

REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION  
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

December 16, 2025  
7:00 P.M.

**Call to Order & Roll Call**

Chair Mesghali called the regular meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission to order at 7:00 P.M. in Mike Balkman Council Chambers at Culver City Hall.

Present: Ehsaan Mesghali, Chair  
Tania Fleischer, Vice Chair  
Shona Gupta, Commissioner

Staff: Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager  
Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst  
Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst

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**Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Mesghali led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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**Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda**

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, indicated that no requests to speak had been submitted.

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**Receipt of Correspondence**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated that she had emailed correspondence to Commissioners with a summary of updates last month.

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### **Order of the Agenda**

No changes were made.

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### **Action Items**

Item A-1

#### **(1) Recommendation to City Council Regarding Selection of CVL Economics + MIG as Consultant for the Community Cultural Equity Plan ("CCE Plan") and (2) Recommendation of the Authorization of a Professional Services Agreement**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, provided a summary of the material of record.

Uday Ram, Founding Partner of CVL Economics, provided background on the organization; expressed eagerness to work together; and hoped to gather as much feedback and engagement on the plan as possible.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding intention to work together; support for the proposal; length of the process; the upcoming Olympics; the World Cup; positioning Culver City as a hub for art and culture; bringing people together in community; concern with siloing and lack of cooperation between different parts of the arts community; the importance of communication; support for a top level analysis; and making Culver City a cultural capital moving forward.

Chair Mesghali discussed the work of the Subcommittee on the item; amount of work put into the process; he read the subcommittee statement that indicated CVL Economics + MIG had been selected to serve as the consultant team for the development of Culver City's Cultural Equity Plan and Public Art Master Plan; discussed the basis for their decision; and indicated that the Subcommittee felt that the consultants chosen offered the most robust and future-oriented team to guide the process and deliver an actionable, equity focused,

and community informed plan positioned to support Culver City's cultural development over the next decade.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding key factors in the decision-making process; number of proposals considered; the well-established creative economy in Culver City; expertise of MIG Consultant Group; data analysis; digital surveying; creative solutions for funding of art and general ability to communicate findings with the community; development of sub-brands; the need for advanced solutions rather than foundational work; specific expertise in securing funds and highlighting the importance of art and culture; large corporations dedicated to the Creative Economy; and ensuring programs do not suffer.

MOVED BY CHAIR MESGHALI, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL SELECT CVL ECONOMICS + MIG AS THE CONSULTANT FOR THE COMMUNITY CULTURAL EQUITY PLAN; AND,
2. RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH THE SELECTED FIRMS.

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Item A-2

**Consideration of (1) Recommendation from the 2026 Performing Arts Grant Program Ad Hoc Subcommittee Pertaining to the Grant Awards for 2026 Performances; and (2) Make a Recommendation to the City Council**

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, provided a summary of the material of record; introduced representatives from performing arts organizations from Culver City and Los Angeles County that applied for grants; discussed the number of recommended candidates for the 2026 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program vs. number of applications received; thanked Vice Chair Fleischer and Commissioner Gupta for their efforts in the process; discussed the newly created panelist handbook and scoring guide for evaluating panelists; fair distribution of public funds; appreciation for contributions from Sony Pictures Entertainment and the Culver City Arts

Foundation; thanked the independent peer review panelists for their time and scoring efforts; indicated that details about the panelists, the guidelines, the review process, timeline, scoring criteria, and requirements for City sponsorship were included in the staff report; discussed total grant amount for 26 organizations; host venues; encouraged those organizations not chosen for grants to stay engaged and apply again in future years; indicated that the City Council was scheduled to consider the grant awards on January 12, 2026; and discussed next steps.

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Stephen Turk provided background on the Culver City Symphony Orchestra; presented a summary of 2025 performances; noted that performances included classical and modern works; discussed their members; and upcoming projects.

Marisa Hamamoto provided background on Infinite Flow - A Wheelchair Dance Company; discussed the disability-led nonprofit and professional dance company; mission to advance disability inclusion; gratitude for support from Culver City; school performances; and excitement for the launch of their first full length performance in Culver City.

Yozmit the DogStar expressed appreciation to the panel for their support; provided background on themselves; and discussed the proposed project, the DogStar Codex.

Lowell Crystal provided background on the Westside Youth Orchestra; discussed types of music performed; musicians involved; positive feedback received; compositions performed; past performances; scheduled concerts for 2026; and noted the value of collaboration between arts organizations.

Katharine Noon provided background on The Ghost Road Theatre Company; discussed past performances; the work of the collaboratively created theater; creating community between the performers and the audience; performances planned for 2026; and she thanked the Office of Economic and Cultural Development, the Commission, the panelists, and Culver City noting the importance of the grant to them.

Joan Ford was called to speak but was not present in person or online.

Jessica Robinson provided background on Black Skeptics Los Angeles and the Women's Leadership Project; discussed their mission including community organizing, arts, education, civic engagement, and youth leadership development; programming; and planned performances.

Sikivu Hutchinson, Black Skeptics Los Angeles and the Women's Leadership Project, discussed the socio-historical context of the initiative; racism, sexism, misogynoir, colorism, and genre segregation in the American music industry as performers, songwriters, producers, engineers, agents, publishers, and executives; persistent barriers despite global profit generated for the music industry by Black women; the diversity desert; reinforcement of disparities; the Black Women's Roots Festival in Berkeley; and the focus of the proposed panels.

Alicia Ide, Culver City Arts Foundation, congratulated all those who received grants; encouraged all participants to engage with the Foundation and to attend events to promote art in the community; noted that the Foundation provided grants; and she invited everyone to get involved in the Foundation and help them in bringing art to the community.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding congratulations to the 2026 grant recipients; gratitude to grantees and staff; the strong, competitive pool of applicants; submissions; the application process; ensuring that samples reflect the proposed performance and mission of the organization; artistic excellence; preference for live performance videos rather than promotional reels; the importance of providing a clear budget; appreciation for speaker comments; limited public funding; encouragement for applicants who were not chosen to submit for next year; and excitement for 2026 programming.

Vice Chair Fleischer noted that it was Beethoven's 255<sup>th</sup> birthday and discussed the relationship between Beethoven and the grants program.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation to those who took the time to speak or write in; eagerness to see the performances; hope that the process offered insight and encouragement to those who were not selected for the current year; appreciation to the Culver City Arts Foundation and Sony for their support;

acknowledgement of the amount of work done; appreciation for the professional caliber and diversity of projects; and encouragement for everyone to take advantage of all that the Foundation has to offer.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER, SECONDED BY CHAIR MESGHALI AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. CONSISTENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE 2026 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE, RECOMMEND THAT CITY COUNCIL APPROVE THE 2026 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM AWARDS AND RELATED GRANTEE CONTRACTS AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT; AND,

2. RECOMMEND THAT CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE THE RELATED PERFORMANCES AS CITY-SPONSORED.

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Item A-3

**(1) Review of a Cultural Affairs Commission Biannual Written Report to the City Council, including Accomplishments During the Period July to December 2025, and an Update on the Upcoming January through June 2026 Plans; and (2) Authorization of Transmittal of the Report to the City Council**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, provided a summary of the material of record.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding agreement to include Commissioner attendance of the Asian World Film Festival premiere under Partnerships and Community Engagements; agreement to add a reference to the work of the Subcommittee on a framework for Music in Chambers in work already done; survey results; options for moving forward; including more specific information under Live Music in the section for the next six months; agreement to add more detail in the section highlighting the Culver City Arts Foundation to indicate that the Subcommittee worked with the Culver City Arts Foundation on Creative Economy and architecture initiatives; and additional opportunity for Commissioners to make small adjustments and corrections to the report.

MOVED BY CHAIR MESGHALI, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GUPTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. APPROVE THE BIENNIAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AS AMENDED; AND,
2. AUTHORIZE TRANSMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

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**Consent Calendar**

Item C-1

**Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meetings of September 16, 2025 and October 21, 2025**

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GUPTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION APPROVE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 AND OCTOBER 21, 2025.

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**Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda (Continued)**

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the Commission:

Alicia Ide, Culver City Arts Foundation, provided a review of 2025 programs; discussed their support of the Artist Laureate program, Music in the Chambers, and the summer concert series; scholarships awarded; the book festival; Tito's Fiesta Mexicana; the Culver City Art Walk & Roll Festival, the *Projecting Possibilities* exhibition; grants provided to individuals, artists, film festivals, and local organizations including AVPA and the Historical Society; the holiday party at Color Me Mine; she welcomed all Commissioners to attend their January 25th retreat at the Kirk Douglas Theatre ; discussed programming for the Olympics and opportunities for 2027; upcoming plans; she encouraged all artists to push the boundaries of art and create great things; and she requested that the meeting be adjourned in memory of Rob and Michelle Reiner.

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**Items from Commissioners/Staff**

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, discussed the December 8, 2025 Cultural Affairs Commission Public Art Subcommittee meeting with Brooks Scarpa Huberer to consider the Architectural as Art proposal for the 9810-9814 Washington Boulevard mixed-use development; the proposed sculptural stair enclosure conceived as a work of art; refinements to be made based on recommendations made to the architectural team by the Subcommittee; review of the updated presentation by the Subcommittee before it is presented to a separate professional review panel; the Art in Public Places Ordinance; timeline and next steps; final approval by the Commission; the *Culver City: Colorful Communities* poster program; the five neighborhood representatives; program participation scoring guidelines; review of applications and scores to be submitted by January 8, 2026; review of the top five finalists by the CAC Public Art Subcommittee on January 15; and consideration of the Subcommittee recommendation at February 17, 2026 Cultural Affairs Commission meeting.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, expressed appreciation to Commissioners for stepping up to do the work; discussed volume of work; efforts to provide a more detailed subcommittee reporting structure based on Commission feedback to ensure new Commissioners can be well-versed on subcommittee work; she congratulated CVL Economics and MIG; expressed excitement about getting to work on the Cultural Plan; discussed the importance of community engagement; shaping the next decade of arts engagement; the amount of cross-departmental work taking place; and she thanked her colleagues in the Cultural Affairs Department.

Chair Mesghali thanked staff for picking up the slack; emphasized the need to make Sam Lee's position full time and permanent; noted that there was not a November Cultural Affairs Commission meeting; discussed the importance of advocating for more staff to allow them to do more; attending the Asian World Film Festival; allowing attendees to experience the full breadth of Asian culture; the Culver City Film Festival; the work of Culver City Arts Foundation to bring more film festivals to Culver City; producing an international film festival during the Olympics; the transition from the Heart of Screenland to the Heart of Streamland; and Culver City as being at the forefront of bringing back the idea of going out to the movies.

Vice Chair Fleischer congratulated Freddy Puza on being elected the new Mayor of Culver City noting that he attended many arts events; discussed a former artist who served as Mayor; echoed support for making Sam Lee's position permanent; reported attending the Love Local Art Fair on December 13; she thanked staff for their work this year; and wished everyone Happy holidays and a healthy beginning to the New Year.

Commission Gupta noted the many things happening in Culver City; discussed the holiday season; attendance of recent events at the Wende Museum; the Murakami exhibit at the Broad Museum; a holiday sing-a-long at the Disney Concert Hall; the Charlie James Gallery in Chinatown, Los Angeles; she congratulated the new Mayor and Vice Mayor as well as the new City Manager; expressed support for making Sam Lee's position permanent; thanked her fellow Commissioners and City staff noting that she had learned a lot; and she was looking forward to working with everyone in the future.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, thanked Deputy City Clerk T'Ana Allen for her help.

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**Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 8:39 P.M., the Cultural Affairs Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 20, 2026.

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SECRETARY of the Cultural Affairs Commission

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

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EHSAAN MESGHALI  
CHAIR of the Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission  
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

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Jeremy Bocchino  
CITY CLERK

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Date