

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

June 17, 2025
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Williams called the regular meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission to order at 7:01 P.M. in Council Chambers at Culver City Hall.

Present: Chair Brenda Williams
Vice Chair Leora O'Carroll
Commissioner Tania Fleischer
Commissioner Ehsaan Mesghali

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

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Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, indicated that Commission seat number three was currently vacant.

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Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda

Chair Williams invited public comment.

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

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Receipt of Correspondence

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported that no correspondence had been received.

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Consent Calendar Items

Item C-1

Approval of Minutes for the Special Cultural Affairs Commission Meeting of May 20, 2025

Vice Chair O'Carroll clarified comments she had made on page 6 of the minutes regarding the Jazz Bakery concert and suggested replacing "the cancellation of" with the word "fundraising" instead.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, noted the correction to Yoshika Masuda's name.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR O'CARROLL, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MESGHALI AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION APPROVE MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING OF MAY 20, 2025 AS AMENDED.

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Presentation

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, acknowledged the fear, intimidation, war, and uncertainty people are experiencing in Los Angeles and the world; discussed ripple effects of severe funding cuts experienced by the arts; jobs lost; free expression under threat; chipping away of creative industries; pride in the role of the Cultural Affairs Division and Commission; she encouraged artists, organizations, and other arts partners to reach out to cultural.affairs@culvercity.org about any issues affecting

them; noted the importance of finding joy during difficult times; and discussed the need for celebration and appreciation for the service and many accomplishments of outgoing Chair Brenda Williams.

Walter Maciel, Walter Maciel Gallery, provided background on the gallery; thanked Chair Williams for encouraging artists, supporting their gallery, for championing the arts overall in the community, and for celebrating diversity and equality; and he wished her well.

Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin discussed meeting with Chair Williams before she became a Commissioner; celebrated her participation, accomplishments, and enthusiasm; discussed her work to ensure that art is not an accessory, but a reflection of who they are; ensuring Culver City not only supports the arts, but values them too; bringing the focus back to what really matters; cultural programs that are richer, more inclusive, and more resonant; and she read a sonnet for Chair Williams.

Shona Gupta expressed appreciation for the service of Chair Williams; discussed her contributions on the Artist Laureate Committee and thanked Chair Williams for being an inspiration.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, reported that several people who could not be present were going to send email, and she read emailed comments from former Commissioner Len Dickter.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve with Chair Williams; thanked her for her leadership, mentorship, insight, and service as well as for her warmth, kindness, charm, and candor; and were looking forward to being able to spend time freely with her without worrying about The Brown Act.

Chair Williams thanked staff and Commissioners for their hard work and support over the years; expressed appreciation to former Commissioners Len Dickter, Zoltan Pali, and Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin; thanked Council Members, and former staff members Louise Coffey-Webb and Christine Byers; discussed efforts to approve *A Frame for a Tree* by Charles Gaines; the work of the Cultural Affairs Commission to enrich people's

lives; and she encouraged residents to look on the City website for upcoming events.

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Action Items

Item A-1

1) Receive staff update regarding pilot concert to relaunch live music performances in Mike Balkman Council Chambers currently scheduled for September 7, 2025 at 3 P.M. 2) Provide program feedback and recommendations as desired

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

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation for the report; excitement for the series and for the Sakura Quintet; preference for keeping the performance free; support for keeping the name of the series as Music in the Chambers; adding costs for piano rental into the budget; potential partnership with Steinway or Yamaha; support for expanding the number of annual concerts; funding from the Culver City Arts Foundation; artist fees; including jazz and music genres from other cultures; having an official RSVP process; building an independent email list; including vocalists in the future; allowing donations in the future; gratitude to staff; lighting and other technical elements; the jazz series; the summer concert series; and creation of a signature series with strong support of a pilot program.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for keeping the focus on classical music as that is underrepresented in Culver City; the recent successful performance at the Wende Museum; the Culver City Symphony Orchestra; keeping the events free; use of the Cultural Trust Fund allocation; development money; performing arts grants; serving non-profit organizations; the Cultural Plan; support for allowing the artists to decide if they want to genre-bend; making chamber music relevant to general audiences; potential partnerships; involving local restaurants; the Creative Economy; collaboration with Economic Development; possible reception in the courtyard; evaluation process; Eventbrite information and printed

surveys; and the importance of having signature events during the 2028 Olympics.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for restaurant partnerships; a suggestion to have a piano permanently onsite; genres; musicians with ability to play both classical and jazz; marketing; creation of a subcommittee; cultural and funding partnerships; reservations and day-of ticketing; banners; flyers; and the RFP (Request for Proposal) for graphic designers.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Commission consensus that the event should be free with a possible option for donation; institutional marketing opportunities; digital kiosks; print or poster signage opportunities; overflow in the Patacchia Room; technology; options for simulcast; and consideration of forming a subcommittee if feedback after the concert in September merits moving forward.

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Public Comment – Items NOT On the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Williams invited public comment.

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

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported attending the Southern California Grantmakers, Arts Funders Group meeting; discussed the focus on the overlapping crises hitting artists and performing arts organizations; and announced upcoming performances.

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported attending a private presentation hosted by Now Art on June 3 showcasing some of Canada's most innovative studios; discussed the opportunity to discover cutting edge projects; engagement with leaders in the creative industries; and he indicated that Carmen Zella of Now

Art wanted to present to the Cultural Affairs Commission at the July 15 meeting.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, discussed City Council approval of Victoria Marks as Artist Laureate at the June 9 City Council meeting; approval of the City budget and Cultural Affairs Department budget requests; she discussed visiting Katy Krantz's studio noting that Cultural Affairs does studio visits; crafting of the work plan; engagement with the community; she welcomed new Commissioners; congratulated Vice Chair O'Carroll on her reappointment; indicated that the focus of the July meeting would be on the biannual report to the City Council; discussed input from Commissioners; subcommittee assignments and officer selection; the presentation from Now Art; appreciation for those who attended the May 27, 2025 City Council meeting where the Charles Gaines project moved to its final phase; the new Artist Laureate who begins on July 1, 2025; film screenings in the early fall; engagement suggestions; presentation of the Artist Laureate Work Plan to the Commission at the October meeting; work on a quarterly communications newsletter from the Cultural Affairs Division; the focus on public art in July; the historic preservation focus for the October newsletter; and, responding to inquiry, she discussed the planned ribbon cutting event for the Sonia Romero installation at the Farragut Connector this summer.

Commissioner Mesghali reported attending the annual Farhang Foundation retreat; discussed devastating news in Iran that affects the diaspora in Los Angeles; negative impacts on arts and culture; UNESCO Heritage Sites in Iran; looting of museums in the Iraq War; and he expressed hope that people would reach out to local representatives.

Commissioner Fleischer reported that she was learning a lot about Tehran through reading a book called *Liquid: A Love Story* by Mariam Rahmani; discussed attending *Birthday Candles* at the North Coast Repertory Theater; the need to support repertory theaters; a recent performance of *Lear Redux* produced by Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin at the Odyssey Theater; recent meetings about performing arts grants and summer concerts; consideration of a diverse group of bands; appreciation to Culver Arts for their support; the upcoming Invertigo performance at Stoneview Nature Center; and summer theater programs.

Vice Chair O'Carroll discussed a meeting with the Culver City Arts Foundation; their Memorandum of Understanding; and the framework for the next four years of partnership.

Chair Williams discussed visiting various museums, exhibits, and theater on a recent trip to New York City; she encouraged everyone to visit exhibits and local theater in Culver City; and she thanked staff, Commissioners, and everyone for all that they do to make Cultural Affairs in Culver City thrive.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:23 P.M., the Cultural Affairs Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, July 15, 2025.

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SECRETARY of the Cultural Affairs Commission

APPROVED _____

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.

Jeremy Bocchino
CITY CLERK

Date