



VAFF DEI Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 25 at 4:00 PM ET

Virginia Film Festival | Equity Center Conference Room

617 West Main Street, 2nd Floor

Minutes

Attendance:

- Committee: Beverly Colwell Adams, Olivia Branch, Andrea Copeland*, Marc Paulo Guzman*, Gary Nimax, Jung Bum Shin
- Staff: Ilya Tovbis, Jenny Mays, Lizzy Ramey*, Erica Barnes, Rob Dunnenberger

*Joined remotely

VAFF Highlights

- Beverly:
 - o Photo op with Jonathan Majors – just fun!
 - o Food at Three Notch'd was fabulous
 - o *Saint Omer* – still talking about it
- Olivia
 - o Enjoyed diversity of panel discussions – very inclusive, saw color, women
 - o Guest Ivey Camille Manybeads Tso
 - o Black Excellence series has come up in a lot of other conversations in organizations - not in circles of other minorities but was being talked about
 - o *Women Talking*
 - o Panels after films
- Gary
 - o Any film that has discussion after – is really one of the bonuses.
 - o I always enjoy the opening night film and party. It was something light. There was a lot of heaviness in the mix of the overall Festival
- Jung-Bum
 - o Liquor Store Dreams – had personal relevance. Thought it would be rather empty, and was nice to see a diverse audience attended. It was surprising and I could see that people liked it.
- Beverly – Vinegar Hill was full and I was able to just walk in. Kurt van Daake – the lives between the lines
- MPG
 - o Really enjoyed the intersectionality in the films – queers, Black Excellence, overlapping. International and queer really provides different perspectives of multiple identities.
 - o The people who the film was about were there, and that made it very Virginia – example of *The Lives Between the Lines*
 - o Critical discussion happening in our spaces and communities. More of that would be great.

Critical Feedback

- MPG – Land Acknowledgement extended video - Felt like Monacan Nation was involved – elicited a lot of applause. Why was it only included in front of a few films, why not all? Land Acknowledgement sometimes fall short. This felt like they were involved – with the tone: still celebrate and we are here.
 - o Beverly – I kept looking for it at other screenings
 - o Jung-Bum – at an earlier meeting, I mentioned to make sure it is not token. I’m not sure how to do it right.
- Olivia – Box Office vs wait lines at Violet Crown were confusing. Need to have clarity between the two.
 - o Jenny – solvable problem. Need staff and signage.
- Gary – disappointed with the turn out for Dustin Lance Black. Known name in LGBTQ Community. Oscar-winner. Impressive get. Heard from people they were going to other films. It was Sunday morning, so harder. Wished it was at a different time.
 - o Ilya – Dustin Lance Black was also part of a panel on Saturday morning that was sold out. Also, the film had already been out on HBO. You could choose to sit home and watch the film. Not sure if either attributed to the low turnout.
- Olivia – Announcing some guest names earlier with longer lead up to help with promotion and get on community calendars earlier. Heard that if some groups would have known earlier about Sam Pollard, they would have brought groups of students.
 - o Ilya – we had the shortest amount of time between announcing and the Festival this year. That is something we are going to avoid in the future.
- Beverly – noticed pretty good coverage in businesses downtown. Signage downtown helps and serves as a reminder that the Festival is coming
 - o Jenny – We can look at ways to engage the downtown. Friends of Downtown is new – some of the things they’ve done on downtown has been more active. What I’m hearing from Beverly is that signage does matter and you are looking for it.
- Gary – smart to use different venues – various locations helping to support us shows we are part of the community. Well done and nice.
- Olivia
 - o ticket buying experience with both PAH and will call was so easy.
 - o I thought venue volunteers were welcoming and gracious. They were knowledgeable.
 - o Anytime we can promote homegrown is a home run. The Jamie Sisley’s film – we all knew him when he was 18, just a kid and it felt like one big reunion from different social circles. It was so much fun.
- Gary - Chrissy Metz transition to Zoom worked much better than anticipated.
- MPG – Look at venue and food through lens of minority-owned and queer owned businesses.
- Olivia – Have you thought of doing anything at Jefferson School Heritage Center? As a gathering, non-screening event. JSAAHC + Pearl Island, minority-owned businesses.
- Jenny – Send us caterers, venues, suggestions
- Olivia – I like the Bradbury, but acoustics are bad – need a mic. Cavernous
 - o MPG – one more set of speakers toward the bar.
- Beverly – go back to PVCC and St. Anne’s?
 - o Jenny – Don't think we will be adding venues on. Does it feel smaller to you?

- Beverly – yes, it felt smaller
- Olivia – *Headwaters Down* had a great turnout. It was late Sunday at Culbreth and I was really pleased.
- Olivia – Safety is an issue. Recommend embracing Chief Kochis – do whatever he can to do to implement measures to feel safe. He should be asking what he can do. Step up presence for late films getting out. The perception of safety downtown must improve, especially for women.
 - Gary – I wonder with being part of the University, if we could tap into the Ambassadors program – bright lime vests. SMG security.
- MPG – Accessibility – is there data on the requests?
 - Erica – we had more requests than previous years, but we do not collect data.
 - Jenny – We ask all our filmmakers to provide films with captioned versions, but they are not available for all films. We implement open captions at our larger screenings when available and provide ASL interpretation.
 - Ilya – industry is going in the right direction. Implementing is getting
 - Gary – At a recent UVA Compliance meeting – 6-8 vendors who are pre-approved to do caption live events.
 - MPG – needs of the people who aren't here. Would love to see us get involved with the film Accessibility Scorecard.
 - Beverly – Add a question on our evaluation/audience survey about use of closed caption devices and accommodations.
- Beverly – what do we mean by partnerships?
 - Jenny – can look a lot of different ways. Sponsors, community organizations, thematic connection, throughout UVA: DDEI – hugely supportive, Samhita (programmer) – IHGC and MESLAC, also helps to get info to students, faculty, and staff
 - Jung-Bum - Korea society – connect with Karsh center in DC.
 - Ilya – by way of partnerships, when we have returning themes like Jewish films, Environment, Korean – it's easier to build partnerships and be more fruitful because they are year-after-year. Example of when it's harder is: *Goodnight Oppy* where we tried connecting with Astronomy department, but did not pan out. Having one off screenings are much harder. We have more headway with long-term partnerships.
 - Olivia – coming from another board – angel partners: anonymous collective group of people who say I want you to come to me with something. Not a process of taking away – truly finding who those people are that are willing to say “I'm going to give you additional funds if you need it.” Helping to close gaps. Who in the community can you ask for standby support and partner.
- Beverly – question about non-funding partnerships
 - Erica – example from community partnership this past year was with JMRL Book Club reading *My Father's Dragon*. We provided the books and complimentary tickets to the screening to participants.
 - Jenny – We don't want it all to be about money/sponsorship, partnership is about audience development and not something we want to be a barrier to community groups. When partnerships are so programmatically driven, it can be limiting. We can activate those partnership more year-round. If there are ever community groups that you think would be good to connect with, flag those for us.

- MPG – Missing youth and college age students. Very middle-aged audience. The boards we are a part of (Boys and Girls Club), we can connect you to younger audiences/partners
- Gary – what about the survey results from. Interesting to see what’s improved.
 - Jenny – we are working on a visual annual report. Bringing group back together in Spring as planning session.
- Olivia – I want to commend Ilya for your contributions. It was just there: the conversations, people on downtown that were just diverse backgrounds. People knew about foreign films.
- Beverly – How are you responding to the Regal closing?
 - Ilya – It's a national trend. Film industry is really struggling. Ticket sales are down.
- Olivia – A lot of people’s highlights were the Shorts – enjoyable.
- Gary – I miss Vinegar Hill being a movie theater – great nostalgia there.

Number One Thing You Would Change if You Could

- MPG – Diversity of attendance goes/audience
- Gary – more of the same – headed in the right direction. People excited to be back in person.
- Olivia – It’s starting to feel like the Festival of many years ago – where there was a buzz. The last 10 or so years was buzzy for those in the know, but this year, it felt more like a whole community event, ex. hearing from someone I work with that they were going to the Festival.
- Jung-Bum – Making this more known to the community. We must continue that. A committee like this is a little bit dangerous. I talk to people outside of this that have never heard of the Festival.
 - Beverly – Do we have buttons – encouraging us to speak about it.
 - Jung-Bum – really like the button idea
 - Olivia – Connect with The Newcomers Club – they're keen-agers. Westminster and retirement communities. They have money and they have a bus. Expanding insuring that people new to the community know about the Festival. I think we could engage the top real estate – Woodriff.
 - Beverly: Connect with Discover Black Cville – Black Excellence.
- Jenny – What’s the one most effective thing we do?
 - Beverly – Three Notch’d event
 - Gary – OLLI has been around for years, and people don’t know about it. You must hit use many ways to get the work out and saturate channels
 - MPG – Have presence in community spaces/events – ex. Farmers Market – cheap and easy that people go to – have presence in those spaces.
- Andrea – why haven’t JSAHC been in the mix?
 - Jenny – This coming festival is not one where we are going to increase number of venues we use or number of films.
- Andrea – would love to see more comedy. Good movies but some were heavy.
- Andrea – overall the Festival was well done. Minority Business Alliance was excited to be involved in the way we were. 8 or 9 members involved. Good Job. Thank you!

Next Meeting – want it to be productive. Waiting on football schedule to pick our dates.