

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

February 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 7:07 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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Oath of Office

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, indicated that the Oath of Office indicated on the agenda would not take place as the new Commissioner was not present.

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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.

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 distributing an e-comment received from Marla Koosed expressing interest in Music in the Chambers.

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Order of the Agenda

The Oath of Office and Item A-4 were not done as the new Commissioner was not available for the meeting.

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Information Items

Item I-1

Update on Recent Activities Related to 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games/Cultural Olympiad

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, provided an update on the Olympics; discussed recent publicly noticed subcommittee meetings she attended with Chair Mesghali and representatives of the Culver City Arts Foundation; provided an update on arts and culture in Culver City related to the 2028 Olympic Games; discussed next steps over the next 4-6 weeks; the core arts framework; cross promotion and/or venue opportunities; weaving into the larger Cultural Olympiad; and the City Council staff report including the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) draft with Culver Arts about fundraising for the framework accompanied by a cultural framework informed by Commission discussions and regional convenings to create a vision for the Olympics.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding general language being used in the framework to keep options open; classical music; the potential for a Music in the Chambers concert with artists from New Zealand and/or incorporate into Olympics programming; the emphasis on performing arts and live programming; support for bringing on a cultural producer; the City Council approval process; support from the General Fund synergy with other special events; coordination of permits and fundraising strategies;

outside partners; the framework to support official partnerships; ensuring communication across channels; things the Foundation is responsible for; and looking at how Culver Arts is positioning themselves to fundraise.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the base level of things they want to do; the job of the Coordinator to organize individual tracks and provide continuity; appreciation to staff for their efforts; encouragement to multiple institutions to apply; momentum with institutions that have a track record in Culver City; requirements to be involved; fitting into the larger context of the network of Culver City events; communication with the Cultural Olympiad; building a clean system that will not overload anyone; allowing the production of professional content; formalization of partnerships enabling the Culver City logo to be included for promotion; identified partners under the framework; City sponsorship; and other things happening in Culver City not under the framework.

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Consent Calendar Items

Item C-1

Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meetings of December 16, 2025 and January 20, 2026

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER, SECONDED BY CHAIR MESGHALI AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION APPROVE OF MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF DECEMBER 16, 2025 AND JANUARY 20, 2026

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Action Items

Item A-1

(1) Discussion of Potential Partnership Framework for the continuation of the Music in the Chambers program with the

Music Guild of Los Angeles; (2) Provide Comments as Appropriate; and (3) Provide Recommendation to Staff

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

Martin Glicklich, Music Guild of Los Angeles, provided background on the organization; discussed upcoming events; challenging audience expectations; he invited Commissioners to attend a concert with the New Hollywood String Quartet; noted the multitude of groups that he can draw upon; and responding to inquiry, he discussed young groups brought in from Europe, engagement of students from the Colburn Conservatory, and he offered to provide recommendations to the Commission.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the amount of work required to present the recent successful Music in the Chambers concert; turning the pilot into an actual series; the Music Guild as an established presence in Los Angeles; the ability to bring in elite groups that would separate Music in the Chambers from other classical music throughout the City; potential connections to Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD); the Students Playing for Students program; growth; connection; mentorship; the Music Adoption Program for unwanted instruments; the community focus; and future ticket buyers.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for the Music in the Chambers program; volunteer support; logistics; discouragement of including food in the event in Council Chambers; creating an evening by pairing of the event with a restaurant or promotional sponsorship for the night; use of Edgar Varela as the onsite producer; gratitude for support of the pilot concert by Culver City Arts Foundation; the fundraising model for the partnership that does not preclude having an organizational sponsor; offsetting expenses; the 25% Performing Arts budget issue; taking measured steps with plans to do a concert in the fall and in the spring; incorporation into the workplan for the next fiscal year; and determining potential dates.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER GUPTA, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION: PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR THE MUSIC

IN THE CHAMBERS PROGRAM AND PARTNERSHIP WITH MUSIC GUILD OF
LOS ANGELES.

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Item A-2

Consideration of (1) Recommendation from the Public Art Standing Subcommittee of Five Artist Finalists for the Culver City: Colorful Communities (CC:CC) Poster Program; (2) Review, Discuss, and Provide Comments; and (3) Make a Motion to Approve the Five Finalists for Program Commissions

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, provided a summary of the material of record; discussed voting categories; top scoring applicants: Stephen Holman, Buena Johnson, Debra Aschheim, AQMNI, and Lori Escalera; the artist commission; the general liability insurance waiver for the artists; the public engagement workshop; special event insurance; feedback and guidance provided from staff, the CAC Public Art Subcommittee, and neighborhood representatives; ensuring alignment with program goals, appropriate content, and standards; and next steps.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding public engagement sessions; time to complete the poster; the process; scheduling; translating approved artwork to the poster design; timeframe; piggybacking on other community events; collaboration with Economic Development; activation of neighborhoods; potential for banner programs or construction wraps; art in the permanent collections; use for various neighborhood branding opportunities; the print run of the posters; digital life of the art; postcards from the City alerting people to events in their specific neighborhood; and reliance on neighborhood representatives and associations to get the word out.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding competition and high level of interest in the process; appreciation to all those involved; addressing the Olympics within the context of existing programming; communications strategy; providing a short video message from the artist talking about their work; looking at ways to increase exposure and create visibility; personalizing the experience; social media; the press release announcing the winners; weaving stories together as engagements happen; congratulations to Buena Johnson; the In the Paint Artist

Program; support for physical communications as well as social media outreach; mailers; appreciation to the Public Art Subcommittee for their help in moving the program forward; the guiding vision; growing the artist workforce through workforce development opportunities; activating the Trust; getting more artists in the collection; enhancing vibrancy and community connection in a time when opportunity is becoming scarce; and the nimble program that shows off Culver City and preps for the Olympics.

MOVED BY CHAIR MESGHALI, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GUPTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION: APPROVE THE FIVE ARTIST FINALISTS SELECTED FOR THE CULVER CITY COLORFUL COMMUNITIES POSTER PROGRAM AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT AND AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PUBLIC ART STANDING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION.

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Chair Mesghali reported that Item A-4 had been removed from the agenda as the fourth Commissioner was not available for the meeting.

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Item A-3

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 there had been very few subcommittee meetings since the previous Commission meeting.

Chair Mesghali reported that the Public Art Subcommittee and Olympics Subcommittee items had been previously addressed.

Vice Chair Fleischer reported that the Cultural Plan Subcommittee had not met as the contracts were still in progress, but they were looking forward to meeting soon.

Commissioner Gupta reported attending the Culver City Arts Foundation Retreat with Chair Mesghali.

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Item A-4

(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 and/or suggest changes to additional Subcommittee assignments as needed and desired

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

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Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

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

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, discussed executing the 2026 Performing Arts Grant Award contracts; the number of first time recipients; upcoming grant performances; information available on the City website in the community calendar; promotion by email and on City social media; contributions by Sony and Culver Arts fully regranted to organizations; surveys and comments submitted by grant recipients; performances being seen in the community.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, discussed the Creative Employer Convening at Veterans Memorial Auditorium on February 26; Action Conversations by Artist Laureate Victoria Marks at the Culver West Recreation Center; the proposal from Now Art; independent siting of the Now Art installation at the Wende on Valentines Day; the Culver Arts Foundation Meetup at K&K Gallery on February 21; she provided an update on the Cultural Plan; discussed insurance; the contract with CVL Economics; Lunar Fest postcards distributed for the Chinese New Year; the budget schedule; alignment with City Council

strategic priorities; the City Council Strategic Retreat; and additional items coming forward.

Vice Chair Fleischer discussed being an advocate for Arts for LA in Culver City; the importance of checking Commissioner availability for the kickoff meeting; and she reported attending an exhibit at the El Segundo Art Museum curated by former Commissioner Brenda Williams noting participation by Flora Kao who had applied for Artist Laureate.

Commissioner Gupta indicated that she had also attended the exhibit at the El Segundo Art Museum; discussed attending Oxy Live at Occidental College; and she was looking forward to the Artist Meet Up, the K&K Gallery, the Artist Laureate activation, and the Other Art Fair.

Chair Mesghali reported attending the Artist Meet Up with Culver Arts and was looking forward to the next one; discussed items to include moving forward; building up Creative Economy Mixers; adding an industry-specific mixer; he acknowledged staff workload; received unanimous support to agendize development of a formal memo from the Commission considering budget discussions similar to what the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission does; noted the importance of advocacy; discussed working to make Sam Lee's position permanent; putting together a formalized ask; and use of the memo in outreach to the community for support.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, acknowledged three nodding heads to agendize a formal budget letter and indicated that staff would draft a formal memo for Commission review for recommendation to the City Council.

Chair Mesghali requested that calendar invites for arts events be sent to Commissioners via City email as a reminder of the extended work of the Commission.

Commissioner Gupta reported attending an AVPA dance performance.

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, March 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