REGULAR MEETING: OCTOBER 10, 2006
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Presiding: Susan Deen

Call to Order
7:02 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

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Roll Call

Present: Susan Deen; Luther Henderson, III; Clement Hanami; Ronnie Jayne; and Gayle Smashey.

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Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Mark Rocha.

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Staff Present

Christine Byers, Public Art & Historic Preservation Coordinator; and, Susan Obrow, Performing Arts Coordinator and Special Events Producer.

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7:04 p.m.

Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Dr. Mark Rocha, President of West Los Angeles College, related that the college had many wonderful arts programs on their campus.

Dr. Rocha was optimistic about the future and indicated his eagerness to be a partner in cultural affairs. He noted that the college's 400 seat recital hall is an arts venue that can be used for receptions, as a gallery space with a great view, and for other events as they try to recreate a community space. He asserted that a thriving arts program is necessary to realize his vision for the future which is to make West Los Angeles College an academically superior college in a great city. He felt blessed to have a resource like the Cultural Affairs Commission and felt it was the beginning of a great partnership.

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Item #C-1
7:09 p.m.

Agenda Posting

Moved by Commissioner Smashey, seconded by

Commissioner Jayne and unanimously carried, to receive and file the Secretary's Report regarding the agenda posting for this meeting.

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Item #A-1

Consideration and Recommendation to the City Council Regarding the Allocation of Percent for Public Art Funds for the Town Plaza Expansion Project

Ms. Byers provided a summary of the material of record noting that specific features incorporated into the design of the Town Plaza Expansion Project include a water feature intended to reference Ballona Creek, a lighting feature to represent the former railroad tracks that once intersected at the site, and the property line between the two former ranchos whose boundaries also met adjacent to the site. In addition there has been detailed discussion about a live performance space.

Ms. Byers noted that the percent for public art allocation for The Culver Studios development project associated with the recently approved Comprehensive Plan Amendment was estimated at $122,898. The percent for public art allocation for the Rush Pacifica project at 9300 Culver Boulevard is currently estimated at about $243,000.

Ms. Obrow pointed out that the Town Plaza Expansion Project presented another opportunity for a performing arts space in Culver City that could be used for dance, children's theatre, music, etc. Staff felt the space should remain flexible with no single orientation of where the audience should sit or where the performers should perform. A budget was put together with features including a portable, sectional steel deck stage very much like the one used in the Summer Sunset Music Festival which can be set up in many different locations in Town Plaza in a variety of configurations. Five hundred folding chairs will be purchased; although the area can accommodate up to 1,000 people. Cabling and wiring is to be built into the infrastructure. A budget line for sound has not been included because each event demands a different sound system so it is easier to rent rather than buy a system which can also become quickly outmoded.

Elements can be stored nearby and the plan presents a basic performing arts infrastructure attractive to both producers and performers.

Ms. Byers noted that The Culver Studios owners / developers were supportive of this proposal for use of public art funds because the studio lot has limited public visibility and access and this alternative provides an opportunity to invest money to enhance an adjacent parcel of land.

Ms. Byers noted that staff felt the existing art work in Town Plaza would be appropriately complimented by the proposed historical / cultural elements and that the historic buildings that frame the Plaza area reference some of the central themes associated with the City's history and with its identity. The newly proposed historical / cultural features are site-specific; the Art Fund is a capital improvement fund and these elements are considered capital improvements.

Ms. Byers indicated that no date had been scheduled yet for a Council meeting to consider the recommendation made by the CAC but that staff hoped to have it on a Council agenda by the end of the month. She added that Commissioners had been provided three color images from the schematics presented on October 3, 2006 to the Redevelopment Agency by Johnson Fain.

Responding to Commissioner Smashey, Ms. Byers explained that infrastructure costs for the event space would be covered by the Redevelopment Agency's project budget.

Project Manager Joe Susca explained that part of scope of services required of Johnson Fain was to prepare a professional estimate of all the costs for the various features of Town Plaza. He indicated that staff felt that, with a built-in contingency, the price estimates were accurate.

Commissioner Smashey pointed out that estimates did not always match real life and she expressed concern specifically with landscape and architectural estimates noting that she wanted to see the contingency in the 10% range, which is more typical.

Project Manger Joe Susca explained that the overall project estimate had a 10% contingency but he noted that staff would be re-checking the bid estimates after preparation of the construction documents and submission of actual bids.

Ms. Byers pointed out that the estimate for the 9300 Culver Boulevard project is on the low side in terms of the 1% or public art allocation and clarified that if the project costs go up, the amount paid to the Art Fund would go up as well.

Commissioner Smashey questioned when the project would start in terms of the phasing for the overall expansion of the performance space and cultural aspects.

Project Manager Joe Susca reported that they were in the process of preparing the design development phase of the project and then they would do the construction documents in preparation for bidding out. He added that the 9300 Culver Boulevard project and the Washington Boulevard realignment would be bid out together at the end of the first quarter of 2007 with one contractor selected to build all three components which should take about a year to complete.

Commissioner Smashey expressed concern about not having enough funds to cover the costs and expressed concern that the project could be scrapped if it was not estimated conservatively enough.

Project Manager Joe Susca indicated that if additional funds are needed, staff would come back to the Commission and City Council to request more money from the Art Fund, or the money could come out of the tax increment fund.

Ms. Obrow noted that LRM would work with various subcontractors including Jeff Lee of Technology Artists who would have his eye on the proposed space in terms of load in, load out, sound needs, lighting needs, wiring, power drops, etc.

Commissioner Hanami questioned where the chairs would be stored and what the costs would be for set up and break down.

Ms. Obrow summarized general procedures for the Summer Sunset Music Festival noting that was used as a model for this plan. She stated that there was room at the Ince Parking structure to store the 500 chairs along with the stage and lighting equipment, and she asserted that the budget for any programming would include the labor to move the equipment.

Responding to Commissioner Henderson, Ms. Byers reported that the percent for public art allocations for two adjacent projects – The Culver Studios and Rush Pacifica -- is estimated at $365,898. She further explained that current cost estimates come in just over $20,000 more than is available, which is why staff is asking for an additional $23,000 from the Art Fund as a contingency. She reiterated that staff believed there was a good possibility that contingency money would not be needed if the Rush Pacifica project comes in at a higher valuation.

Commissioner Henderson questioned whether a study had been budgeted to determine how other businesses in the area would be affected by sound and echoes.

Ms. Obrow reported that Jeff Lee of Technology Artists would be retained by LRM and he is currently contracted by the City to perform the sound design and services for the Summer Sunset Music Festival as well as lighting services for Music in the Chambers series. She indicated that Mr. Lee had often produced functions in Town Plaza and in other locations throughout the City.

Commissioner Jayne was pleased with the project and happy that sound and lighting issues were being addressed before the project began construction. She questioned whether plaques would be provided to explain the historical aspects of the design and Ms. Byers indicated that this had been specifically addressed at the October 3, 2006 Redevelopment Agency meeting. Ms. Byers added that other subtle references could be incorporated into the design that might further direct visitors terms of appreciating the historical references.

Responding to Commissioner Jayne, Ms. Obrow noted that the Cultural Affairs Division would suggest performances for the space, and arts organizations in the City would also be able to use the space.

Project Manager Joe Susca reported that the Agency Board had instructed staff to work with the City Attorney's office to formulate policies for Town Plaza use and they agreed with the idea of preparing promotional materials and hiring a promoter to secure desirable events for the space such as book fairs, antique shows, musical events, performance art, etc. He noted that the surrounding buildings somewhat limit how they can control the sound, but the Parcel B building is being constructed with the performance aspects of the adjacent plaza area taken into account. He added that some of the hardscape components had been removed to reduce echoing and have been replaced with landscape components to help reduce noise.

Chair Deen expressed concern with whether they were setting a precedent if they approve this as there is an ordinance which calls for 1% per project budget for public art. She acknowledged that the elements such as the water feature and the lighting to delineate the railroad tracks and the rancho boundaries could be seen as art but she questioned where the purchase of chairs and lighting fit into the ordinance.

Ms. Byers indicated that staff had considered that issue. She stated that the Art Fund is a capital improvement fund with specific parameters as to how much can be spent on an annual basis on non-capital improvement items such as performing arts grants, fund administration and maintenance of art work. She added that it is a restricted capital improvement fund and as a policy the money is spent on public art related capital projects. In sum, she said that staff supported this proposal as a viable investment of these funds.

Ms. Byers indicated that staff had looked long and hard at the best use of this money noting that it was presented to Cultural Affairs staff that if the funds could not be approved by the Commission and the City Council for the historical/cultural elements and the performance space, that there were no other funding sources available. Staff felt that the live performance space was an important programmatic feature and they would miss an opportunity if they did not find a way to fund it. She cited examples of exceptions made in the past including using some Art Fund money to pay for the consultant who put together the Community Cultural Plan. She emphasized that as a rule the money should be used for professional artists, public arts projects, and conservation and maintenance of public art but all the items in the proposal fall under the purview of Cultural Affairs so staff felt they could be supported. She did not think that there was a risk of other developers coming back to the City trying to use their 1% for public art allocation for other uses. Finally she noted that the items designed by Johnson Fain were unique, site specific, referenced historical and cultural themes, and were all capital improvements.

Responding to concerns from Chair Deen about routing the money, Ms. Byers indicated that for logistical reasons the money would go directly into the Agency project account.

Responding to Chair Deen, Ms. Obrow indicated that it would be more convenient and less costly to reserve the chairs, stage, etc., for Town Plaza use only because they are big and bulky and it would be cost prohibitive to use them at other locations with perhaps the exception of Media Park.

Commissioner Henderson questioned how much increased revenue might be expected from use of the new performance space.

Project Manager Joe Susca indicated that plaza improvements were meant to revitalize the downtown businesses and restore and enhance pedestrian orientation with the thought being that people attending events would patronize the businesses in the area. He explained that no formal estimate of increased revenue had been prepared but when the City Attorney creates a policy for use of the plaza there will be permit and administrative fees built in that will go toward ongoing maintenance of the space.

Commissioner Henderson questioned whether there were estimates on labor to put up and remove the chairs.

Project Manager Joe Susca explained that event producers would be responsible for set up and break down as well as fees toward public works and a public safety presence and the City would ideally make a modest income. He added that in most cases outside employees would set up the chairs and the stage.

Moved by Chair Deen, seconded by Commissioner Jayne and Vice Chair Henderson and unanimously passed to recommend to the City Council that the percent for public art allocations for the Rush Pacifica 9300 Culver Boulevard project, The Culver Studios project, and up to $23,000 from the Art Fund be allocated toward the historical/cultural features and specific live performance components for the future Town Plaza expansion and moved to Redevelopment Agency Account Number 33393400.730100 (Downtown Street Improvements).

Commissioner Henderson wanted to make sure that in the event the $23,000 from the Art Fund is not used, it comes back to the Agency. Ms. Byers agreed noting that that they might defer transferring the money until it is actually needed.

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Public Comment

None.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Ms. Byers reported no formal correspondence. She announced that all Commissioners had been invited to the Employee Awards Dinner on Saturday, November 4, 2006.

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Items from Staff

Ms. Byers reported that the September meeting minutes would be presented at the next meeting on November 14, 2006.

Ms. Byers announced that the City Council had unanimously approved Kyungmi Shin's concept for Washington Boulevard and extended the project area from Sepulveda Boulevard to

Walnut Avenue.

Ms. Obrow reported that she and Ms. Byers had been in a peer review panel for the Performing Arts Grant Program to decide 2007 grant awards and she thanked Chair Deen and Vice Chair Henderson for joining them for a long day of deliberation. She reported that a very distinguished panel with representation from arts education, dance, theatre, and music had thoroughly reviewed the 14 applications.

Ms. Obrow indicated that Commissioners would receive their packets earlier than usual for the November meeting so they could review the grant award recommendations and have time read each application. She reported changes to procedures, noting that this year staff would work with each recipient on their marketing to the community. Other additions include an accordion style pocket calendar listing all grant-funded performances. Expanded outreach would also include reminder e-mails for all Cultural Affairs programming. She encouraged Commissioners to add any names they want to the e-mail list, noting that they wanted to continue promoting Culver City beyond the City's borders.

Ms. Obrow reported meeting with David Young, principal bassist for the Los Angeles Opera and a participant in last year's peer panel for performing arts grants and a performer in the Music in the Chambers series, to discuss producing his program "All Strings Considered" on the west side of Culver City. The program features a quintet of string players that introduce string instruments to children, kindergarten through third grade, and culminating in a concert.

Ms. Obrow announced that staff was close to announcing more details about *Music in the Chambers* in March 2007, adding that the performers were almost set and the budget allowed for three concerts.

Ms. Byers thanked Chair Deen and Commissioners Jayne and Smashey for devoting time to review hundreds of images for the Washington Boulevard art project. She added that Kyungmi Shin indicated that she would be able to install the first phase of art work in January 2007.

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Items from Commissioners

Responding to Commissioner Smashey, Ms. Obrow reported on results of the Summer Sunset Music Festival survey taken on September 7, 2006. She reported 265 responses out of 400 surveys distributed with 57 different zip codes represented. She related that overall people enjoyed all of the concerts, especially the world music and American regional music.

Ms. Obrow announced the Los Angeles County Forum for Arts Commissioners on Saturday, October 28, 2006 at Culver City City Hall.

Commissioner Smashey thought the partnership with West Los Angeles College could be good and was interested to know more about what they were doing.

Commissioner Jayne was pleased to hear about the e-mail alerts and she emphasized the importance of publicity to alert the public to all the wonderful events the City has to offer, noting that they can not attend if they are not aware of them.

Commissioner Henderson reported meeting with Dr. Mark Rocha, President of West Los Angeles College and he was optimistic about a fruitful and positive relationship, noting that from all indications, Dr. Rocha appeared committed to working not only with the Cultural Affairs Commission but also with the City. He added that West Los Angeles College is a designated City venue for funding through its Performing Arts Grant program.

Commissioner Henderson felt that Culver City was well-served by staff and the panel working on the arts grants and that everyone would be proud of new developments. He was looking forward to the Los Angeles County Arts Commission Commissioner Forum and the Music in the Chamber series in March.

Chair Deen thanked Commissioner Henderson, staff, and the peer panel for their work on the performing arts grants. She noted that the projects submitted were diverse and exciting, and she looked forward to a dynamic year.

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8:15 p.m.

Adjournment
With no further business for the Commission to consider, the Chair entertained a motion for adjournment.
MOVED BY COMMISSIONER JAYNE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMASHEY AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:15 P.M. TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2006 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE MIKE BALKMAN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL.

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SUSAN DEEN, CHAIR

KRISTI CALLAN
Minutes Reporter