REGULAR MEETING, MARCH 14, 2006
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

PRESIDING: CHAIR JAYNE

Call to Order 7:01 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Susan Deen; Gayle Smashey; Luther L. Henderson, III; Clement Hanami; and, Ronnie Jayne.

Pledge of Allegiance

Julie Oakes, of Oakes Architects, led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Staff Present

Christine Byers, Public Art & Historic Preservation Coordinator; and, Susan Obrow, Theatre Coordinator and Special Events Producer.

Item #C-1.

Agenda Posting.

It was moved by Commissioner Henderson, seconded by Vice-Chair Deen and unanimously carried, to receive and file the Secretary's Report regarding the agenda posting for this meeting.

Item #C-2.

Approval of Minutes.

It was moved by Vice-Chair Deen, seconded by Commissioner Smashey and unanimously carried, to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2006 Town Hall Meeting and the February 14, 2006 Regular Meeting.

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Item #A-1. 7:03 p.m.

Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness for Tenant Improvements at Helms Bakery Complex.

Ms. Byers presented the staff report noting that the Helms Bakery Complex is divided latitudinally between Culver City and the City of Los Angeles and that the proposed project is intended to better accommodate retailers desiring to move into the complex on the Washington Boulevard side. The complex is designated as a cultural resource within the "Landmark" category within Culver City's local registry. She stated that various alternatives were considered to ensure the project's compliance with local state and federal guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic properties; and that this was the Cultural Affairs Commission's opportunity to forward its comments and recommendation to the Planning Commission for its consideration of this item at its regular meeting on April 26, 2006.

Ms. Byers reported that the oldest part of the Helms Bakery Complex was constructed in the 1930s and that it has been owned by the Marks family since the 1970s. She advised that a significant addition was constructed to the east of the Beacon Laundry Building, saying the improvements being considered at this time are projected to be the last major alterations to the site for some time. She explained that there are approximately 26 openings – windows and doors – on Washington Boulevard between Helms Avenue and the western most edge of the complex. Nine of those openings will be affected by the proposed tenant improvements but that three of the existing openings will be restored back to their original configuration from the 1940s based on early drawings. A fourth opening (just off the western most alley of the complex) will also be restored to its intended 1940s configuration. She further explained that per federal guidelines for historic properties, as many of the original materials will be retained and reused as possible.

Ms. Byers advised that staff was able to determine that the proposed tenant improvements affecting the Washington Boulevard façade of the complex were in keeping with the intent of the original 1940s design and in compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. She noted that the impact of the proposed alteration, which would lower many of the existing window sills by approximately 30 inches, would be mitigated in part by retaining as a permanent feature the existing historical interpretative display currently installed in the H.D. Buttercup space. She noted that it is being recommended that the property owner be given latitude in the future as to placement of the display area.

She concluded by reporting that the CAC Historic Preservation sub-committee, of which Vice-Chair Deen and Commissioner Hanami are sitting members, met with staff on February 27th to review the changes in detail, noting they had no further comments or questions and strongly recommended that the CAC support the Certificate of Appropriateness related to the proposed tenant improvements.

Chair Jayne entertained comments or questions from the Commissioners.

Vice-Chair Deen indicated that, having grown up in Culver City and having toured the Helms Bakery at some point in elementary school along with many, many others, she is absolutely thrilled by this proposal. She remarked that she is very pleased to see that some of the roll ups doors will be replaced by windows, and she commended the Marks family for their wonderful stewardship of this jewel of a building.

Commissioner Hanami concurred, saying the property owner and architect have done a remarkable job with this magnificent Culver City landmark.

Commissioner Smashey commented that she, too, grew up in the area and has a special affection for the building, saying she believes the proposed changes will greatly improve the facade. She inquired if there are currently any thoughts about where the interpretive display from the H.D. Buttercup site will be located.

Ms. Byers advised that there is ongoing discussion about how much space the owner wants to devote to the display for the future, noting staff is recommending they be provided the flexibility to relocate the display wherever it most conveniently fits within the complex. She commented that the display is very engaging, saying the objective is to utilize it to extend to the public the history of the site. She agreed that the Marks family have been wonderful stewards, noting they took it upon themselves to restore the historic neon sign and that they spent more money than required on their public art commission several year ago. She also noted that an additional art piece was added voluntarily on the Los Angeles side of the complex.

Commissioner Smashey noted the Venice facade is actually located in Los Angeles and inquired if there is cooperation between the two cities as far as their requirements for historic significance.

Ms. Byers invited Ms. Julie Oakes, the project architect, to comment.

Julie Oakes, of Oakes Architects, advised that her firm has worked with Mr. Marks and has been the master planning architect on the complex for nearly 20 years. She indicated she was not aware of any special provisions the City of Los Angeles has with regard to the structure.

Ms. Oakes noted that the integrity of the building and its historical significance have made it a landmark that provides a sense of place, saying it has the distinct advantage of being clearly recognizable as the Helms Bakery Complex rather than some building that houses a furniture store.

Commissioner Smashey passed along a comment she received from a community member expressing disappointment that the patio seating is obscuring the visibility of the public art outside the Beacon Laundry Building.

Wally Marks, owner of the Helms Bakery Complex, indicated the Venice Boulevard side of the structure is actually on more of a vehicular scale because the building is physically raised from the sidewalk on that side whereas the Washington Boulevard side is much more pedestrian friendly. He advised that they do not foresee any major changes to the facade on the Los Angeles side and noted the structure is very use-oriented, with a co-tenancy that has worked very well over the last 30 years, saying those uses will likely remain.

MOVED BY VICE-CHAIR DEEN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULVER CITY CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION THAT THEY APPROVE THE CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE EXTERIOR REHABILITATION AND ALTERATION ALONG THE WASHINGTON BOULEVARD AND WEST ALLEY FACADES OF THE HELMS BAKERY COMPLEX PURSUANT TO THE

CRITERIA PROVIDED BY STAFF AND THE DRAWINGS PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT.

Ms. Byers remarked that working on the project had been an absolute delight. She stated that it was extremely helpful to have the original drawings from the 1940s, noting without them it would have been very difficult to determine the original intent of the building and would have made it a much more challenging process.

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Item #A-2.
7:25 p.m.

Update and Discussion on the Development of a 501(c)(3) for Cultural Affairs.

Ms. Obrow presented the staff report, advising that the City Council expressed support for the Cultural Affairs Foundation and 501(c)(3) when the item appeared on their February 27th agenda and that they suggested the following revisions: that the role of the Community Development Director and the Foundation should be more clearly defined; and, that term limits be set for board members, noting Councilman Rose recommended a maximum of two consecutive terms.

She outlined the purpose and structure of the Cultural Affairs Foundation and explained that board members must be named before the filing process for the 501(c)(3) can begin. She recommended the Commissioners take this opportunity to discuss the qualifications for board members, think about whom they would like to appoint to the board, and return in May to make their nominations and vote. She delineated the proposed qualifications to consider, noting staff is hopeful that the overall composition of the board will reflect the diversity of Culver City's larger community.

Chair Jayne requested Commissioners' questions and comments.

Commissioner Smashey noted the Bylaws indicate that board members "must" be residents or business owners in Culver City but the staff report says they "may".

Ms. Obrow stated the language would be changed to reflect "must".

Chair Jayne remarked that she did not recall a decision being made that board members must be residents or business owners, saying her recollection of the discussion was that an individual with a strong tie to the community, i.e. someone who lived or owned a business in Culver City for a number of years before moving elsewhere, would be appropriate.

Ms. Obrow advised that Section 3 of Article 3 of the proposed Articles of Incorporation indicates that to be eligible for appointment as a board member an individual must either live, work, or own property or a business within the city.

Commissioner Henderson stated it seems illogical to render someone who might have a special and widely recognized interest in improving cultural affairs of the community ineligible to serve on the board simply because they do not live, work, or own a property or business in Culver City.

Ms. Obrow noted that the first qualification proposed is a commitment to supporting cultural and historic preservation programs in Culver City. She indicated there will also be an advisory committee which will provide an opportunity for truly distinguished artists who might not have the time to serve on a board to lend their names for connectivity purposes.

Commissioner Henderson clarified that Section 3 of Article 3 should include a sentence indicating the need for a special, widely recognized interest in improving the cultural affairs of the community or region.

Ms. Obrow stated the language would be amended.

Commissioner Hanami inquired about the approval process for prospective board members.

Ms. Obrow explained that the CAC will approve the slate of board members in May, saying those names will then be forwarded to City Council for their final consideration.

Commissioner Henderson inquired if it might be appropriate to articulate that the board should include individuals with the financial resources and/or appropriate connections to help ensure a viable, potent foundation. He stated individuals are often appointed to boards because they have access to funds or have connections that can be utilized to help further the goals encompassed by the foundation, saying he believes it would be prudent to try to embrace the business communities in Culver City and throughout the region.

Ms. Obrow noted that the second proposed qualification is the ability to make connections to private foundations for possible grants, saying staff is hopeful that candidates will be suggested who can connect the Cultural Affairs Foundation to other foundations.

Commissioner Hanami suggested it might be advisable for each Commissioner to select multiple candidates, saying it might be difficult to achieve diversity if Commissioners are limited to only one.

Ms. Obrow recommended that each Commissioner think of a primary candidate and an alternate.

Ms. Obrow stated that another proposed revision suggested by Councilman Rose was that there be a clear distinction between how the Foundation and the City receive money. She indicated staff's recommendation is that a business wishing to make a donation would be solicited by the City through the Parks and Recreation Department rather than by the Agency or Community Development Department, noting that system is already in place for the Summer Sunset Music Festival and the Music in the Chambers series with Sony Pictures Entertainment probably being the best example of this type of event sponsorship.

Chair Jayne commented that there are presumably not many instances where a company doing business with the City will be solicited for a grant but, since that situation could occur, it would certainly be prudent to establish a policy.

Vice-Chair Deen agreed that concern about public perception is indeed warranted, commenting it might appear very suspicious if a company negotiating to build something in the City sponsored an event and simultaneously received project approval.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER HENDERSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULVER CITY CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION DIRECT STAFF TO IMPLEMENT THE ITEMS INDICATED IN THE STAFF REPORT INCLUDING THE FIVE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION FOUNDATION.

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Public Comment.

None.

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7:55 p.m. **Receipt of Correspondence.**

Ms. Obrow reported that invitations had been received from the Teen Center for their opening and from Center Theatre Group for their upcoming youth performance at the Kirk Douglas Theatre entitled, "The Stones".

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7:57 p.m. **Items From Staff.**

Ms. Byers advised the Commissioners of their upcoming meeting schedule and agenda items.

Ms. Obrow announced that March is Arts Education Month and, in recognition, both theaters in downtown Culver City would be presenting their regularly scheduled plays for young people; that a special celebration would be held March 26th at 2:00 p.m. in Town Plaza to mark the much anticipated unveiling of the Harry Culver sculpture; and, that a free poetry reading featuring California Poet Laureate Al Young would be held on April 30th at 3:00 p.m. at the Culver Events Center. She reported that the Music in the Chambers series would be holding its final performance for the season on March 17th, noting the series was a tremendous success with a full house every Friday night. She voiced appreciation to Commissioner Henderson for all his hard work helping to pull together this wonderful fifth season.

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8:03 p.m. **Items from Commissioners.**

Commissioner Smashey commended staff and Commissioner Henderson for an outstanding Music in the Chambers series, noting it was a tremendous series featuring some incredibly talented musicians and it was wonderful to see the hall filled.

Commissioner Hanami noted he believed the MODAA exhibit space would be opening soon in a building whose façade was designated Architecture as Art on Washington Boulevard.

Ms. Byers reported that SPF:a would be hosting a meeting on March 25th regarding the Specific Plan for that neighborhood, saying she believed the grand opening celebration for the recently completed SPF:a building is scheduled for March 31st.

Vice-Chair Deen commented she had the privilege of attending a performance of "1984" by The Actors' Gang, saying it was a wonderfully provocative work of theater that truly left the audience thinking.

Commissioner Henderson inquired if there was any update regarding the prospect of The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities coming to Culver City. He also queried about the status of the arts directory.

Ms. Obrow announced that Culver City would be co-hosting a cocktail reception on May 23rd for The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, noting that further details would be provided and invitations would be sent out shortly. She also advised that Tara Potthoff, an energetic young intern from USC, would be taking on the responsibility for the arts directory as one of her primary projects.

Commissioner Henderson stated he was very pleased to see the 501(c)(3) continuing to move forward, saying he anticipates being able to expand and improve the cultural programming offered in Culver City in 2007.

Chair Jayne echoed that sentiment. She agreed with Vice-Chair Deen regarding the "1984" production, saying it was very stimulating and a wonderful conversation starter.

Chair Jayne inquired on the status of the ARTWALK.

Ms. Obrow advised that the City's inaugural ARTWALK is being planned for June 3rd from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., saying it is designed to promote the art galleries in and immediately bordering Culver City along Washington and La Cienega

Boulevards as well as adjacent cafes, restaurants, and bars. She noted there are plans to augment the festivities and the mood with music and special lighting, saying it should be a wonderful event.

Chair Jayne reiterated that March is Arts Education Month, saying 2005-2006 marks the third year of the Culver City Unified School District's participation in a countywide effort to integrate the arts into the school curriculum. She indicated that Culver City, as one of the first five vanguard districts, in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, is part of a regional Blueprint for Arts Education, helping to implement a series of policy changes for arts education in school districts. She reported that some of their more notable achievements have been to write and obtain approval for an arts policy and initial arts education plan as well as to pilot and ultimately adopt a series of K-12 visual arts textbooks. She advised that she is very excited about the program, noting that approximately 20 classrooms throughout the district will have benefited from it by the end of the school year.

8:17 p.m. **Adjournment.**

With no further business for the Commission to consider, the Chair entertained a motion for adjournment.

MOVED BY VICE-CHAIR DEEN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:17 P.M. TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING ON TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2006 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE MIKE BALKMAN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronnie Jayne

Ronnie Jayne, Chair

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Debra Presutti, Minutes Reporter