

REGULAR MEETING, SEPTEMBER 12, 2006
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

PRESIDING: Chair Deen

Call to Order
7:00 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Mim Shapiro led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Staff Present

Christine Byers, Public Art & Historic Preservation Coordinator.

Item #C-1.

Agenda Posting.

It was moved by Vice-Chair Henderson, seconded by Commissioner Jayne 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 Commissioner Smashey, seconded by Vice-Chair Henderson and unanimously carried, to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2006 Regular Meeting.

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Item #A-1.
7: 02 p.m.

Consideration of Artists' Proposals and Recommendation to the City Council of a Public Art Concept for Washington Boulevard.

Ms. Byers presented the staff report, noting that this project was supported both by the Cultural Affairs Commission and the City Council as an impetus to activate and beautify the area of Washington Boulevard between the 405 Freeway and Walnut Avenue, which is not only a major thoroughfare through Culver City but a main artery connecting downtown Los Angeles and beyond to the Pacific Ocean. She continued by saying that earlier in the year staff had convened an Advisory Panel for the project composed primarily of neighborhood residents that included representatives of the Culver West, Herbert Street, and Culver Triangle Neighborhood Associations, as well and the CAC Public Art subcommittee.

Ms. Byers noted that a Request for Qualifications was sent out to several thousand California-based artists in March, in response to which, 44 submissions were received. She indicated that a Selection Panel, that included Aandrea Stang of the Museum of Contemporary Art; May Sun, a well-known public artist with works

currently on display in Culver City; and, Kathleen Weaver, a local visual artist, was convened in June. Three artists were selected from the 44 submissions; these were Peter Richards and Richard Johnson, an artist/architect team; Jody Zellen, a Santa Monica based artist; and, Kyungumi Shim, a Los Angeles based artist.

Ms. Byers advised that the 44 submissions were reviewed and rated based on the following criteria: the quality of previous work, at 80 percent; professional experience, at 10 percent; and, the ability to complete a project of similar scope, also at 10 percent.

Ms. Byers displayed images of the three semi-finalists' concepts, providing an overview of each, and a summary of comments from the Selection Panel.

She noted that the Richards-Johnson team submitted a three-phase project concept called "Post Your Verse," which would allow the public the opportunity to create a dialog specifically related to how the automobile has shaped Culver City's community and how external changes might impact the way people live and work in the future. She explained that this concept would utilize nearly all the available light standards within the project area; that phase one would utilize approximately one third of the poles to display a series of verses broken into one, two or three words per banner so that five or six separate poles might be used to encompass an entire verse inspired by some form of historical highway reference or advertising; that the banners would be one-sided to minimize distraction; that signs promoting the program, including a website and phone number, would be integrated among the verses; that phase two would incorporate another third of the poles and feature the verses selected from those submitted by residents of Culver City and adjacent communities during a specific time period; and, that phase three would include verses selected from Culver City schoolchildren.

Ms. Byers stated that this project would include an active community component by creating a "virtual" panel of community members that included a resident poet, to review the submitted verses and make recommendations.

She reported that the Selection Panel was pleased with the sophistication of the concept and the community involvement aspect but expressed reservations about the complexity of the concept's implementation; the fact that its oversight might impact staff's and the Commission's time; that words on banners did not necessarily contribute to a beautification of the streetscape; and, that, while it was very site-specific by celebrating the voices of the Culver City community, the underlying theme of the car culture could apply to any community in Southern California or even the United States.

Moving to the next semi-finalist, Ms. Byers advised that Ms. Shin proposed designing a series of unique double-sided banners for each of the light standards with the same information displayed on both sides; that Culver City's flower, the lantana, would be used as the inspiration for the background color; and, that the predominant theme, while historical in nature, is also infused with playfulness, whimsy and humor.

She reported that the Selection Panel commented that, although some of the historical references had been made several times before, they appreciated the expansion of those references and the opportunity to bring them to a wider audience; that the work was "poetic" and "provocative"; and, that it was the most site-specific of the three proposals.

Rounding out the semi-finalists proposals, Ms. Byers advised that Ms. Zellen's concept was inspired by Culver City's cinema history, the zoetropes in downtown, and the motion studies of the 19th century English photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who created a series of motion studies using several cameras. The concept involved mounting a series of silhouetted figures frozen in motion to approximately half the light poles within the project area; that the figures would be created in ten different uniquely colored designs that would be replicated a number of times within the project area; and, that the figures would be approximately six feet high and three feet wide, and would be made out of a thin powder-coated aluminum or a metal mesh to compensate for wind resistance.

Ms. Byers reported that the Selection Panel was pleased to see a departure from the banner concept, that they considered Ms. Zellen's proposal delightful, but that they had reservations that the reference to motion, while playful in spirit, might not translate into an easily recognizable association with the movie studios.

She advised that each of the semi-finalists indicated they could have all or a portion of their work installed by January 2007. Noting that the project duration has an outside time line of approximately three years with the understanding that, if a City program or other development initiative dictates, some or all of the works might need to be removed sooner, she reported that all the artists supported the possibility of reusing or recycling their artwork when the project is terminated.

Ms. Byers concluded her report by indicating that the panel scored the proposals most heavily on artistic merit, at 80 percent; the concept's responsiveness to the site, at 10 percent; and, the durability of the design, also at 10 percent. She reported that based on those scores Ms. Shin's proposal was awarded first place, with Ms. Zellen's proposal coming in second, and Mr. Richards' and Mr. Johnson's proposal placing third.

Chair Deen entertained questions and/or comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Smashey stated she was unfamiliar with Ms. Sun's work and inquired where her art was located in Culver City.

Ms. Byers advised that Ms. Sun's artwork is integrated into the fountain in the courtyard in front of the Council Chambers at City Hall, saying Ms. Sun conceived of the fiberglass stone-like animal shapes as well as the etched images of Ballona Creek in the stainless steel panels embedded into the sides of the spillways.

Commissioner Smashey asked if some type of event was being planned to celebrate the installation and inform the citizenry of yet another wonderful public art project in Culver City.

Ms. Byers answered that staff is planning to arrange some type of announcement probably in the form of a press release, including information on the website, and perhaps placing some type of notification within the project area.

Commissioner Jayne commented that she attended the September 6th meeting to review the semi-finalists' proposals and listen to the panel's discussion, saying she was extremely impressed by the care and consideration the panelists exercised in their deliberations. She stated she was pleased that the artists were flexible about the phasing of the project, noting that will provide an opportunity to bring the work out in phases, allowing the scene to change over time so the public will not view the same thing over the life of the project.

Remarking that the outside budget of \$85,000 originally proposed by the Richards/Johnson team included 300 banners, she inquired if that figure was still correct in light of their revised proposal for only 176 banners.

Ms. Byers verified that their outside number remained the same, noting they initially misunderstood the scope of the project to include 176 light standards on each side of Washington Boulevard rather than in total. She explained that, while the cost per banner had not changed, the \$85,000 figure remained constant because their revised budget contained a more than two-fold increase in website design costs, increased marketing consultant fees, and a banner replacement cost.

Commissioner Jayne indicated she definitely had her own preferences, saying she thoroughly enjoyed Ms. Shin's mix of history and whimsy as well as her inclusion of different languages. She commented that she found Ms. Shin's enthusiasm for collecting the history of Culver City and bringing that to the Westside a refreshing departure.

She commented that, while she appreciated Ms. Zellens' concept, she found it rather disjointed and was disappointed to find that, unlike the zoetropes, her pieces actually had no movement.

Commissioner Hanami expressed concern regarding the timing of phase one and inquired if a review process was planned for each of Ms. Shin's 176 individual banners. He commented that the banners are actually quite large, saying it seems a rather daunting task to create such a variety of unique pieces within such a short time frame.

Ms. Byers advised that the actual printing and fabrication of the banners is a relatively quick process, saying Ms. Shin had already done a great deal of research and had broken the project into two phases to enable her to complete and install the first phase while continuing to research and complete the printing for the second phase. She noted that, since the concept and direction of the project are generally known, the subsequent review process is envisioned to remain at the staff level with Ms. Shin providing a list of proposed references and, if necessary, staff bringing that information before the appropriate CAC subcommittee to provide an opportunity for further comment.

Commissioner Hanami asked if there are plans in place to inform the public that the project is actually a public art work rather than just some whimsy of the City.

Ms. Byers indicated that staff has given this some thought, adding she would welcome any suggestions the Commission might have to offer. She stated staff has considered the possibility of positioning one or two banners which might display the Culver City logo, provide credit to the artist, or in some other manner indicate that it is a public art project.

Commissioner Hanami suggested perhaps creating some type of bookends for the project which might help illustrate that the City is involved in public art in a variety of different ways.

Commissioner Smashey questioned whether that particular area of Culver City has a specific name, i.e., the West Washington corridor, or if there is some mechanism for the City to identify the area being enhanced, saying something similar to the "Culver City Art District" comes to mind.

Commissioner Hanami commented that providing names for different areas of the city could be construed as a type of branding, saying he is not certain that is something the City necessarily wants to become involved with.

Chair Deen advised that a couple members of the City Council recently directed questions of a similar nature to the Planning Department and Redevelopment Agency, inquiring how areas of

the city are named and whether, in fact, they should be named. She noted that, while the project area has always been known as "West Culver City," there is discussion taking place about the official use of such nomenclature.

She agreed with the idea of using a banner or some other form of marker to indicate that the artwork is a Culver City Cultural Affairs project, saying many people are not aware that the area is actually in Culver City, believing it to be part of Venice, West Los Angeles, or Mar Vista.

Ms. Byers commented that her recommendation would be to use a bookend or some other form of notification to introduce the project as a Culver City public art rather than attempting to brand the neighborhood.

Vice-Chair Henderson commended the subcommittee and the panel for their careful review of all 44 submissions.

He inquired regarding the actual outside budget for the project and asked how long staff envisions that the artwork will remain in place.

Ms. Byers advised that the outside budget limit is \$85,000. She indicated that the artists were requested to design a project with an outside time frame of approximately three years, noting that area will be undergoing a significant amount of change in the next five to ten years and the intent was to implement an art project that would evolve over time with the area.

Vice-Chair Henderson advocated placing something to welcome people to Culver City in the vicinity of Washington Blvd. and Walnut Ave., near the Costco site. He inquired regarding the feasibility of hanging a banner across the street or perhaps positioning a bookend saying, "Welcome to Culver City".

Ms. Byers proposed delegating this suggestion to the artist as an additional requirement, saying that would ensure that the chosen mechanism integrates aesthetically into her concept. She indicated that something which references the area as part of Culver City and identifies the work as a public art project for the neighborhood are perfectly appropriate criteria to incorporate.

She commented that Ms. Shin has shown a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm about many of the details of Culver City's identity. She indicated that staff will provide some direction and allow her to develop a concept which will then be brought back.

Vice-Chair Henderson remarked that incorporating the information as an aspect of the artist's project was a fabulous idea.

Commissioner Hanami recommended that staff check with the manufacturer regarding the longevity of the banners. He stated he was curious to know whether they can actually withstand the effects of time, weather, and so on over the proposed three years and, if so, how they will look over an extended period.

Ms. Byers noted that was an excellent point and assured that staff would follow up on that suggestion as well as making inquiries regarding UV and anti-graffiti coating.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER JAYNE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION, AFTER CONSIDERATION OF ALL THREE SUBMISSIONS, RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL THAT MS. SHIN'S DESIGN CONCEPT BE SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

Vice-Chair Henderson proposed a friendly amendment that a logo or some other form of reference identifying the area of Washington Blvd. and Walnut Ave. as a part of Culver City be incorporated within the motion.

Ms. Byers advised that staff duly understood that suggestion, saying it would be incorporated into the staff report as a recommendation from the CAC for the City Council.

Chair Deen indicated that, while she agreed with the intent of Vice-Chair Henderson's amendment, she did not believe it appropriate to include in the motion since the motion was merely a recommendation to accept Ms. Shin's design and the amendment is requesting further direction to the artist.

Ms. Byers assured the CAC that staff would include a note in the staff report indicating that, if Council approves this recommendation, it would encompass additional direction being given to the artist as she finalizes her design concept.

Vice-Chair Henderson expressed satisfied with that course of action and withdrew his friendly amendment.

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Public Comment.

None.

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Receipt of Correspondence.

None.

7:56 p.m.

Items From Staff.

Ms. Byers advised that Ms. Obrow was on vacation and, on her behalf, reported that the Summer Sunset Music Festival concluded on September 7th after 13 concerts, 17 performances, and an estimated attendance of 700 to 1000 people at each concert.

She announced that the deadline for the 2007 Performing Arts Grant applications had just passed, noting fourteen applications had been received representing a variety of genres: four from theater companies, five pertaining to musical performance, one children's theater submission, and four from dance companies.

Ms. Byers reported that a few design concepts for the expansion of Town Plaza were currently under review, saying one of the primary objectives of that expansion is the development of a new outdoor performance space. She indicated that the item would be going forward to the Redevelopment Agency on October 3rd for consideration.

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7:58 p.m.

Items from Commissioners.

Commissioner Smashey congratulated Commissioner Hanami and announced that he was part of an exhibition called *Tigers and Jaguars*, a combination artwork from the Latino neighborhood in the Boyle Heights area where he grew up.

Commissioner Jayne applauded all the participants who worked on Fiesta La Ballona, saying everyone did an amazing job putting together a great fun-filled event loaded with terrific music.

Vice-Chair Henderson requested an update on the status of the 501(c)(3).

Ms. Byers advised that more information on that would be available in the next couple weeks.

Vice-Chair Henderson congratulated those Commissioners involved with Fiesta La Ballona, concurring that it was an absolutely great experience.

He noted that the Culver City Chamber of Commerce recently held its Culver Expo, saying it was a very well-attended event which helped illustrate that Culver City is, and continues to be, a vibrant city for commerce, business, cultural affairs, and recreational activities.

Vice-Chair Henderson concluded his remarks by saying he was

very excited in anticipation of the next Music in the Chambers series.

Chair Deen also thanked all those who participated in Fiesta La Ballona, noting everyone worked very hard to develop a wonderful event. She extended a special note of gratitude to all the sponsors for their continued participation and support.

Chair Deen ended her comments by noting she recently attended a performance of "Nighthawks" at the Kirk Douglas Theatre, saying it was one of the most visually stunning productions she had seen in a quite some time.

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8:05 p.m.

Adjournment.

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

MOVED BY VICE-CHAIR HENDERSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JAYNE AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:05 P.M. TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2006 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE MIKE BALKMAN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan Deen, Chair

Debra Presutti, Minutes Reporter