

Statement of Tacoma Art Museum Board of Trustees

November 18, 2022

TAM is committed to providing a safe and supportive work environment for all our employees that honors their essential role in fulfilling of our artistic mission and community purpose. Every TAM employee is entitled to fair and impartial treatment, open and honest dialogue on issues that impact conditions of their employment and a respectful and non-adversarial platform to voice grievances and concerns. As an arts institution built on creative expression and artistic freedom, celebrating the diversity of our personnel, combatting racism, LGBTQIA prejudice, antisemitism and classism and fostering compassionate and respectful treatment of our employees is not just a management philosophy; it lies at the core of what we stand for as an institution.

We acknowledge with respect efforts by some of our most talented and highly regarded employees to form a union. TAM honors our employees' freedom to engage in collective bargaining not only as a legal obligation but as their basic human right.

We recognize that much of the catalyst for this unionization campaign is frustration that legitimate grievances regarding personnel management and workplace equity have been ignored, patronized, or minimized for far too long. The Board has only recently been apprised of the depth of our employees' concerns and is actively working to restore a relationship of trust, candor and mutual respect between TAM and our valued employees. As we search for a new Executive Director, one of our paramount criteria is hiring an individual with the personal integrity and managerial experience to heal the 2 frayed relationship with our workforce as well as the motivational talent to articulate an organizational vision that allows every employee to feel included, honored, respected, and appreciated.

We have carefully considered the request that TAM agree to recognize TAM Workers United as the bargaining agent for our workforce prior to a determination of whether the majority of our employees wish to be so represented. We respectfully decline this invitation for the following reasons.

Regardless of how individuals feel about the current organizing effort, there is no question that unionization would fundamentally alter the relationship between TAM and its workforce. We believe it is vital that every employee have a full and fair opportunity to thoughtfully weigh the pros and cons of unionization without pressure from either side and express their decision through a private vote without any fear of recrimination or reprisal.

We are concerned that the current unionization effort is being undertaken at a time of upheaval within TAM's upper management when our Executive Director position is vacant, our personnel director is on leave and our head curator will soon be leaving. The senior leadership team who

would be responsible for implementing a decision to sidestep the usual procedure for certifying a union is not in place. As trustees, our fiduciary role mandates that day-to-day management of the museum be delegated to 3 senior staff and we decline to impose the obligations of collective bargaining on a new Executive Director who did not play a role in this decision.

Finally, we observe that many of our employees' most salient grievances relate to poor communication, erratic decision-making and disrespectful treatment which are not the traditional subject matters of collective bargaining. We respectfully request that unionization efforts be deferred until a new Executive Director has an opportunity to address the important issues that have only recently been brought to our attention. We recognize that the decision to defer unionization is not ours to make, however, as fiduciaries cannot agree to sidestep the legal process through which employees vote on union representation.

We respect our employees right to engage in collective bargaining and should they vote to go forward with unionization will work with senior leadership and legal counsel to ensure that the process is undertaken in an orderly and respectful fashion in full compliance with applicable law.

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Statement from the Tacoma Art Museum Board of Trustees (email communication, November 18, 2022)