



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 21-1006, **Version:** 1

Item #: C-14

CC - (1) Extension of Alexey Steele's Term as Artist Laureate to a Third Year Through December 31, 2022; (2) Authorization to Increase Artist Laureate Stipend for 2022; and (3) Direction to City Manager as Deemed Appropriate

Meeting Date: May 24, 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 ☐

Commission Action Required: Yes ☒ No ☐

Date: CAC - 04/20/21

Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas - City Council (05/20/2021); Culver City Arts Foundation (05/13/2021); Dr. Janet Hault (05/13/2021); Alexey Steele (05/13/2021)

Department Approval: Serena Wright-Black, Assistant City Manager (05/19/2021)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) extend Alexey Steele's term as Artist Laureate for a third year through December 31, 2022; (2) authorize an increase to the annual stipend for 2022 to \$6,000.00; and (3) provide other direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

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 (Attachment 1).

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 been relatively limited. 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 (Fund 413). (Note: Alicia Ide was hired by the City as the program coordinator in 2019. She implemented and coordinated the application process, which included developing a web page for the program, on-line application guidelines and forms, as well as identifying and hosting a selection panel. The full amount budgeted for the program coordinator was not spent as that contract was cancelled in March 2020 when Ms. Ide assumed a full-time position with the City's Public Works Department. The remaining money from the coordinator contract 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.

The CAC considered the Subcommittee's recommendation at its Regular Meeting of April 20, 2021 and passed the following motion (5-0):

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR DICKTER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WISNOSKY STEHLIN AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION RECOMMEND THAT IN LIGHT OF THE UNPRECEDENTED CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THE CITY COUNCIL:

1. EXTEND ALEXEY STEELE'S TERM AS ARTIST LAUREATE FOR A THIRD YEAR THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022, AND,
2. INCREASE THE ARTIST LAUREATE STIPEND TO \$6,000 FOR 2022 WITH \$4,000 COMING FROM THE CULVER CITY ARTS FOUNDATION AND \$2,000 COMING FROM THE CULTURAL TRUST FUND.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The \$2,000 from the Cultural Trust Fund for the Artist Laureate stipend for calendar year 2022 would come from account 41322400.619800 PZ502. For FY 2020-2021, there is \$4,568.00 still available in this account which includes the unspent funds from the coordinator contract that were carried over from the prior fiscal year).

ATTACHMENTS

1. 21-05-24_CC_ATT_Alexey Steele Artist Laureate Update for 2020

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S)

That the City Council:

1. Extend Alexey Steele's term as Artist Laureate to a third year through December 31, 2022; and
2. Increase 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; and,
3. Authorize the City Attorney to review/prepare the necessary documents; and,
4. Authorize the City Manager to execute such documents on behalf of the City.