

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

July 28, 2026
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Mesghali called the special meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission to order at 7:10 P.M. in Mike Balkman Council Chambers at Culver City Hall.

Present: Ehsaan Mesghali, Chair
Tania Fleischer, Vice Chair
Shona Gupta, Commissioner*
Van Johnson, Commissioner
Heather Moses, Commissioner

*Commissioner Gupta left the meeting at 8:10 P.M.

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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Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, clarified that elections for a new Chair and Vice Chair and subcommittee assignments would take place during the August meeting; she confirmed that Chair Mesghali and Vice Chair Fleischer would remain seated for the current meeting; she welcomed newly appointed Commissioner Van Johnson; and she congratulated Chair Mesghali and Commissioner Moses on their reappointments noting that one new and two returning Commissioners had completed their Brown Act training and completed the Oath of Office.

Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, read the statement on hate speech.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Chad Kroeger discussed the current turbulent times; suggested that an awe-inspiring leader was needed; and he proposed that Poseidon be made the god of California as that would improve housing and erosion.

JT Parr discussed factional conflict between gods; he hailed Poseidon; and encouraged everyone to be kind to those on the water.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported that no correspondence had been received.

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Presentations

Item P-1

Update and Presentation by Artist Laureate Victoria Marks

Victoria Marks, Artist Laureate, provided an update and presentation on completing the first year of her two year term; thanked Commissioners and staff for the opportunity to create work in Culver City; noted that she was always learning; provided an overview of her work in 2025-2026; discussed her focus on attending civic events; engagement of residents in participatory acts of performance; Connecting Culver City; the MLK (Martin Luther King) January event where participants read excerpts of his words on camera; Conversations with Words & Movement held on Sundays in February; Dancing Words at the Culver City Book Festival; participation in a project at the Senior Center;

participation with Tom Welsh in the Summer Concert Series at the Culver Steps; she presented plans for 2026-2027 including the Hug Public Art Performance at the Culver Steps on August 6; a collaboration with the Culver City High School (CCHS) Academy of Visual & Performing Arts (AVPA) and the Dance Camera West Festival; participation in workshops to encourage connecting with students' family members to create films on movement, dance, and connection to screen at The Wende Family Theater on January 17, 2027; Making Home planned to be screened in June 2027 at the Wende Theater presenting participants who have gathered weekly for approximately 10 weeks to move, dance, and share collective experiences; and she indicated being open to suggestions from the Commission to reach people and encourage participation.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, remarked that as the item was a presentation there could be some brief questions with further discussion possible by contacting Ms. Marks at her Artist Laureate email at artist.laureate@culvercity.org.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation for the presentation; clarification that the Hug Project is envisioned as a performance; the visually appealing Culver Steps location for attention on social media; support for promoting Culver City via social media with filmed projects; appreciation for success of the recap of the MLK Day content; and excitement for collaboration with CCHS students at AVPA.

Victoria Marks, Artist Laureate, reported being unable to participate in the next Culver City Art Walk, but noted that she would curate readings about Culver City to be videotaped and she indicated that someone would need to oversee the booth.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the importance of resident connection to support the community; consultation with the MLK Committee before sharing the MLK video; availability of the original ArtWalk video on the Artist Laureate page on the Culver City website as well as on YouTube; appreciation for multi-generational participation and work with CCHS students; the Book Festival event; and appreciation for the photo of the Hug event that includes the Culver City Theater sign in the background.

Action Items

Item A-1

(1) Review of a Cultural Affairs Commission Biannual Written Report to the City Council, including Accomplishments During the Period January through June 2026, and an Update on the Upcoming July to December 2026 Plans; and (2) Authorization of Transmittal of the Report to the City Council

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, provided a summary of the material of record noting that the Cultural Affairs Commission always delivers a robust report; she complimented Commissioners for submitting their items for the report; thanked Commissioner Johnson for already supporting the work of the Commission; confirmed that the edit from Vice Chair Fleischer had been put into report; and she clarified that the reason for the special meeting was to approve the required report before being sent to the City Council in August.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for the report submitted as part of attachments to the agenda with the edit from Vice Chair Fleischer and clarification that the Olympic discussions were on pause.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR FLEISCHER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MOSES AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION APPROVE THE BI-ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AS AMENDED AND AUTHORIZE TRANSMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners to clarify that one vote was taken to approve the document and to transmit the document to the City Council, and that the motion reflected that the item was approved "as amended" to reflect the one edit made to the document.

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Public Comment - Items NOT On the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Mesghali invited public comment.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, reported that no requests to speak had been received.

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Items from Commissioners/Staff

Sam Lee, Cultural Affairs Analyst, welcomed Commissioner Johnson; provided updates on Colorful Communities; confirmed that designs were completed with poster fabrication to be next phase; announced that he would be leaving Culver City to join the Cultural Affairs Division in the City of Pasadena; and he expressed gratitude for last four years of support.

Lee Lawlor, Cultural Affairs Analyst, expressed gratitude to Sam Lee for his dedicated service; discussed grant performances through December; multiple opportunities to attend free music and theater performances in August with details and ticket links to RSVP in the community calendar on the City website, promoted by email, and listed on social media; grant guidelines and Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the 2027 Performing Arts Grant Program available on the website beginning August 10; grant workshops held August 25-26; the application deadline on September 23; she indicated that promotion for the next grant cycle would begin soon; and reported that Red Tour books were ordered and at the binder for production.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, thanked Sam Lee for his dedication and acknowledged his many accomplishments; expressed appreciation for his role in the department and for his part in helping make the position permanent; discussed the A Frame for a Tree art installation by Charles Gaines scheduled for September 8 at Washington and National; work being done on a multi-phase communication campaign for the community; public messaging; the upcoming unveiling of the Colorful Communities artwork; the Ribbon Cutting for the Japanese Water Wheel at the Julian Dixon Library; the Community Cultural Equity Plan Update; robust communication between City departments; limited response from stakeholder focus groups; planned outreach; efforts to align with the Public Art Master Plan; collaboration with the PRCS Director; her participation in a post-production film lobbying event with California Post Alliance (CAPA); bringing film production opportunities back to California; Creative Economy challenges; the Public Art Coordinator position; extension of the application deadline for Olympic Requests for Proposals (RFPs); she reported attending the Public Art Walk of the Walk and Rollers; noted the invitation to Cultural Affairs to collaborate on a public art tour;

reported work with the City Manager on the MGM sign and the Washington Avenue tree surrounds; and summarized items planned for the August agenda including consideration of subcommittee assignments and elections for Chair and Vice Chair, the update on the work plan for next two years to align with City Council's goal to transition to two year budget cycle, limiting subcommittees due to reduced meeting spaces available, and presentation of a proposal for a set subcommittee meeting schedule.

Commissioner Moses thanked Sam Lee for his patience and vision; applauded staff for the many events planned; and expressed appreciation for strong communication and active social media efforts.

Commissioner Gupta acknowledged the work of Sam Lee noting that he would be missed; expressed excitement for the Summer Concert Series and the upcoming work of Victoria Marks; offered to assist with outreach for the installation of A Frame for a Tree; and reported attending art shows at Taylor Art and The Getty.

Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager, indicated that she had distributed materials for Commissioners to disseminate.

Vice Chair Fleischer also celebrated Sam Lee and thanked him for his contribution to the art world; welcomed Commissioner Johnson; expressed excitement for the Cultural Plan Kick Off and encouraged everyone to engage; reported attending a Kick It with Culver City event and discussed their engagement efforts; discussed the Summer Concert Series; the shout out to the Cultural Affairs Commission; communication with the Music Guild and moving forward with a decision on the October 18 program; and she asked about cleaning and maintenance of the zoetropes.

Commissioner Johnson thanked Sam Lee for his warm welcome and wished him well; expressed gratitude to the Commission for the opportunity to serve; he was excited to celebrate and promote Culver City; and, responding to inquiry, he provided background on himself and what brought him to serve on the Commission.

Commissioner Gupta exited the meeting.

Chair Mesghali welcomed Commissioner Johnson; extended his gratitude for all the efforts of Sam Lee and expressed heartbreak at his departure; offered to introduce Sam Lee to contacts in Pasadena; reported visiting the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Pompidou Center in Paris; and acknowledged that the August meeting would be longer with more agenda items to cover.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:14 P.M., the Cultural Affairs Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, August 18, 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