



# City of Culver City

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## Staff Report

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**File #:** 18-0973, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** A-2.

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**CC - (1) Consideration of Guidelines and Application for Implementation of an Artist Laureate Program; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.**

**Meeting Date:** March 12, 2018

**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 - City Council (03/06/18); Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (03/06/18); Dr. Janet Hoults (03/15/18)

**Department Approval:** Serena Wright-Black, Administrative Services Director (03/01/18)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council (1) consider guidelines and application for the implementation of an Artist Laureate Program; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND**

On May 11, 2015, the City Council considered an agenda item pertaining to the creation of a Poet Laureate position. Upon consideration of the material of record and public comment, the City Council directed the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) to investigate the creation of a Poet Laureate position and to make a recommendation. The CAC created an ad hoc subcommittee at its meeting on June 9, 2015 and appointed former Commissioners Thomas Small and John B. Williams to that subcommittee. The CAC subcommittee conducted research and considered public comment on the subject and made the following recommendations for consideration at the September 8, 2015 CAC meeting:

1. That the City Council establish an Artist Laureate Program to include all the arts (visual, performing, musical, written and spoken word);
2. That Dr. Janet Hoults be appointed Honorary Artist Laureate (for poetry) for a two year term

ending December 31, 2017; and,

3. As Honorary Artist Laureate, Dr. Hoult's duties would include facilitating public awareness and expression through the poetic arts, working with the Culver City Centennial Celebration Committee on events leading up to the City's Centennial in 2017, and serve in an advisory capacity to the CAC in creating guidelines and selection criteria for permanent Artist Laureate Program.

The CAC Poet Laureate subcommittee felt strongly that creating an Artist Laureate Program provided an opportunity for a more inclusive and diverse program that would also set Culver City apart from other cities (there are many Poet Laureate Programs but relatively few Artist Laureate Programs in the United States). The CAC voted 4-0 to support the subcommittee's recommendation (former Commissioner Williams was unable to attend the meeting but provided comments supporting the recommendation). The CAC's recommendation was forwarded to the City Council for consideration on September 28, 2015. The City Council supported the CAC's recommendation, appointing Dr. Janet Hoult as Honorary Artist Laureate for a two-year term expiring December 31, 2017 and directed the CAC to continue to work with Dr. Hoult on development of an Artist Laureate Program.

In December 2015, the CAC dissolved the Poet Laureate subcommittee, created an Ad Hoc Artist Laureate subcommittee and appointed former Commissioners Small and Williams to that subcommittee. The subcommittee met with Dr. Hoult and staff through the spring of 2016 before having to suspend meetings until early 2017 due to transitions on the CAC and within Cultural Affairs, and the need to focus on other competing work program priorities.

## **DISCUSSION**

At the August 15, 2017 regular meeting, the CAC considered an item pertaining to a potential Artist Laureate Program. After considering the information provided in the staff report and comments made during the meeting, the CAC made a motion that the draft Overview & Guidelines and Application documents be further reviewed by the CAC Artist Laureate Subcommittee (currently Vice Chair Wisnosky Stehlin and Commissioner Fleischer) and brought back to the CAC for further consideration.

The CAC Artist Laureate Subcommittee met twice with staff and Dr. Janet Hoult since the August 15, 2017 CAC meeting. Comments made at the August meeting were reviewed and changes to address those comments are incorporated into the two documents attached hereto. The following changes are intended to address questions about the purpose of the program and expectations of the Artist Laureate, as well as the number of appointments to be made and term limits:

- One Artist Laureate to be appointed for a two-year term with a cash award of \$8,000 (commensurate with cash awards associated with similar programs such as City of Los Angeles Poet Laureate Program and Silicon Valley Artist Laureate Awards);
- The purpose of the program is to:
  - Raise community consciousness to a greater appreciation of the arts within the City of

Culver City by having the Artist Laureate serve as cultural ambassador;

- Recognize artistic excellence and support continuing development of the artist's work; and,
  - Spotlight the important role individual artists play in contributing to a vibrant and creative community, enriching the City's creative economy and positively impacting the quality of life for people of all ages.
- The Artist Laureate is to:
    - Attend community and arts events as a cultural ambassador;
    - Liaise/Partner with the Culver City Unified School District;
    - Visit/Partner with Culver City community, non-profit and cultural institutions; and,
    - Liaise/Partner with the Culver City business community.

In addition, the subcommittee recommended that if implemented, the Artist Laureate Program align with the City's fiscal year and not overlap with the Performing Arts Grant Program with regard to release of applications, convening of review panels, and CAC and City Council consideration. To address this, the biennial application cycle would begin in January and an appointment made by the City Council in June. Finally, as noted at the top of the draft Application form, the final formatting of the draft documents will be determined by the online platform used for submissions.

On October 17, 2017, this item was brought back to the CAC for further consideration. The CAC unanimously supported a motion recommending that the City Council implement an Artist Laureate Program as outlined herein.

Dr. Janet Hoult, who has served as Honorary Artist Laureate for Poetry since September 2015, has worked consistently since then to promote poetry in Culver City. In addition to working on the draft guidelines and application for an Artist Laureate Program, she has taught a Word Painting Poetry Class at the Senior Center, wrote poems for specific events during the Centennial year, organized a poetry contest, and is currently editing a Centennial Poetry Collection. Should the Council desire to implement an Artist Laureate Program beginning in FY 2018-19, Dr. Hoult has expressed a willingness to continue in her current role as Honorary Artist Laureate until a new Artist Laureate is appointed.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

The recommended Artist Laureate cash award has been increased to \$8,000 for a two-year term. In addition, given existing workloads, implementation of the program would require contract staff support. Contract staff would have responsibility for uploading the application to an on-line platform, releasing the application, coordinating with applicants, preparing application materials for the panelists and CAC Artist Laureate Subcommittee, identifying panelists, convening the review panel, preparing reports for CAC and City Council review and attending those meetings. Contract staff would also serve as City coordinator with the Artist Laureate during the two-year term, including obtaining regular updates/reports from the Artist Laureate on their activities. Initial estimates for

contract assistance range from \$6,400 - \$9,600 (based on an estimate of 320 hours over a six month period). The estimated total maximum biennial cost for an Artist Laureate Program is estimated at \$20,000 which would also cover related out-of-pocket expenses, including panelist honoraria, printing costs, etc. There would be an additional impact on staff resources to develop an RFP for a contractor to implement the program and on-going coordination and assistance.

The Cultural Trust Fund (Fund 413) is limited per the City's Municipal Code in use of those funds for soft costs which includes funding for an Artist Laureate Program. The Cultural Trust Fund's annual available soft costs are appropriated to offset existing contractual employee costs, Commission costs, office supplies, etc. as well as the Performing Arts Grant Program. Funding for an Artist Laureate Program would have to come from the City's General Fund and/or through money raised by the Culver City Cultural Affairs Foundation (CAF). With regard to the CAF, fundraising efforts would fall to the CAF Board.

Staff recommends that if approved by City Council, that the Artist Laureate Program be included in the FY 2018-19 Cultural Affairs budget.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. 18-03-01\_ATT No. 1\_Artist Laureate Program Overview and Guidelines
2. 18-03-01\_ATT No. 2\_Artist Laureate Program Application
3. 18-03-01\_ATT No. 3\_Excerpt from October 17, 2017 CAC Meeting Minutes

### **RECOMMENDED MOTIONS**

That the City Council:

1. Approve the implementation of an Artist Laureate Program with funding to be included in the FY 2018-19 City Budget; and,
2. Extend Dr. Janet Hoult's term as Honorary Artist Laureate for Poetry until a new Artist Laureate is appointed; and,
3. Provide other direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.