

Transcript of Interview with Dalton Boszé by Tory Schendel Cox

Interviewee: Dalton Boszé

Interviewer: Tory Schendel Cox

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Location (Interviewee): Evansville, Indiana

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Abstract: Interview with Dalton Boszé, Community Development Specialist, City of Evansville's Department of Metropolitan Development. In response to COVID-19, the Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science launched the mini-series, "Cultural Insights: Interviews in the Creative Sector," to highlight colleagues and professionals working in the same or similar field of museum professionals.

Tory Schendel Cox 00:01

Hi, my name is Tory Schendel Cox and I'm the Virginia G. Schroeder Curator of Art at the Evansville Museum. And today we have Dalton, and I appreciate you and your time and please take it over.

Dalton Boszé 00:10

Alright. So for everyone else, hello, I'm Dalton Boszé. My official mouthful of a title is a community development specialist for Evansville's Department of Metropolitan Development. So breaking that down, my job exists in about two major sections from what I've been led to understand over the past year. I administer federal grant funds, and I act as a direct representative of the city. So when it comes, so both things have been affected by COVID-19, and you know, the novel Coronavirus around us. So, when it comes to being a direct representative of the city, we go to neighborhood associations, they kind of made me the neighborhood specialists, so I go to more than the average specialist. So I have the ones that I regularly go to like every time they meet, which is I have four, and then through the focus neighborhoods, which are ones that correspond kind of to the boundaries of like a Promise Zone. So areas that are focus areas within the city of Evansville. And so there's about 10 total, in that. Some of those overlap with the ones that I just go to anyways. But I cycled through, basically those other six throughout the year; those meetings have stopped for the time being. So that's one way in which I have been affected with that portion of my job. The other bit is it has a lot of other effects. And it might be a little bit more difficult to see, but it is very present nonetheless. That's with the administering of federal funds. I am currently in my apartment. So- And I have been working from home for the- well, for the last- since last week. We got the order, well, the recommendation from you know, using that from Governor Holcomb at the beginning of last week. And then Mayor Winnecke was like okay, "So, essentially, if you can work from home, you work from home," taking those measures, and assessing who can and who can't, how are we going to work with that. And dealing with those things on a department or department basis, in a sense. So we made it through last week with working from home. So we are- we- So just about everyone is home. And I say just about because there are some individuals who actually are staying in the office. We have- a lot of is because of being able to print and scan things and log things in because the big thing that we do with DMD is we are well, administering that federal

funding. We are making sure that the that the taxpayer's money is moving to the places it needs to go in the city. Most of our stuff we get from HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. And so then that goes down to us as a grantee. And then we essentially sub-grant that money out to organizations like the YMCA, Carver Community Organization, Boys and Girls Club, United Methodist Youth Home. There are many. And so through that this is one way in which we are able to help other organizations that are in Evansville, and who are then able to carry out their mission to then serve Evansville and its people. So the big thing is that we have monthly monitoring reports and invoices. Monthly monitoring reports, self-explanatory, you have to say what you've been doing for the last month and breaking it down into numbers. How many people did you serve, demographics of the people that were served in that month. And so when it comes to that, it's making sure that we have that data because then it's, it's because that kind of data can also be public. So you know, HUD gets it, and Hud can make reports with it when it comes to- and so they have to- so agencies then have to email that stuff to us, and/or walk it in, mail it, however. And so with the building being closed, it's kind of like you can meet someone at the door of the Civic Center. They can't come in type of thing. But you can hand off like paperwork to someone who was actually in the building. And so with that, it's how we have a few people about, I think there are four people who actually are kind of still in the office. One goes in and out. And then the other three are there in order to make sure that things get scanned in, logged in and everything still works. Things will take a little bit longer, because now there's more emails; I have a lot more emails now than I previously did, because of that extra communication. So it sometimes it's those little things as to how your job changes, or how your life in general changes when events unfold. And so it's especially getting to interview with you right now it's being able to look at that it's like, oh, yeah, like I, I have more of this or less of that. And it's, it's the little things like. On a regular basis, you might be able to sense like relate back to is this like, "Oh, yeah, we all had to deal with that." And just had the experiences differ in general too. And so when it comes to the invoices, those can, you know, those also have to be scanned in, that's when agencies are submitting a claim for a portion or all of their funds. Agencies can submit one to technically infinite numbers of claims throughout the year, throughout the activity year. So it depends on how much they- their grant is for and ends on what they are claiming that money for. Breaks down into things like travel, gas, mileage, supplies, insurance, salaries, rent, and utilities. There's, there's a lot of different things that they can claim it on. And so they have to submit all that stuff to us, we go over it, make sure, "yes, this is fine. This has all of the information." So we can like establish the paper trail and such, and then making sure that everything is, it's all legal, it's all good. And then we fill out our sheets. And so then it gets submitted to finance. And so that process has also been affected. Because now things have to be still physically brought in because we wet signatures on claim sheets. So just for anyone who doesn't know wet signature means, it has to be an original copy, has to have been physically signed by whoever is supposed to sign it. And so that's usually like the, the agency director or some other person acting in an official capacity. So with that, we are then able to- So they have to either mail it in or have it walked to the door. And so then when it's received by the office, then it gets scanned in. And that scan is then emailed to us, the specialists, so that we can review it. And then we will email the agency saying, "hey, this was good," or "hey, can you provide more documentation on this?" Or "I think there was a computing error on like your summary sheet" or

something or anything, submitting paystubs, timecards, utility bills. That's, that's a lot of the stuff that we work with. And so making sure that all those things are there. And of course, we also have to redact personal and private information. So yes, it's, it's public information, but also because of that being public, then that also means we need to make sure that persons are protected. And so making sure things like that. So that also would be really fun using like the white text boxes on like Adobe in order to actually do the redactions rather than using like markers and correction tape. So it might actually look a little bit more seamless for the next couple of months in terms of redacting that personal information.

Tory 9:20

So out of curiosity and speaking of personal information, are you allowed to share any of the projects that you're currently funding?

Dalton Boszé 09:26

Yes, no, that that stuff is totally public. Well, at the very least I can talk about like the agencies who we're with and see what comes to my memory. Everything else is publicly available, you can go online to the city's- anyone can go online to the city's website, and sorry, and, and research that and anyone can also walk in or call DMD and request some information about that. We do have brochures actually, that have contact information for a lot of those agencies. But specifically, I work with Carver Community Organization, the Boys and Girls Club, and let's see, Missing Pieces Community Development Corporation, Ark of Evansville, so the one on Virginia Street, because then there's another Ark, which is, which is on Lincoln, and that's the Ark Child Care Crisis Center. Then I also work with, let's see, United Methodist Youth Home, and Patchwork Central. Let's see, I think, pretty sure that's all of them. I would hope that I remember who are all my organizations, except for the last year. So and each agency can have technically as many activities as they want. So we have four activities with Carver, we've got two activities, each with Boys and Girls Club, and with Missing Pieces. And it's, it varies as to how much money each activity and each agency is awarded for a year. Every five years, we have to do a consolidated plan for DMD, which is kind of like what is a, it's a five year kind of like, list of list of five years of goals as to what do we want to have as our goals for the city in order to do things like community development, community development, neighborhood revitalization, historic preservation, all these different kinds of things, infrastructure, and housing. There's a very long list. So we are also currently in the midst of that right now, which has also been affected. Because we have to reach out to other agents or other departments and sometimes other agencies that are working with the city in order to get information so we can actually create that plan and get that data for us like, so how did like the Evansville Housing Authority do this year? Or like, what goals did they accomplish, how many people were served, how many people have been housed, or assisted in housing? Things like that. And so the types of- timelines are, in this, have been extended or stretched. A lot of, a lot of grantees, well, a lot of other cities are- will have been applying for extensions on their consolidated plans as to when, to have them submitted because if things are closed down and or they don't have the same number of staff, then it's more difficult to get all that information in order to actually create the- to create those con plans. And every year, we also have an annual action plan, which is like the con plan in miniature. So it's just one it's 1/5 of the con plan. It's just not as large in scope. So especially when it comes to that, and so, you

know, we also got an extension for our Consolidated Plan. We're, and it's mainly for a cushion, we're going to do is as much as we can to just get in as early. as soon as possible. do... and I know last year when we were doing the annual action plan, I didn't remember any major hiccups or whatever, like stuff was submitted on time. So.

Tory Schendel Cox 13:47

Yeah. It's pretty wild to see how much this is affecting every cla-, every platform, every organization, every business, and especially on a city level. So out of curiosity, do you think it's going to affect the giving of the financial assets that you guys have? Like, I know that there'll be a delay, but do you think because of the crippling effect that Corona has had that would affect these nonprofits that you help?

Dalton Boszé 14:14

I don't know how it would affect the nonprofits on like, an individual basis, like from nonprofit to nonprofit or agency to agency. So the main thing is as long as we're able to keep the money flowing, then they can continue to operate to the best of their ability. So they're all... and it's also kind of shown in like the monthly monitoring reports as to, says like, so, "what things did you do, and what problems did you encounter?" And so for a lot of the agencies for upcoming monthly monitoring reports, there will be things that say like, probably in the most likely in the what you know, challenges that you encounter this month as like, we had fewer people that we were able to, like serve or stuff like that, like with childcare, Carver Community Organization, and Boys and Girls Club, both working with, with children and childcare, and after school youth programs and such. So, children are staying home because the idea of social distancing. And so you know, of course, those programs are affected. And so numbers might be a little lower, but then we take the entire narrative into account when it comes to like, reviewing things at the end of the program- of the activity year. And so it's like, okay, well, the world was kind of having an issue for several, for a good portion of the year. So it's, it's making, it's making sure that just because numbers might be lower, not as many people or individuals are served, then that, at least for us, like on a community development specialists level, it just like, there, there was a problem that was outside of everyone's control in this. In terms of what, like how much money, in terms of funding goes to agencies, a lot of that will be determined by how HUD decides as to how much money they want to provide to, well, just every other American city and state that gets HUD money. And we will roll with that as, as we roll with it every year.

Tory Schendel Cox 14:32

Makes sense. Out of curiosity, as a person who lives in Evansville, is there something that we can do as a community to ensure that money keeps flowing in? Is there something we can do to be more proactive?

Dalton Boszé 17:08

Aside from paying your taxes, it is it is your federal tax dollars at work. So that was a very good question. I hadn't thought of necessarily that angle on it. But definitely, especially since a lot of people, if you are not deemed an essential worker, are home, then now would be a very good time if you have internet access to go online to the city of Evansville's website and look up DMD. I forget if our brochure is on there. But that has a list of all of our agencies, look at the agencies that, that we support and that we partner with, look at the things that DMD has been doing in the past couple of years, in terms of like, especially housing projects. Also, if anyone wants, they can get in touch personally with any of the specialists. I always have my cards on me just because I'm that kind of person. But let's see, all of our emails and phone numbers for our office are on the city's website. But I-, I'll, I'll solicit mine here. You can contact me at D-R- Boszé. So, B-O-S-Z-E at Evansville dot I-N dot gov [drbosze@evansville.in.gov]. Or you can give me a call at 812-436-7819. I don't know, can you put the link in the description maybe. But I'm just, but also if they, but also you can contact the office in general, if they want, they can contact me. They can also contact anyone who really works with it, works through the city contact Kelley Coures. He's the executive director. Sure. I don't have his permission to get his number out. But it's on the website. So, but so it's, all that information is public. If anyone has any questions, if anyone wants to see how they can get more involved, volunteering at any, at any of these nonprofits and other agencies, especially in the- especially when we're able to go back outside is, to me, I feel like that would be a great way to show how much we support our nonprofits and other agencies that are doing good and doing good and great things in the Evansville area and ust making sure that they're helped, because they're helping serve people who, people who, people who need it. So, through, through DMD and the city, providing funds to, to the other agents, agencies and other nonprofits. It's one way that we're able to do it. And some of us ourselves, even volunteer, and we go, and we go to the events, people, donate, whatever. So, donate your time, donate your dollars, if you, if you, if you feel that you're in a position to do so. But definitely, to anyone who knows the, the TV show, The West Wing, one of the characters on there, he says, "history is made by those who show up." And I so-, and you can apply that to just about anything. And especially working with the museum, local history is, history is just as important as anything else. And so how we respond to the crisis, and especially in the aftermath of it, that's part of history. And so it's a, it would be a very, very good at least several pages in Evansville's history to write about what we did afterwards.

Tory Schendel Cox 21:29

Yes, absolutely.

Dalton Boszé 21:31

Yeah, another long answer. I'm known for those.

Tory Schendel Cox 21:34

There's nothing wrong with that, because that's great and valid information. And I am looking forward to see what we as a museum do as an aftermath, and we are working on that at this moment. And that was part of the evidence of this series is to see what creatives are doing, see how they're still moving forward

with this barrier. And then also too, we do want to offer some type of reflection afterwards. So definitely keep posted with us on that. But Dalton, is there anything else you'd like to share with our viewers?

Dalton Boszé 22:04

Stay safe out there. Take care. And I hope to see people getting involved with their city, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, other agencies, other people doing good and doing good on your own through and after all of this.

Tory Schendel Cox 22:22

Absolutely. Well Dalton, we definitely appreciate your time and remember, this is an Evansville recording. And please, by all means, don't be a stranger. So bye for now.