

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

January 20, 2026
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.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Dr. Luther Henderson, former Cultural Affairs Commissioner, provided background on himself; encouraged continuation of the reinstated Music in Chambers; discussed musicians featured in the previous program; the excellent sound system and acoustics; Black History Month; he distributed a list of African American and African classical composers; and he noted that Cultural Affairs is a form of Economic Development.

Rebecca Goodman, provided background on herself; indicated being a lawyer, previously serving on the board of the Culver City Arts Foundation; discussed her organization of artist meetups over the past year; encouraging collaborations; her advocacy to create an expanded edition or an additional volume of the Culver City *Art in Public Places* book to include architecture and new art in public places installations; a mockup prepared by volunteers for review; she indicated that she had pre-cleared photos and arranged for professional photographers to provide photographs of new buildings and art not in the current edition; and she asked about interest in moving forward.

Heather Moses, Arts Coordinator for the Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD), announced upcoming events including the California Statewide Dance Festival workforce development project with students co-producing on January 24 at the Robert Frost Auditorium, open to the public; the Middle School Improv'ers performance on January 31 and February 1; display of visual arts student zines at the Village Well on February 1; and she indicated that additional information on CCUSD events was available at ccusdarts.com.

Hope Parrish, City Historian, was looking forward to working with the Commission; noted that Rebecca Goodman's proposal for a new edition of the *Art in Public Places* book focusing on mid-century modern architecture and endangered buildings would be an interesting addition; discussed the decision by current Historical Society President Jack Bommarito and Museum Chair Maureen Fleming to open every Sunday (except the fifth Sunday of each month) from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.; public interest and attendance; and the quarterly program/general meeting on January 27th at the Foshay Masonic Lodge on Venice Boulevard in collaboration with the Masons.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding clarification about the inability of the Commission to get into a discussion about any of the public comment provided; the ability to agendaize items for future discussion; and appreciation for the public comment provided.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported distributing mail received from the Culver City Symphony Orchestra.

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Information Items

Item I-1

Update on Recent Activities and Overview of Next Six Months

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, noted the need for a consensus of the Commission in order to agendize topics brought up in Public Comments; discussed City Council prioritization of appointments for the Cultural Affairs Commission noting the intent to have new Commissioners sworn in by the February meeting for a limited term through June and eligible to be reappointed for a regular term; she encouraged Commissioners to reach out to the new City Manager noting that she had invited him to attend a Commission meeting; she discussed changes to the budget process this year noting that there will likely be changes to the Work Plan presentation process; she provided a slide show presentation with a mid-year update on the fiscal year 2025-2026 Cultural Affairs Work Plan; discussed department core functions; status and next steps for work plan priorities; the Community Cultural Action Plan; performing arts and live music; public art in the community; the commemorative poster series; rotating public art; public art planning and major projects; the Arts District tree surrounds; historic preservation; alignment with General Plan goals; planning for 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games (LA28) and formalizing partnerships with the Culver City Arts Foundation; the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding); strengthening partnerships and communication internally and externally; recent activities; she provided an overview on what is planned for the next six months; and she shared a visual worksheet survey showing distribution of staff time across programs, administration, Commission work, community work, and special projects.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation to Dr. Henderson for his support of Music in the Chambers, to staff for their efforts, and to the Commission for their work and accomplishments over the past year; and support for making Sam Lee's Cultural Affairs Analyst position full time.

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Action Items

Item A-1

1) Receive Staff presentation regarding possible Communications and Outreach framework for Cultural Affairs Division 2026 - 2028 2) Provide feedback and Recommendations to Staff

Staff shared a short video presentation by Culver City Artist Laureate Victoria Marks on her weekly "Conversations with Words, Conversations with Movement" series on Sundays in February, at Culver West Alexander Park Recreation Center.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, introduced Culver City Public Information Manager, Dustin Klemann noting his responsibility for communication across all city departments.

Dustin Klemann, Culver City Public Information Manager, was excited for the new year, for opportunities to share the Culver City art scene, and to continue to highlight the Heart of Screenland.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, provided a presentation on the proposed framework for a Cultural Affairs communications strategy for 2026-2028; discussed communications priorities; feedback provided to the subcommittee; creation of a 2 - 3 year communications plan with a workable, sustainable framework; guiding principles; creation of core principles to shape communications; consistency over volume; lifting up the Commission locally; centering artists and community stories; keeping everything scalable and manageable; alignment with Culver City's broader communications structure; audience tiers and messaging focus; acknowledgement of Commission-led priorities; regional audiences; milestones; national and international outreach; content type; and feedback to help shape the next phase of the work.

Dustin Klemann, Communications and Public Information Manager, discussed the importance of making content more accessible; increasing the number of videos, and highlighting more artists; outreach by the Culver Arts Foundation; support for additional collaboration; efforts to boost "Visit Culver City" branding; ensuring arts are recognized and enhanced; appreciation to the Artist Laureate for her participation in the video; and ensuring the Cultural Affairs Commission is properly attributed for their work.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding citywide communication on upcoming World Cup and Olympics activities; review of core principles cited in the presentation; hesitancy regarding the statement about consistency over volume; social channels that respond better to volume for a higher level of exposure; a suggestion to add a team member responsible for producing cultural related content; a recommendation to produce videos on culture and art; use of interns or student filmmakers; transfer of funds to hire out of work filmmakers to shoot and edit content on a more consistent basis; and building out an ambitious content plan.

Discussion continued between staff and Commissioners regarding the importance of a consistent voice, timing and intentional messaging; number of videos and outreach for each event; providing layered messaging; identification of concrete partners such as the Olympic Committee of New Zealand, the Wende Museum or the Culver City Arts Foundation in the digital space through joint and collaborative posts; being mindful of City Charter limitations on promoting events not sponsored or produced by Culver City; efforts to enhance MOUs; avoiding potential conflicts; social media standards; and discussions of priorities as part of the Community Cultural Equity Plan.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding ensuring the arts has a prominent place on the upcoming "Visit Culver City" website and its new branding; integration of the communication strategy with the Community Cultural Equity Plan; specific partnerships and content for specific events; finding opportunities to create branded, repeatable content to promote on social media; exploring outreach to find hidden artists to highlight; the importance of promoting artists and performers; the power of thoughtful

content creation; content created with Culver City Arts Foundation for Art Walk and Roll Festival; co-sharing and amplification of content; utilizing tracking metrics, email open rates, and sharing; finding creative ways to share content; leveraging opportunities; artist profiles; the goal to elevate the status of Culver City; a suggestion to have themed content with branded art-related content to promote community-centered storytelling; openness to new ideas; promotion of Performing Arts Grant performances and artists; and appreciation for the leadership of Sally Unsworth.

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Item A-2

Receipt and Filing of Updates from the Members of the Standing Subcommittee and Ad Hoc Subcommittees of the Cultural Affairs Commission

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, introduced the item noting that subcommittee updates would be part each agenda moving forward.

Chair Mesghali provided an update on the Standing Public Art Subcommittee; discussed the proposal to fulfill the art requirement of the new development next to the Kirk Douglas Theatre using the architecture as art option; the intent to create a sculptural moment out of the staircase; and assembly of a professional review panel to help with the decision-making process.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding efforts to assemble the panel; the process; Commission consideration of the proposal in March or April; and feedback provided to the developer on preliminary drafts and renderings with a focus on establishing that the specific part of the building is art.

Commissioner Gupta provided an update on the poster program; thanked Sam Lee for his involvement; discussed artist selection; three alternates chosen; award amount; and she indicated that an additional \$1,000 had been agreed upon to cover required liability insurance.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding required artist interaction with the community;

finalists to be presented to the full Commission for final approval; and notification of selected artists.

Commissioner Gupta discussed the Ad Hoc Artist Laureate Subcommittee meeting with Victoria Marks to refine the plan; feedback and recommendations; upcoming events in February; and she expressed appreciation to the Culver Arts Foundation for their work with the Artist Laureate.

Vice Chair Fleischer discussed working with the Artist Laureate to find the right balance; support for the February project; and looking at other ways to engage.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, reported that the Ad Hoc Communications and Outreach Subcommittee had not met and still required another member.

Vice Chair Fleischer discussed the Ad Hoc Creative Economy and Cultural Plan Subcommittee; finalizing the contract for the consultant; the process; and support for Civil Economics and MIG.

Chair Mesghali reported on Culver City Arts Foundation events; discussed development of networking relationships with the architecture community in Culver City similar to the artist community; and the upcoming Culver City Arts Foundation retreat at the Kirk Douglas Theatre.

Commissioner Gupta reported attending the holiday party hosted by the Culver City Arts Foundation, and she discussed the artist meet up at Pasta Sisters.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, announced a public meeting of the Olympics Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee on January 22 to discuss cultural programming and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Culver Arts.

Vice Chair Fleischer discussed the 2026 Performing Arts Grant Program Ad Hoc Subcommittee; City Council approval of the grants on January 12; funding; development of the Music in the Chambers program; and a meeting scheduled for January 21.

Commissioner Gupta expressed gratitude for the caliber of people who had applied for grants; and she thanked the Wende Museum, Culver City Arts Foundation, and Sony for their support.

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Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

Lee Lawlor, Associate Analyst, reported that no one had signed up to speak.

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported attending a gallery tour of the *Monuments* exhibition at the Geffen Contemporary at MoCA. The tour was organized by the Public Art Coalition of Southern California, noting that staff were all members; discussed the exhibit reflecting on the histories and legacies of post-Civil War America; he discussed his work on next steps for the *Culver City: Colorful Communities* Poster Program; final approval from the full Commission; and he reported assisting in convening the professional review panel for the Architecture as Art proposal.

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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, February 17, 2026.

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SECRETARY of the Cultural Affairs Commission

APPROVED _____

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.

Jeremy Bocchino
CITY CLERK

Date