

REGULAR MEETING, NOVEMBER 8, 2005
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

PRESIDING: CHAIR JAYNE

**Call to Order
7:03 p.m.**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Roll Call

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

Commissioner Deen's absence was excused.

**Pledge of
Allegiance**

Janet Weber, of Vox Femina, 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 Commissioner Smashey and unanimously carried, to receive and file the Secretary's Report regarding the agenda posting for this meeting.

Item #C-2.

Approval of Minutes.

Commissioner Smashey stated that she submitted a set of notes summarizing her comments from the visit to Westlake Village to see the clay model for the Harry Culver statue and requested that they be included with the September 13, 2005 meeting minutes.

Ms. Byers advised that the change would be made.

It was moved by Commissioner Smashey, seconded by Commissioner Hanami and unanimously carried, to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2005 Workshop and the corrected minutes of the September 13, 2005 Regular Meeting.

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**Item #A-1.
7:07 p.m.**

**Consideration of the 2006 Performing Arts Grant Awards
as Recommended by the Cultural Affairs Commission
Grants and Artists Services Subcommittee.**

Ms Obrow presented the staff report.

Chair Jayne entertained comments from audience members who submitted speaker cards.

Janet Weber, Vox Femina Board of Directors Member, complimented the Commission for their continued support of the

arts and for recommending that Vox Femina receive the full amount of funding requested. She expressed gratitude for the positive comments made on their behalf, saying they were very much appreciated.

Commissioner Smashey reported that the review panel commented it was unfortunate that Vox Femina did not have a larger facility to enable more people to enjoy their performances. She inquired whether or not they had considered having more than one performance.

Ms. Weber explained their rationale has been that once they develop a larger audience they would move to a larger venue. She indicated that they have a very close relationship with the church where they put on their productions, saying that the church would like to continue to support them until they have actually outgrown the facility. She agreed that including another performance is a very good idea and indicated she would take the suggestion back to the other board members. She advised that they are currently considering different venues throughout Los Angeles for their 10th anniversary which will occur in the 2007-2008 season.

Matthew Hetz, President and Principal Bassist of the Culver City Symphony Orchestra, thanked the Commission for their award recommendation and distributed flyers for an upcoming performance at Veterans' Auditorium.

Carter Dewberry, Director of The Definiens Project, thanked the Commission as well as Ms. Byers and Ms. Obrow for all their assistance. She opined that the evaluation criterion that examines performance history in Culver City holds great value, explaining that part of The Definiens Project's mission is to form a grassroots presence in the communities which they serve. She stated they have been extremely fortunate in being able to collaborate with Culver City over the last few years. She thanked everyone for the opportunity to maintain this relationship, saying she looks forward to continued collaborations with the City.

Chair Jayne asked for Commissioners' comments.

Commissioner Henderson advised that he and Commissioner Deen spent many hours reviewing the information submitted by the applicants. He indicated that their analysis was not done in a cavalier manner but in an organized and thoughtful way to verify that the highest quality performances would be presented to the citizens of Culver City.

He remarked that Culver City has a limited amount of funds to dedicate to this endeavor, saying he is very pleased to report that Sony Pictures Entertainment has graciously supplemented the Performing Arts Grant program. He expressed great appreciation to the peer review panel, saying he was extremely gratified to

have such distinguished panelists providing their professional and artistic input.

Commissioner Henderson noted that artistic excellence was given the most weight of the criteria used to evaluate each application, followed by budget, community outreach, and performance history in Culver City. He opined that the performance history criterion should be reexamined when modifications are contemplated since it creates a tendency to favor organizations with a longer performance record over those newer groups who do not have the same historical advantage. He indicated that ten points had been granted to all applicants to compensate for the performance history score and to ensure that that factor did not serve as a detriment to any application.

Commissioner Henderson advised that Commissioner Deen had forwarded comments to him with a request that he present them for the record in her absence. He read her comments which in summary indicated that the peer review panel was a wonderful experience; that the panelists were bright, articulate, and diverse yet all reached the same conclusions; that she and Dr. Henderson discussed and concurred with the findings and recommendations of the panel; and, that she was very grateful to the panelists and staff for a very productive day.

Commissioner Henderson noted the review panel recommended that The Culver City Playhouse receive a \$500 "seed" grant in addition to an in-kind grant (Fee Waiver) of \$900 for nine readings at the Veterans' Auditorium and questioned whether they would actually be performing nine readings.

Ms. Obrow advised that the application from the Culver City Playhouse stated they would be prepared to go ahead with their productions by raising necessary funds in the event they received a smaller grant than they had requested or were denied funding altogether. She inquired if there were any representatives from the organization in attendance to clarify the matter.

There were none.

Since no one was available from The Culver City Playhouse to address the issue, Commissioner Henderson suggested amending this particular item to indicate that the in-kind grant request would be for approximately \$100 per reading, not to exceed nine readings total.

Ms. Obrow advised that staff would follow up with The Culver City Playhouse on the matter.

Commissioner Henderson reported that the review panel spent quite a bit of time reviewing each of the applications, saying their affirmative response to the in-kind fee waiver and recommendation of a \$500 cash award was intended as

encourage to The Culver City Playhouse, who are a new organization to Culver City.

Commissioner Henderson advocated that the Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission recommend to the City Council that the grant awards be allocated with his amendment.

Commissioner Smashey thanked the peer review panel, saying she was a panelist the preceding year so she is well aware that the task is incredibly difficult and that a great amount of time is required to review all the information provided. She remarked that she is very excited about the upcoming performances and looks forward to filling her calendar with many wonderful events.

She spoke specifically to The Definiens Project's application, noting that their program notes were very clever and creative; and, to the Culver City Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, saying she is curious to know what plans they have for their performing arts center.

Commissioner Smashey advised that she did have some recommendations for the upcoming grant year. She commented that the scoring process seems fairly subjective, saying she would be more comfortable if there were established funding guidelines prior to review of the applications. She indicated she would also prefer more of a graduated system in which perhaps 90 percent of a request might be granted in one particular range and 40 percent in another or some similar type of rating system. She noted it would also be helpful if the review process provided a breakdown of the rationale behind scoring, i.e., was an 85 percent score given because documentation was incomplete or because of the quality of the performance.

Chair Jayne suggested that applying a graduated system might create the unintended consequence of encouraging prospective recipients to request greater amounts than they actually need, saying it will certainly make for a lively discussion to decide the best mechanism for determining percentages and what amounts should be granted.

Commissioner Hanami expressed gratitude to Commissioners Deen and Henderson for devoting so much of their time, and to Ms. Byers and Ms. Obrow for creating such well-organized and packets. He remarked that peer review panels are critical to the success of these types of grants, saying the group selected was stellar and represented a great deal of diversity, with each member providing a special component to enhance the decision-making process. He expressed satisfaction with all the decisions and their acknowledgment of the artistic talent presented.

Commissioner Hanami proposed that the Commission explore ways to introduce a greater diversity of voices to Culver City. He noted that, while he certainly believes the quality of the programs is excellent, it does represent a particular slant and he would like

to find a mechanism to provide a more comprehensive artistic palette in the future.

Commissioner Henderson presented a brief overview of the NOFA guidelines and noted that, while there are very concrete objective criteria, making determinations regarding artistic quality is a very subjective process. He indicated that the review panel allows an exchange of input from individuals who are renowned in their particular disciplines and areas of expertise and lends credibility and as much fairness to the process as possible. He opined that the dollars being awarded are being well spent.

Chair Jayne reiterated much of what her fellow Commissioners expressed regarding the panel, adding that they had wonderful credentials and did an amazing job. She commended staff and the subcommittee for their hard work and remarked that the applicants all presented a very high level of quality.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER HENDERSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANAMI AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULVER CITY CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL THAT THE NOFA GRANT AWARDS BE ALLOCATED AS AMENDED; THAT AMENDMENT BEING TO ENSURE THAT THE IN-KIND ALLOCATION TO THE CULVER CITY PLAYHOUSE IS FOR \$100 PER USE OF THE VETERANS AUDITORIUM AND THAT IT NOT EXCEED \$900.

Chair Jayne congratulated the NOFA grant recipients and encouraged all those who did not submit applications to do so when they become available in the coming year.

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Receipt of Correspondence.

None.

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Items From Staff.

Ms. Obrow advised that staff received invitations for all Commissioners to attend *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, a new production at the Kirk Douglas Theatre scheduled to open on November 19th.

She reported that John Santos and his Latin jazz Quartet put on an outstanding performance on November 5th to conclude the City's outdoor concert events for 2005.

She announced that the next Art of ... speaker series would feature Glenn Laiken presenting "The Art of Looking Your Very Best" on November 16th at 7:00 at ALANDALES. She advised that reservations are recommended and can be made by phoning (310) 253-5777.

Ms. Obrow reported that The Actors' Gang recently held a very successful benefit at the Kirk Douglas Theatre in collaboration with the Center Theatre Group. She indicated that the purpose of the event was to raise money for The Actors' Gang and also for the Ocean Park Community Center, an organization which provides outreach services for the homeless.

Ms. Byers advised the Commissioners of some of the items planned for the upcoming December meeting.

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Items from Commissioners.

Commissioner Henderson remarked that he attended the first meeting organized by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission for members of cultural affairs commissions throughout L.A. County. He reported that one of the functions was to provide commissioners with an opportunity to discover what other communities are doing in terms of their comprehensive cultural plans. He advised that it was a very enlightening meeting which revealed that Culver City was a leader in cultural planning for a city its size. He stated he was extremely proud of the many wonderful accomplishments made in the past few years and declared that he has thrown down the gauntlet by proclaiming that Culver City will become the cultural mecca of the Westside. He suggested that Culver City should serve as host if the Los Angeles County Arts Commission decides to hold another forum.

Commissioner Smashey concurred with Commissioner Henderson's sentiments regarding the L.A. County Arts Commission event. She commented that it was incredible to learn what the Culver City CAC and other commissions throughout Los Angeles have accomplished and it was a wonderful opportunity to network with fellow commissioners.

Commissioner Smashey inquired about an action item she recently saw on staffs' weekly updates regarding public art for Fire Station No. 3.

Ms. Byers explained that the Redevelopment Agency is working on a new fire station in the Fox Hills/Corporate Pointe area to replace Fire Station No. 3, noting that Redevelopment Agency building projects must comply with the City's public art requirement if they meet the minimum threshold. She reported that she recently met with a member of the fire department staff to discuss some of their options.

Commissioner Smashey announced that a recently formed world music club called Crypto Noche will be meeting on occasional Fridays at Club Tropical located near the Helm's Bakery complex at 86411 Washington Boulevard. She highly recommended an upcoming performance and suggested that anyone interested in information contact Club Tropical at (310) 559-1127.

Chair Jayne indicated she has attended shows at Club Tropical a number of times, saying they have great entertainment that showcases various types of music on different nights with world music on Fridays. She proclaimed that the recent performance by John Santos and his band in the City Hall courtyard was a joy to hear and noted the crowd was very appreciative.

Chair Jayne agreed that the L.A. County Arts Commission event was remarkable. She stated she is hopeful it is just the beginning of many more such events because there is a great wealth of information held collectively by different commissions and communities and the forum provided a wonderful opportunity to share information and experiences. She concurred that it is wonderful and amazing to see how much progress Culver City has made compared with that of other cities.

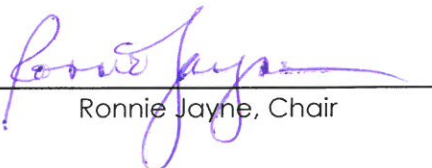
8:00 p.m.

Adjournment.

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

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANAMI AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:00 P.M. TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2005 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE MIKE BALKMAN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL.

Respectfully submitted,


Ronnie Jayne, Chair


Debra Presutti, Minutes Reporter