SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES • 20 August 2026

South Carolina Arts Commission Offices, Columbia

Board Members Present

Flavia Harton (chair), Heidi Carey, David Hodges, Barbara Nwokike, Rip Parks, Jessica Rourke, Linda Stern, Danielle Thompson, Bhavna Vasudeva.

Staff Present

In Person: Ashley Brown, Ce Scott-Fitts, Kimberly Washburn Motte, Angela Brewbaker, Jonathan Eason, Jason Rapp.

Virtual: Daisha Calhoun, McKenzie Drake, Taylor Dublin, Amelia Dupont, Julia Greene, Krista Grendze, Trinity Howell, Wendy Jackson, Julian Jant, Amanda McSwine, Mikayla Moore, Amanda Noyes, Laurel Posey, Johnathan Rabon, Abby Rawl, Harvee White, Hailey Yasinski.

Others Present

In Person: Ben Zeigler (counsel to SCAC).
Viewing Room: Mary Adam, Ed Madden, Jeff Robinson, Wade Sellers, Donna Wyman
Virtual: Paul Bowers, Jennifer Coffey, Elizabeth Franklin-Best, Sierra Garland, Luis-Alfredo Garcia, Mark Hollingsworth, Lara Kaufmann, Skylar Laird, Pat Moran, Sally McClellan, Kelsey Mesa, Laura Nicholas, Emily Prado, Scott Shanklin-Peterson, Kim Wilson.

Call to Order

HARTON called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Executive Session

- HARTON called for a motion for the Board of Commissioners to enter executive session for legal advice.
    - NWOKIKE made a motion.
    - CAREY seconded.
- A vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously. The Commissioners and ZEIGLER entered Executive Session.
- All staff exited the meeting.
- BROWN was brought into Executive Session at 10:38.
    - HODGE made a motion to exit Executive Session at 10:50.
    - NWOKIKE seconded.
- The Board exited Executive Session at 10:51.

Executive Session Business
HARTON reported no action was taken in executive session.

Approval of June 2026 Minutes
Meeting minutes from the June 18, 2026 meetings were presented for approval and/or comment.

- HARTON called for a motion to approve.
    - CAREY motioned to approve.
    - PARKS seconded.
- A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved as presented unanimously.

Adoption of Resolution
A resolution, drafted by counsel Ben Zeigler, was circulated in board packets and presented for adoption.

- HARTON asked for a motion to approve the resolution as presented.
    - VASUDEVA motioned to approve.
    - STERN seconded.
- There was no discussion.
- A vote was taken, and the resolution was unanimously adopted as presented.

FY2026 Fourth Quarter Financials
BREWBAKER made a report of the SCAC financials wrapping up FY26 beginning with the statement of activity. Some expenses went over budget because of increases related to outfitting Hub offices. School Arts Support grants went slightly over budget. Education Improvement Act funding helped cover the overage for these small awards to schools.

HARTON asked clarifying question about Hub operations.

BREWBAKER moved on to a review of the balance sheet. Education Improvement Act funding was lower because carryover funding was used toward overages in the School Arts Support grant category as mentioned. National Endowment for the Arts grants from FY24 and FY25 were closed out by virtue of spending those funds, so only the FY26 NEA grant will carry into FY27. BROWN made clarifying comments about NEA funding being commonly carried over in several states because that funding can only go to specific things.

There were no questions posed to BREWBAKER and no further discussion.

- HARTON asked for a motion to approve the FY26 Q4 financials.
    - NWOKIKE motioned to approve.
    - PARKS seconded.
- A vote was taken, and the financials were approved unanimously as presented.

As she began to present the next agenda item, BROWN mentioned that the state adopted a budget for FY27 and the SCAC's FY27 budget would be presented at the October board meeting.

Grants Request
BROWN began a brief presentation of the three grant categories with grants recommended for approval.

The Arts Industry Operating Support category has new guidelines that were tightened up from previous iterations of operating support. As a result, some organizations will receive less funding than historically granted and there is "bridge funding" provided for them to prepare for reductions next year as they make budget preparations.

ArtsNOW Advancement grant is a three-year grant for schools to use ArtsNOW Learning to come in and whole-school arts integration programming. That was formerly fully funded by ESSER funding. SCAC implemented a three-year step process for schools to transition to fully fund usage of ArtsNOW themselves.

STERN asked a clarifying question about matching funds and schools, answered by BROWN.

BROWN continued with the partnership grant for ArtsNOW Learning as an organization to do professional development days and an annual foundational seminar for ArtsNOW schools. It is a logistical grant for administrative purposes.

STERN asked a clarifying question about accountability in usage of grant funds. BROWN shared that ArtsNOW has Memoranda of Understanding with all the school grantees.

- HARTON asked for a motion to approve the Arts Learning grants in the amount of $461,000 in the ArtsNOW Advancement category.
    - STERN motioned to approve.
    - CAREY seconded.
- A vote was taken, and the Arts Learning grants were approved unanimously as recommended.
- HARTON asked for a motion to approve the partnership grant in the amount of $112,000 to ArtsNOW Learning.
    - PARKS motioned to approve.
    - VASUDEVA seconded.
- A vote was taken, and the partnership grant was approved unanimously as recommended.

The Board returned to the Arts Industry grants in the Arts Industry Operating Support category.

- HARTON asked for a motion to approve to approve the Arts Industry grants in the amount of $1,027,469 in the AIOS category.
    - NWOKIKE motioned to approve.
    - STERN seconded.
- Before a vote could be finalized, discussion was requested by PARKS, who made the following statement:

  "Madam Chairwoman, the General Assembly holds this commission accountable for maintaining community standards, and the Commission has concerns about two programs that were presented. The Gay Men's Chorus and Proud Mary Theatre Group. What we question is the artistic merit of these two programs. And so what we're going to request as a commission is that these two organizations return to the commission and further explain and actually defend the artistic merit of these two programs."

- It was clarified that this was a motion, by PARKS, to amend the original motion to approve the recommended funding by removing Greenville Gay Men's Chorus and Proud Mary Theatre Company from consideration at the August meeting and reconsider, with additional discussion, in October.
- ZEIGLER clarified that staff would make further inquiry (of the removed organizations) "as to the nature of the grant and artistic merit of the subject matter of grant."
    - HARTON called for a roll-call vote.
        - Voting "yes," to amend the motion: NWOKIKE, PARKS, ROURKE, STERN, THOMPSON, VASUDEVA.
        - Voting "no" to amending the motion: CAREY, HODGE.
    - NWOKIKE expressed a desire to change her vote, but it was clarified that she voted the way she intended. The final tally was six in favor of the amendment, two opposed.
- Upon passage of the amendment, the Board returned to the original motion, which had already been seconded. A vote was taken and the original motion, amended to remove Greenville Gay Men's Chorus and Proud Mary Theatre Company from consideration at the August meeting, passed unanimously.

Special Order: Additional Grant Request

NWOKIKE brought to the Board a funding request for consideration, extra to the agenda, that she personally received from the Sweetgrass Conservatory. The group was gifted 80 acres in the Lowcountry in which to grow and harvest sweetgrass but lacked funding to farm the acreage. HARTON, BROWN, and STERN asked clarifying questions. NWOKIKE clarified that Sweetgrass Conservatory needs $20,000, has nonprofit status, and has done some community-based fundraising via a gala. It was further clarified that an October vote would delay the group from beginning farming

before fall. BROWN added that the SCAC could use nonrecurring state funding for this request, pending approval and qualification.

- HARTON asked for a motion to approve the Sweetgrass Conservatory request in the amount of $20,000.
    - HODGE motioned to approve.
    - ROURKE seconded.
    - There was no further discussion.
- A vote was taken, and the funding request was approved unanimously as presented.

Board Manuals and Agency Updates
BROWN began agency updates, noting that she can be brief because of the Conversation StARTer email and to check that email for updates. BROWN praised EASON, MCSWINE, and RAPP for behind the scenes work on that project.

The FY27 budget process is nearly complete, and the SCAC received no governor vetoes. She reported that SCAC received recurring funding increases of $250,000 to go toward grantmaking and $100,000 toward shared services increases, a common request by state agencies this cycle. SCAC also received $500,000 in nonrecurring funds to Hub Services and project-based grants that are nonrecurring. Rolling grant categories are set to open Aug. 25.

BROWN moved to the board manual overview, first thanking JACKSON for work on the board manuals before a tour of their contents. BROWN thanked SCOTT-FITTS and MOTTE for their leadership and the full staff for work as grantmaking was paused and extra work added. HARTON added an (unofficial) second of that and added her own thanks to BROWN and ZEIGLER.

Adjourn
- Harton called for motion to adjourn the meeting.
    - PARKS made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
    - ROURKE seconded.
- A vote was taken, the motion to adjourn passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason L. Rapp
Communications Director
Board Liaison