



Emma S Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center

January 21, 2018

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo and Council Members,

The Emma S Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) Advisory Board unanimously chose at its January 10, 2018 board meeting, not to participate in the Artist Access Program (also known as the Artist in Residency Program) and requests intervention by Austin City Council to suspend any further implementation of the program at the MACC, the George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center and the Asian Resource Center by Parks and Recreation, and preserve the Latino Arts Residency Program as is. Furthermore, we recommend against breach of contracts by Parks and Recreation originally agreed with Artists in the Latino Arts Residency Program (LARP) with an ending date of September 2019 remain in force.

While we would normally welcome the potential upsides of a new program such as the AAP with extended hours, more staff to support events, assistance with marketing and grant-writing for artists, we have concerns about the following:

Council approved funding for extending cultural center operating hours

On December 14, 2017, council voted to approve \$240,000 to extend the cultural center's hours at the four-city owned cultural centers, not specifically for the creation of a city-wide artist residency program.

The Current Contract with PARD and LARP

1. In March 2017, PARD, LARP artists, and the MACC working group agreed that they'd draft a new LARP contract together. The unilateral imposition of the new AAP program and contract on the board and the LARP artists does not honor this agreement.
2. Artists feel that the AAP contract is one-sided in heavy favor of the city, since it includes many impractical responsibilities for the arts groups with scarce rights or benefits. The current LARP artists were informed by PARD that they would be "grandfathered" into the new Artist Access program. Yet, they were pressured into signing the new AAP contract with less than a week during the holidays to review and sign the 17-page AAP contract or lose access to the facility unless they paid full rental rates charged under the MACC fee schedule. It was the desire of the working group to achieve contracts that should benefit and protect *both* parties.
3. It's still unclear to what extent the city's legal department was involved in the creation and review of the AAP contract.

Negative repercussions of AAP contract

4. There aren't enough safeguards in place that prevent the gentrification of the cultural center artists. For example, at the November meeting we were told that the artist selection committee would consist of members nominated by each cultural center, but the Recommendation for Council Action states that the committee will be recommended by the Economic Development Department.

5. Some LARP artists and parents of the children they serve are concerned of the safety of their children over some of the clauses in the AAP contract.

The design and imposition of the AAP

6. Even though the MACC board requested the official AAP guidelines at the November meeting, we have yet to receive them even though the program has allegedly started.
7. No proper timeline of the development and implementation of the program was presented.
8. LARP artists were given the ultimatum of signing the AAP contract or resigning their existing residency (which was supposed to extend until September 2019).
 - o The artists at the Dougherty were not given this ultimatum.
9. PARD's "grandfathering" statement mentioned at the November 1st, 2017 MACC Advisory Board meeting is of concern since the original LARP contract is still pending.

For these reasons, we ask the following:

1. That you intervene to suspend the AAP implementation, at least until the program is redesigned with input from the cultural centers, existing artists, and community as an integral part of the process and not an afterthought.
2. That the original ongoing contracts, which were set to expire September of 2019, be honored without the ultimatums.
3. That a formal inquiry be conducted into the many discrepancies throughout this process.
 - a. Why the cultural centers, artists, and community were not involved in the development of the program as PARD stated at the City Council meeting on December 14th, 2017?
 - Why was the city council told that this was the case?
 - b. Why the MACC board was told that they, and the other centers, would be nominating people to selection committee, and why those nominees will instead be coming from the Economic Development Department?
 - c. Why the MACC board hasn't been sent the official guidelines of the program?
 - d. Why LARP artists were sent ultimatum letters, but the Dougherty artists were not?
 - e. Why is PARD breaching its own contract with LARP artists for the third time?
 - f. Why was the existing LARP contract never resolved and swept aside by PARD leaving the LARP residents in limbo since Spring of 2017?

Our Hispanic Community is unique with its own set of issues. The MACC Advisory Board Members and our constituents believe that proposed programs expectations do not serve our community. Our board members and constituents believe that the expectations of the proposed program do not serve our community.

After listening to our community, some feel the development of the Artist Access Program is punitive action towards multiple groups in the LARP program with whom contract negotiations have stalled. Substantial documentation was provided illustrating infractions that the LARP artists incurred during the program development and contract negotiations, Members of the audience stated that, "the program was an attempt to further disenfranchise the Hispanic/Latino Community in Austin." A member of the African-American Quality of Life Commission also attended the meeting and expressed similar concerns, stating that "his board will also have this issue on their February meeting agenda."

We believe it is imperative that these matters be resolved for the ESB-MACC to move forward in a productive and meaningful way. The MACC is the cornerstone of our culture in this community, it is a symbol of our presence and historic and future contributions to Austin. We look forward to your positive resolution to these matters on our behalf.

Sincerely on Behalf of the Emma S. Barrientos Cultural Center Advisory Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Maciel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Maciel" clearly distinguishable.

Anna M. Maciel, Vice Chair
Emma S Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board

Cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Sara Hensley, Assistant City Manager
Kim McNeely, Acting Parks and Recreation Department Director
Jannette Goodall, Office of City Clerk
Brion Oaks, Chief Equity Officer
Jane Rivera, Parks and Recreation Board Chair
Jill Ramirez, Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission Chair
Kenneth Thompson, African American Resource Advisory Commission Chair
Vincent Cobalis, Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission Chair
Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board