



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 23-658, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-1.

Receipt and Filing of the Report Regarding the History, Mission and Vision of the Fiesta La Ballona Event and Culver City's Current Demographic Statistics.

Meeting Date: February 15, 2023

Contact Person/Dept: Dani Cullens/PRCS
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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐

Attachments: Yes ☒ No ☐

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Fiesta La Ballona (2/13/2023); (E-Mail) Culver City News and Events (2/13/2023); (E-Mail) Parks, Recreation & Community Service Department Updates (2/13/2023)

Department Approval: Armando Abrego, PRCS Director (12/21/2022)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Fiesta La Ballona Committee receive and file the report regarding the history, mission and vision of the Fiesta La Ballona event (Fiesta) and Culver City's current demographic statistics.

BACKGROUND

On December 7, 2022, the Fiesta La Ballona Committee (FLBC) reached consensus that an informational item focusing on the history, mission and vision of the Fiesta La Ballona event be included on a future meeting agenda. In addition, a listing of Culver City's current demographic make-up was requested as part of the report.

DISCUSSION

History of the Fiesta La Ballona Event

According to the book, "A Past to Remember," by Lucinda W. Pennington and William K. Baxter (pages 95 - 97; published by the City of Culver City in 1975), thirteen (13) consecutive "Fiesta La Ballona" celebrations were held annually beginning in 1950. To quote the text on page 97:

The Fiestas were week-long affairs that combined high jinks, a touch of madness and well-planned events in a salute to the valley's early Spanish-Mexican traditions.

City officials, community leaders, businessmen and bankers sprouted beards, porkchop sideburns, and handlebars for Whiskerino judges.

A traveling "hoosegow," manned by eagle-eyed "deputies" roamed the streets to round up residents who failed to display a fiesta button.

Local lovelies vied for the honor of being selected Fiesta Queen or being chosen a member of her court, and being crowned at the annual Coronation Ball.

Youngsters of all ages temporarily became thespians to act in the "La Ballona Days" Pageant, written and directed by Culverite Mrs. Merle Linthicum.

The week's festivities received wide support and were directed by a special citizen's committee working with the Chamber of Commerce. Climax of the celebration was the traditional Saturday parade of floats, bands and equestrian units through the center of town.

Attachment 1 provides a personal account of the early Fiestas written by local Culver City historian, Julie Lugo Cerra. This article may also be found, along with images of the Fiesta's past, at <https://www.fiestalaballona.org/Home/History>.

History of the Fiesta La Ballona Committee

As noted above, the City of Culver City has long been involved with the Fiesta La Ballona. The Culver City Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Department does not have a record of when the Chamber of Commerce became less active in the planning and implementation of the Fiesta event. However, records indicate that PRCS Department staff has been involved with the Fiesta La Ballona Committee at least since the days when Syd Kronenthal was the Director of the Department. For example, during the time that the Fiesta Committee was a volunteer committee, former Human Services (now PRCS) Department Director Donald R. Rogers, played an active role in coordinating the Fiesta La Ballona (aka the "Festival of the People") and served as the lead staff member on the Fiesta Committee from 1974 to 1988.

On December 10, 2012, the City Council discussed the structure of the existing Fiesta La Ballona Committee (a group of volunteers without a formal legal structure) and considered creating a City Council appointed Fiesta La Ballona Committee (an Official City Committee). At that meeting, the City Council adopted a Resolution that created the Fiesta La Ballona Committee and, approved its Bylaws. Some of the important provisions of the Bylaws that were discussed included the following:

- The Committee shall be comprised of seven persons appointed by the City Council from applicants that submit an application to the City Clerk's Office.

- Each member shall serve a term of four years (with the exception of the newly formed Committee which shall have some members serve a shorter term to allow for staggering of terms).
- Similar to the volunteer Committee, the Fiesta La Ballona Committee is tasked with assisting in the planning and promotion of the annual Fiesta La Ballona. However, the Fiesta continues to be a City of Culver City event produced by the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department.
- As an official City Committee, the meetings of the Committee are subject to the requirements of the Brown Act (including public participation and notice).

It was also stressed that Members of the Committee are covered by the City's insurance in the performance of their official City duties. The importance of volunteers to the production of the Fiesta was acknowledged such that existing (and new) volunteers continue to be an integral part of the Fiesta La Ballona.

Mission and Vision of the Fiesta La Ballona

The Fiesta has transitioned from a week-long event at multiple sites, with varied activities, to its current incarnation as an extended weekend event in Veterans Memorial Park that offers carnival rides and games, live performances, a beer and wine garden, food trucks, and various booths spotlighting artisan wares and local organizations. Although there is no formerly stated mission or vision for the Fiesta La Ballona, the Fiesta event can be characterized by both its former name, the "Festival of the People," and one of its more recent brands, "Party in the Park." The Fiesta has always been an inclusive, joyful event that celebrates the diversity of Culver City and its environs. Each year, PRCS Department staff and the Fiesta La Ballona Committee work to improve the Fiesta and make it a relevant and engaging event.

Culver City's Current Demographic Statistics

With a 2020 population of 42,489, Culver City is the 216th largest city in California and the 1086th largest city in the United States. Culver City is currently growing at a rate of 0.45% annually and its population has increased by 4.19% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 40,779. Spanning over five miles, Culver City has a population density of 8,314 people per square mile.

The average household income in Culver City is \$131,424 with a poverty rate of 7.35%. The median age in Culver City is 42.6 years, 40.2 years for males, and 44.4 years for females.

According to the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), the racial composition of Culver City was:

- White: 59.72%
- Asian: 17.53%
- Black or African American: 9.31%
- Two or more races: 8.36%
- Other race: 4.55%
- Native American: 0.26%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.26%

[Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/culver-city-ca-population>]

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact associated with this discussion.

ATTACHMENT

1. 2023-02-15 - Early Fiestas - Recollections of Julie Lugo Cerrra

MOTIONS

That the Fiesta La Ballona Committee

Receive and file the report regarding the history, mission and vision of the Fiesta La Ballona event and Culver City's current demographic statistics.