

REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION  
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

March 17, 2026  
7:00 P.M.

**Call to Order & Roll Call**

Chair Mesghali called the regular meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission to order at 7:03 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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**Oath of Office**

Chair Mesghali reported that Heather Moses had been appointed to the Cultural Affairs Commission for a partial term and would be eligible for consideration for a full term starting in July.

Heather Moses recited the Oath of Office, signed the form, and joined the Commission on the dais.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, discussed technical issues noting that voice votes would be taken throughout the

meeting, and she requested that Commissioners remain following adjournment for a photograph.

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Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated wanting to let staff provide comments rather than have them wait until the end of the meeting.

**Items from Staff**

Jill Thomsen, Recreation and Community Services Supervisor, noted that she is traditionally in charge of the entertainment stage at Fiesta La Ballona held at the end of August; discussed the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration; the possibility that there could be two entertainment stages at Fiesta La Ballona this year; assistance by the Ad Hoc Entertainment Subcommittee; number of applications received; work to program the event to provide something for everyone; and, responding to inquiry, she clarified the timeline for receipt and review of applications.

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**Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated that no requests to provide comment were received.

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**Receipt of Correspondence**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, highlighted the March 4, 2026 email she had sent to Commissioners regarding updates to the MGM sign process.

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**Information Items from Staff**

Item I-1

**Update on Recent Activities Related to Items Not on the Agenda**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, presented a video created by Information Officer Dustin Klemann documenting

Victoria Marks' weekly series, "Conversations with Words, Conversations with Movement" in February at Culver West Alexander Park; provided departmental updates; discussed the staff presentation at the Senior Center on the MGM Lion sign; distribution of feedback surveys; the presentation to the Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Commission; storage and possession of the sign; determination as to whether the sign should be part of Culver City's permanent art collection; investigation of alternative sites for the sign; presentations to the Public Art Subcommittee; Arts District tree surrounds; creation of a map and status report for each tree surround; pricing to replace the film strips; a planned walk of the corridor; Commissioners were invited to attend the City Council presentation of the Olympics/Cultural Framework scheduled for April 13; she discussed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Culver Arts Foundation related to the upcoming 2028 Games; the New Zealand stage during the 2028 Games; a PRCS/Tellefson Park mural collaboration through a National Fitness Campaign grant; the City budget process including a Civic Assembly with approximately 30 community members; fabrication of Charles Gaines' sculpture "A Frame for a Tree," with installation at the intersection of Washington and National Boulevards planned for June and a ribbon cutting ceremony in September; cross-departmental collaboration and coordination; and the Community Cultural Equity Plan currently in development in collaboration with CVL Economics and MIG.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Commission input to the City Council regarding the 2028 Cultural Framework; the RFP (Request for Proposals) process related to the framework; clarification that the item is informational and not able to be discussed; clarification vs. discussion; and the ability to agendaize items for future discussion.

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### **Order of the Agenda**

Items from Staff were heard after the Oath of Office as well as at the end of the meeting.

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### **Action Items**

Item A-1

**Consideration of (1) the Cultural Affairs Commission Public Art Subcommittee's Recommendation to Relocate "Neptune's Necklace" by David Trubridge from its Existing Location to a New One within the Westfield Culver City Mall; and (2) Review, Discuss, and Provide Comments; and, (3) Make a Motion to Approve the Relocation Plan**

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, introduced Josh Morton, General Manager of Westfield Culver City noting that the relocation had been previously discussed by the Public Art Subcommittee.

Josh Morton, Westfield Culver City, presented the relocation plan for "Neptune's Necklace" by David Trubridge; discussed moving the sculpture from its current location at center court to the east wing near the JC Penney anchor space in order to optimize the center court as a flexible, multi-purpose event venue; improving dwell time; potential layout configurations for the new location; estimated cost for professional fine art handlers; maintaining integrity of the piece; he confirmed that artist approval had been obtained for the relocation; discussed cleaning and maintenance; the potential timeline for relocation; and establishing a platform for scalable growth.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding raising awareness about the commissioned piece of art; inclusion of the plaque in the relocation plan; appreciation for the thoughtful approach; collaboration with Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD); support for creation of additional event spaces within the mall; clarification regarding the images used for the presentation; and appreciation for flexibility provided with the change.

MOVED BY CHAIR MESGHALI, SECONDED BY MEMBER GUPTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION: ACCEPT THE CAC PUBLIC ART SUBCOMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION TO RELOCATE "NEPTUNE'S NECKLACE" BY DAVID TRUBRIDGE FROM ITS EXISTING LOCATION AT CENTER COURT OF WESTFIELD CULVER CITY MALL TO A NEW LOCATION IN THE EAST WING NEAR THE JC PENNEY ANCHOR SPACE.

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

Commissioner Gupta reported on the work of the Public Art Subcommittee; discussed the Arts District tree surrounds; consideration of the Westfield sculpture relocation; and the MGM sign process.

Regarding Art as Architecture, Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, reported that the professional panel had been held but staff had not had a chance to convene with the Public Art Subcommittee yet.

Commissioner Gupta discussed the Artist Laureate Ad Hoc Subcommittee; reported meetings with Artist Laureate Victoria Marks; indicated participating in the February series; discussed upcoming events and activations; and continued collaboration.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated that the Communications and Outreach Subcommittee had not yet met so no report was available.

Vice Chair Fleischer noted that the first meeting of the Creative Economy and Cultural Plan Ad Hoc Subcommittee was planned for the beginning of April, and she referenced a post from Dustin Klemann explaining what the Cultural Plan is and inviting community participation.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, noted that the post about the Cultural Plan had gone out through GovDelivery and would go out through social media channels soon.

Chair Mesghali reported that the FY 2025-26 Culver City Arts Foundation Ad Hoc Subcommittee would provide an update after their next meeting.

Commissioner Gupta reported that she and Chair Mesghali had attended the last Artist Meetup at K&K Gallery in the Arts District.

Vice Chair Fleischer noted that no official meetings of the 2026 Performing Arts Grant Program Ad Hoc Subcommittee had taken place; she discussed the Summer Concert series; and she expressed anticipation for spring and summer grant performances.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, indicated that she would provide an update at the end of the meeting under Items from Staff.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated that no new updates for the 2028 Olympics/Paralympic/Cultural Olympiad Ad Hoc Subcommittee would be available until after the City Council meeting on April 13 and that Historic Preservation would be discussed during the next agenda item.

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Item A-3

**(1) Confirm the updated FY 2025-26 Standing and Ad Hoc Subcommittee structure and assignments; (2) Appoint Commissioners to fill existing vacancies on the Communications & Outreach, 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games/Cultural Olympiad, and Historic Preservation Subcommittees; (3) Creation of an Ad Hoc Fiesta La Ballona Entertainment Subcommittee; (4) Assignment of Commissioners to the Ad Hoc Fiesta La Ballona Entertainment Subcommittee for Fiscal Year 2025-26; and/or (5) Suggest changes to additional Subcommittee assignments as needed and desired**

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, introduced the item; discussed the vacant position on the Commission; the appointment of Commissioner Moses through the end of June; the hope for a full Commission by July 1, 2026; return of the agenda item in July; and she read the list of existing standing and ad hoc subcommittees.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Commissioner availability and willingness to serve; workload of the Historic Preservation Ad Hoc Subcommittee; the focus on code updates; interdepartmental fundraising; the Cultural Trust; Architectural Resources Group (ARG); the placement of the Communications & Outreach and Historic Preservation subcommittees on hold until July due to capacity; ad hoc vs. standing subcommittees; creation of a new Ad Hoc 2026 Fiesta La Ballona Entertainment Subcommittee; folding Communications and Outreach into the Cultural Plan; defined scope of the contractors; suggestion to pause the Communications and Outreach Subcommittee; Brown Act Rules; the ability to have a quarterly check-in on communications built in to the CAC agenda for everyone without having a separate subcommittee; and

Commissioner appointments to all active subcommittees for the remainder of FY 2025-26.

MOVED BY CHAIR MESGHALI, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MOSES AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. CREATE AN AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE WITH THE FOLLOWING LIMITED SCOPE: FIESTA LA BALLONA ENTERTAINMENT; AND,

2. PRIORITIZE AND APPOINT COMMISSIONERS TO THE FOLLOWING SUBCOMMITTEES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 AS FOLLOWS:

STANDING SUBCOMMITTEE:

PUBLIC ART: CHAIR MESGHALI AND COMMISSIONER GUPTA

AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEES:

ARTIST LAUREATE: COMMISSIONERS GUPTA AND MOSES

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH PLAN: ON HOLD UNTIL JULY

CREATIVE ECONOMY & CULTURAL PLAN: CHAIR MESGHALI AND VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER

FY 2025-26 CULVER CITY ARTS FOUNDATION: CHAIR MESGHALI AND COMMISSIONER GUPTA

FY 2025-2026 HISTORIC PRESERVATION: ON HOLD UNTIL JULY

2026 PERFORMING ARTS GRANT PROGRAM: VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER AND COMMISSIONER GUPTA

2028 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES/CULTURAL OLYMPIAD: CHAIR MESGHALI AND COMMISSIONER MOSES

FIESTA LA BALLONA ENTERTAINMENT: VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER AND COMMISSIONER MOSES

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Item A-4

**(1) Discussion of a Draft Letter from the Cultural Affairs Commission to the City Manager Regarding Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Recommendations; and (2) If Desired,**

**Authorization of Transmittal of the Correspondence to the City Manager**

Chair Mesghali presented the draft letter from the Cultural Affairs Commission to the City Manager regarding Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget recommendations; noted that the primary request in the letter was to retain Sam Lee's Public Art Analyst position as a permanent position; discussed putting their stance on the record; framing the letter in positive terms; and emphasizing the City's public art focus and growth.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding staff expertise; the framing and language of the draft budget letter; the Cultural Plan; the emphasis on public art that requires a permanent staff position; success of the program; development and Percent for Art requirements; suggested amendments to include language highlighting the specialized expertise of the Public Art Analyst position and the City's development growth as reasons to support the permanent retention of the position; staff salaries paid for from the General Fund; agreed upon amendments; the process; and the importance of making a compelling, affirmative case to the City Manager.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER MOSES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GUPTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION:

1. APPROVE THE DRAFT LETTER REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS AS AMENDED; AND,
2. AUTHORIZE TRANSMITTAL OF THE CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CITY MANAGER.

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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**

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, provided a recap of the 2025 Performing Arts Grant program; discussed grants awarded; performance and attendance figures; grantee feedback regarding permitting costs, police presence costs, and marketing needs; she provided an update on the 2026 Performing Arts Grant program; discussed number of grants; amount of money awarded; she expressed appreciation for Commissioner attendance of events; and she highlighted the upcoming Grand Performances presentation of Viver Brasil at Culver Steps as an example of grant-supported programming.

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, provided an update on the *Colorful Communities* poster program; reported that five artists had been contracted; noted that public engagement workshops were being planned; he was looking forward to seeing works in progress; and he indicated that he would provide updates to the Public Art Subcommittee.

Commissioner Moses expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to serve on the Cultural Affairs Commission; received clarification regarding subcommittee meetings vs. community meetings and Brown Act Rules; discussed meetings related to the Community Cultural Equity Plan; and she promoted an upcoming dance concert at Robert Frost Auditorium taking place March 19 to 21.

Commissioner Gupta reported attending a Culver City Arts District Business Improvement District (BID) event; discussed work to support local artists and build momentum in the Arts District; and she received unanimous Commission consensus to agendaize a BID presentation on a future Commission agenda as an informational item.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding clarification that the BID falls under the Economic Development Department.

Vice Chair Fleischer welcomed Commissioner Moses to the Commission.

Chair Mesghali welcomed Commissioner Moses to the Commission; discussed the possibility of the Commission writing a letter to the School Board to advocate for the preservation of the Technical Director and Arts Coordinator positions; concern with maintaining programming at the Robert Frost Auditorium

and throughout Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD) without those positions proposed for elimination; his work for CCUSD; and he received clarification that individual Commissioners could communicate with the City Council or write letters on their own behalf to avoid Brown Act issues, rather than a submitting a formal Commission letter.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the ability for two Commissioners to write a letter, and a recommendation for individual Commissioners to reach out and emphasize that they are communicating on behalf of themselves.

Commissioner Gupta reported attending the recent open meeting.

Chair Mesghali indicated trying to make a statement at the last meeting; discussed the MGM sign process; additional research into other locations; hiring a consultant or issuing an RFP for a professional consultant to conduct an analysis and provide a professional recommendation; he proposed incorporating the sign into gateway art; and expressed concern with pressure put on staff.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding next steps related to the MGM sign process; consideration by the Public Art Subcommittee; siting location work already done; and the surprisingly controversial topic.

Commissioner Gupta discussed attending the *Hades Town* performance at the Frost Auditorium, *Post-Fire 1* at Des Artistes, Kristi Head's show at Taylor Fine Art, and *The Other Art Show* at the Hayden Tract.

Vice Chair Fleischer discussed her work at AVPA; noted that the space could not be run without a Technical Director or an Arts Coordinator; and she pointed out that she and Chair Mesghali were former faculty, and she felt it appropriate for them to write a letter.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, reminded Commissioners to stay for the group photograph.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 8:42 P.M., the Cultural Affairs Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

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SECRETARY of the Cultural Affairs Commission

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

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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.

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Jeremy Bocchino  
CITY CLERK

Date