



City of Culver City

Staff Report

File #: 21-884, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-1.

CAC - Recommendation to City Council on Extending Alexey Steele's Term as Artist Laureate to a Third Year Through December 31, 2022 with a Stipend Increase

Meeting Date: April 20, 2021

Contact Person/Dept: B. Christine Byers / Administrative Services - Cultural Affairs

Phone Number: (310) 253-6003

Fiscal Impact: Yes No

General Fund: Yes No

Public Hearing:

Action Item:

Attachments: Yes No

Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (04/16/21); Culver City Arts Foundation (04/16/21); Dr. Janet Houtt (04/16/21); Alexey Steele (04/16/21)

Department Approval: Serena Wright-Black, Assistant City Manager (04/15/21)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Cultural Affairs Commission make a recommendation to City Council to extend Alexey Steele's term as Artist Laureate for a third year through December 31, 2022 and that his annual stipend for 2022 be increased to \$6,000.00.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Alexey Steele was appointed Culver City Artist Laureate by the City Council on January 13, 2020 for a two-year term ending December 31, 2021.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health orders, Mr. Steele has responded in numerous ways to the need of the Culver City community, emphasizing art as a vehicle for emergency relief. Mr. Steele's work to date has involved children, youth, and the elderly, as well as less recognized and at-risk populations. He provided a detailed summary of his first year as Artist Laureate at the CAC meeting on January 19, 2021.

Staff and the CAC Artist Laureate subcommittee (Chair Tania Fleischer and Commissioner Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin) are in support of extending Alexey Steele's term to a third year which would: 1) allow for continuity in his work relating to the COVID-19 pandemic; and, 2) provide more time for

focusing on his studio practice which to date, has not been possible. Based on Mr. Steele's efforts in 2020, the subcommittee was in agreement that an increased stipend of \$6,000 for 2022 would be more in proportion to the amount of time and effort invested as Artist Laureate versus the \$4,000 per year Mr. Steele received for 2020 and 2021. With subcommittee input, a request was forwarded to the Culver City Arts Foundation (Culver Arts) in March asking for a \$4,000 contribution toward the 2022 Artist Laureate stipend; the remaining \$2,000 would come from the City's Cultural Trust Fund. (As noted in the January 19, 2021 CAC staff report, the full amount budgeted for the program coordinator was not spent and that remaining money would be reallocated toward the 2022 Artist Laureate stipend.)

Culver Arts addressed the City's request at their Board meeting on March 25, 2021 and subsequently voted on the item. They responded via email on April 7, 2021 stating that they supported the City's request with the following comment:

We are pleased to inform you that the Culver City Arts Foundation Board approved your request for the additional \$4000 along with the City's \$2000 to extend Alexey Steele's tenure as Artist Laureate through December 2022. We appreciate Alexey's indefatigable passion and dedication for spreading his love of the arts throughout our community. He uplifted community spirits through generously sharing his artistic joy at a time when many felt sorely deflated.

Extending Alexey Steele's term to a third year is in response to the unprecedented circumstances both he and the Culver City community have faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff and the subcommittee intend that future Artist Laureate terms will be for two years. Future costs for the program, including stipend amounts, will be evaluated on an on-going basis.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Other than staff time and the \$2,000 from the Cultural Trust Fund (Fund 413) toward the Artist Laureate stipend for 2022, there are no additional costs associated with this agenda item.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S)

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. In light of the unprecedented circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, recommend that the City Council extend Alexey Steele's term as Artist Laureate to a third year through December 31, 2022; and
2. Recommend increasing the Artist Laureate stipend to \$6,000.00 for 2022, with \$4,000 coming

from the Culver City Arts Foundation and \$2,000 from the Cultural Trust Fund.