how they can support the organization to maintain its focus on these issues and reinforce their and the board's commitment to support NEFA to take risks in addressing and operationalizing these values.

Closing Remarks & Adjournment

In his closing remarks, Chair Larry Simpson reminded the board that they are in a unique position at a unique organization; not every board or organization they work with will offer an opportunity to engage in a deep and intentional process of transformation. He reminded them their individual and collective commitment to this process is essential to its success.

Board Chair Larry Simpson adjourned the meeting at 5:09 PM.

Next Steps:

- ***Present these minutes to the board for approval on March 8, 2019***