

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

November 19, 2024
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Williams called the regular meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission to order at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers at City Hall and via Webex.

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

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

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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, reported that no Public Comment for Items NOT On the Agenda had been received.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported distributing a letter from the Ebell of Los Angeles, and emails from Helix Collective, Synchrony, and Center Theatre Group to Commissioners noting that anything that arrived after 5:00 P.M. on November 19, 2024 would be distributed to Commissioners on November 20, 2024.

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Consent Calendar Items

Item C-1

Approval of Minutes for the Regular Cultural Affairs Commission Meeting of October 15, 2024

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR O'CARROLL AND SECONDED BY CHAIR WILLIAMS THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION APPROVE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 2024 AS WRITTEN.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: FLEISCHER, MESGHALI, O'CARROLL, WILLIAMS

NOES: NONE

ABSTAIN: WILLICK

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Action Items

Item A-1

Consideration of (1) a Recommendation from the 2025 Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee Pertaining to the 2025 Performing Arts Grant Program Awards; and (2) Make a Recommendation to the City Council

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, provided a summary of the material of record.

Chair Williams invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Ericka Newman, Ebell of Los Angeles, provided background on the "Living Herstory" project; discussed public performances that would be funded with the grant as approved by the peer review panel; filling educational gaps; positive responses to performances; expansion in Culver City; funding by the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; touring initiatives; and expressed appreciation to the Commission for their support.

Bryan Caldwell, ArtsUP! LA and The Blue Door Theater, provided background on the organization; expressed appreciation for consideration of a grant for an upcoming Theater by the Blind project; discussed the planned program and performance; ensuring participation in the arts; appreciation for being a part of the Culver City arts community; and working together to share art.

Joan Ford, Angel City Chorale, provided background on the organization; expressed appreciation to Culver City for past support and current consideration; discussed past performances in Culver City; the eclectic repertoire and membership; the youth choir; she indicated that the proposed grant would support a performance at Fiesta La Ballona; and she acknowledged the importance of City support noting the difficulty of finding funding for the arts.

Sikivu Hutchison, Black Skeptics LA, provided background on the organization; discussed their request for funding to support their upcoming performance planned for January 26, 2025 at the Blue Door Theater; the timely project to amplify the diverse voices of Black women; utilization of community talent; lack of Black female-led and focused theater companies; inequities; target audiences; principal artists; and the current climate.

Jessica Robinson, Black Skeptics LA, discussed plays encompassed in the production.

Alexander Lee, Fivemind Reeds, provided background on the organization; thanked the 2025 Performing Arts Grant Subcommittee for their recommendation; and discussed the proposed grant project.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, thanked all of the grant applicants; discussed the number of applicants; the wealth of dynamic things going on in Los Angeles; varied arts organizations; appreciation for the process and for the work of staff and subcommittee members; historical knowledge; looking to the future; encouragement to those who were not recommended for grant awards to apply again in the future; appreciation for the quality of work; the gold standard grants program; and the execution made possible by Lee Lawlor.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation to those who spoke about their projects; projects that could not be awarded; the difficulty of writing applications; grant writers; amount of work that goes into the process; budgetary and workflow constraints; appreciation to Sony Pictures Entertainment for their support; appreciation to staff and Commissioners for participation in the process; tough decisions; coming to an equitable solution; number of applications received; quality of work; and appreciation for the number of organizations and for the process.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding congratulations to those being considered; programming throughout the year; appreciation for the diversity of the people involved and the art that comes out of the program; appreciation for the insight into the work provided by the speakers; things to learn for those who were not awarded; and openness to communicate with those who were not awarded.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR O'CARROLL, SECONDED BY CHAIR WILLIAMS AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. CONSISTENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE 2025 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE, RECOMMEND THAT CITY COUNCIL APPROVE THE 2025 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM AWARDS AND RELATED GRANTEE CONTRACTS AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT; AND,

2. RECOMMEND THAT CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE THE RELATED PERFORMANCES AS CITY-SPONSORED.

Public Comment – Items NOT On the Agenda

Chair Williams invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the City Council:

Bryan Caldwell discussed the Veterans Empowerment Theater program with shows currently going on at the Blue Door, and he announced upcoming holiday concerts.

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, discussed upcoming 2024 grant performances adding that information was available on the community calendar on the Culver City website, and she wished everyone Happy Holidays noting that she would not be present at the December meeting.

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported that Sonia Romero's contract agreement had been completed and she could now begin the Farragut Connector project; discussed communication with Hope Parrish to refine historical aspects of the design; meetings to discuss the work plan and create milestones; progress updates; conservation projects; regular maintenance; and water elements.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, encouraged everyone to look at Nate Mohler's artwork at City Hall; asked that all Commissioners email her about activities from July to December and plans for January through June for the report to the City Council; discussed closure of Council Chambers in December and January; alternate meeting location; the Olympics planning; and she encouraged Commissioners to come to the December meeting, attend some of the many upcoming performances, and to take a walk and look at the restoration efforts for Public Art in Culver City.

Commissioner Mesghali reported working on Olympics-related items; discussed coordination with the Sister City program; finding alignment with existing programs; efforts to meet with Lisa Saperston of the Sister Cities Committee about expanding

relationships with cultural partners; and potential communication with consulates to foster relationships.

Commissioner Fleischer discussed the Artist Laureate event at the former gun store; the Creative Economy event at the Wende Museum; cross pollination of performing Arts grantees; building community across arts organizations; the jazz series; appreciation to Edgar Varela and the Kirk Douglas Theater for their work on the jazz series; the Artist Laureate process meeting; recommendations that came out of the meeting; continuing the process; she expressed appreciation to Sam Lee for his work with Sonia Romero; she agreed to share a photograph of herself and Chair Williams in front of Truth or Fiction; and she wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Vice Chair O'Carroll discussed her busy month attending numerous events in Culver City.

Chair Williams echoed comments made by previous speakers; indicated attending many of the events mentioned; discussed keeping creative processes at the top of consideration in the future; and she wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:03 P.M., the Cultural Affairs Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held at 7:00 P.M. on Thursday, December 17, 2024.

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SECRETARY of the Cultural Affairs Commission

APPROVED _____

BRENDA WILLIAMS
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