



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION MINUTES

DRAFT

Newport Beach Civic Center – Council Chambers
100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach 92660
Thursday, December 11, 2025 – 5:00 PM

City Arts Commission Members:

Heather Ignatin, Chair
Vanessa Moore, Vice Chair
David Anastos, Commissioner
John Blom, Commissioner
Cory Glass, Commissioner
Tiare Meegan, Commissioner
Laurel Tippett, Commissioner

Staff Members:

Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
Rebecca Lightfoot, Library Services Manager
Camille Escareal-Garcia, Cultural Arts Assistant

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Heather Ignatin called the City Arts Commission Regular Meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present:

Chair Heather Ignatin
Vice Chair Vanessa Moore
Commissioner David Anastos
Commissioner John Blom
Commissioner Cory Glass
Commissioner Tiare Meegan
Commissioner Laurel Tippett

Commissioners Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
Rebecca Lightfoot, Library Services Manager
Camille Escareal-Garcia, Cultural Arts Assistant

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Ignatin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Notice to the Public was read, explaining the public comment procedures and requesting that cell phones be turned off or set to silent mode.

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Consent Calendar Items

1. Minutes of the November 13, 2025, City Arts Commission Meeting

2. Financial Report

Review of financial information.

Chair Ignatin asked for comments on the consent calendar items, which included the minutes from the November 13, 2025, meeting and the financial report. No comments were made by the Commissioners.

There was no public comment on the consent calendar.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Glass, to approve the consent calendar. Motion carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

VI. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. Items for Review and Possible Action

Historian Laureate William Lobdell

The position of Historian Laureate was created by Resolution No. 2025-24 at the May 27, 2025, Council Meeting. At the August 26, 2025, Council meeting, the Council unanimously appointed William (Bill) Lobdell as the first Newport Beach Historian Laureate.

William "Bill" Lobdell, Newport Beach's first Historian Laureate, gave a presentation on the history of Newport Beach. He explained that his interest in Newport Beach history began during COVID, combining his experience as a former Daily Pilot editor with his passion for history. His podcast "Newport Beach in the Rear View Mirror" and social media videos have garnered over 6.5 million views, helping to connect younger generations with the city's history.

Mr. Lobdell engaged commissioners with a history quiz and provided fascinating information about Newport Beach's development, including that:

- Newport Bay didn't exist before the 1800s
- The Santa Ana River's course change created the peninsula in just a few decades
- The harbor entrance was extremely dangerous, with 25 drownings in five years during the 1910s
- The city incorporated in 1906 specifically to obtain a liquor license when Orange County was dry

- The red car trolley system was crucial to the city's development, running until 1953

Commissioners expressed interest in Mr. Lobdell's research methods, which primarily involve examining old newspapers and primary sources rather than relying on potentially inaccurate historical accounts that have been passed down. Commissioner Glass, a third-generation Newport Beach resident, asked about the status of historical document archiving in the city. Mr. Lobdell acknowledged that historical preservation efforts could be improved and suggested that Sherman Library could serve as a centralized repository for historical materials currently scattered across various organizations.

This was a receive and file item with no formal action taken.

3. Phase X Sculpture Exhibition Online Public Poll Results

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission review the results of the online public poll and approve ten sculptures and three to five alternates to recommend to City Council for final approval.

ArtsOC Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Patrick Brien, presented the results of the Phase X Sculpture Exhibition online public poll, which ran from October 15 to December 5, 2025. The poll received 230 voters who cast over 1,700 eligible votes. Eighteen voters and 98 votes were disqualified for being from outside Newport Beach.

The presentation highlighted the top 10 sculptures by public vote, with Catherine Daley's *Cosmos: Starry Starry Night* ranking first in both the public poll and the jury rankings. Mr. Brien noted significant discrepancies between some jury rankings and public votes. He recommended selecting at least four alternates to account for potential unavailability of winning sculptures.

Commissioner Blom raised concerns about the voting website's user experience, noting that the voting buttons were initially difficult to see and there were no clear instructions on how to vote. Mr. Brien acknowledged these issues and explained they made adjustments during the voting period. Commissioner Tippett suggested that for Phase XI, the sculpture ad hoc subcommittee should review the website before it goes live.

Chair Ignatin raised concerns about two sculptures Solomon Bassof's *Joyride* and Clark Martinek's *Intended Destination* posing potential safety risks to the public, especially young children that might attempt to climb on or in those sculptures. Chair Ignatin asked if an engineer or attorney had assessed the risks associated with these sculptures, and ArtsOC indicated that they had not.

Commissioner Meegan asked if the City had a risk management division that we could use for their expertise. Staff replied that the City does have risk management, and that they could simultaneously move the sculptures to risk management as they continue to move forward with the process.

Commissioner Blom noted that any sculpture could pose risks if climbed upon, and pointed out that the poor condition of the sculpture garden walkway itself was a greater liability concern.

The Commission discussed potential alternates and safety considerations before making a motion.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Meegan, to approve the following sculptures for the Phase X Sculpture Exhibition, excluding Chair Ignatin's opposition to Clark Martinek's *Intended Destination* and Solomon Bassof's *Joy Ride* due to safety concerns:

- Catherine Daley's *Cosmos: Starry, Starry Night*
- Diego Harris' *Wind Tree*
- Harold Linke's *Spiral Dance*
- Zan Knecht's *Coming Through*
- Tamara Robertson's *Open Heart*
- Clark Martinek's *Intended Destination*
- Alex Gall's *Voyage of a Giant*
- Chris Plaisted's *The Wave*
- Solomon Bassof's *Joy Ride*
- John Bank's *Art in Old English*

The motion also included the following four sculptures to be alternate pieces, with Nicholas Meyer's *Emergence* moved up to the first alternate as it was the curatorial panel's highest rated choice:

- Nicholas Meyer's *Emergence*
- Kirk Seese's *Dragonfly*
- Ilya Idelchik's *Reaching for Life*
- Aldo Mazzarelli's *The Butterfly Enchanter*

Motion carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

4. Newport Beach Arts Foundation Funding Contributions 2020-2025

Staff provide a summary of funding given to the City Arts Commission by the Newport Beach Arts Foundation for the last five years.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented a summary of the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's funding contributions to the City Arts Commission over the past five years. The total contribution during this period was \$42,500, broken down as:

- FY 2020-21: No contributions due to the pandemic

- FY 2021-22: \$20,000 for Sculpture Exhibition Phase VII artist honorariums
- FY 2022-23: \$12,500 (\$10,000 for Phase VIII and \$2,500 for the 56th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition)
- FY 2023-24: \$10,000 for Phase IX
- FY 2024-25: No contributions as Phase X was not installed due to the rotation change from 2 to 3 years

Commissioners inquired about the Foundation's role and fundraising capacity. Staff confirmed that the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's sole purpose is to fundraise for the City Arts Commission, and that the Commission itself cannot fundraise due to City Council policy. The Commission had requested \$50,250 from the Foundation at the November meeting (\$45,000 for a Pacific Symphony concert and \$5,250 to increase pay for summer concert series bands). Vice Chair Moore reported that the Foundation had canceled their December meeting and would review the request at their January meeting.

This was a receive and file item with no formal action taken.

5. Proposal for the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition and 2026 Art in the Park Event

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission review and approve a proposal from the Art Exhibition ad hoc subcommittee to hold the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition in conjunction with the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's 2026 Art in the Park event on Saturday, August 15, 2026, as the culmination of Art Week.

Manager Lightfoot presented a proposal from the Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee to hold the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition in conjunction with the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's 2026 Art in the Park event on Saturday, August 15, 2026, as the culmination of Art Week.

The proposal outlined the division of responsibilities between the City Arts Commission and the Newport Beach Arts Foundation:

The City Arts Commission would handle:

- Fees and special permitting for the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition
- Selection and payment for the Exhibit Hall and Sculpture Exhibition décor
- Selection and payment of the entertainment and children's activities
- Reservation of and logistics of the Community Room exhibition space
- Hiring janitorial services
- Acquiring additional parking for event attendees

The Newport Beach Arts Foundation would be responsible for:

- Special event permits for Art in the Park on the Green
- Reserving and handling logistics for the Civic Green booths and food pavilion
- Food and beverage pavilion furnishings and decor
- Hiring food vendors and security
- Processing art sales from the Art Exhibition

- Additional trash services

Staff noted that holding these events together could save approximately \$10,000 for the Cultural Arts Division. Public commenter Jim Mosher asked whether the Arts Foundation was aware they wouldn't have access to the Community Room as they typically would for their event. Staff confirmed the Foundation was aware of this change.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Tippett, to approve the proposal from the Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee to hold the 59th Annual Art Exhibition in conjunction with the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's 2026 Art in the Park event on Saturday, August 15, 2026, Motion carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

6. Cultural Arts Activities

Monthly review of cultural arts activities from the Library Administrative Office for upcoming Library and City arts events and services

Manager Lightfoot reported on upcoming cultural arts activities, including:

- A photography installation at the Central Library Gallery
- The Student Art Exhibition, which received 103 entries from pre-K through 12th grade students
- A Family Fun Night at the Maria Park Community Center on December 19, 2025

Commissioner Tippett asked about the process for announcing Student Art Exhibition winners. Manager Lightfoot clarified that the artwork would be displayed beginning January 6, with winners announced at the January Commission meeting.

Commissioner Anastos inquired whether information about Dennis Carrie's portrait exhibition (scheduled for April 2026) would include the artist's story. Cultural Arts Assistant Escareal-Garcia confirmed that artist information would be available both on flyers at the exhibition and on the library's website.

B. Monthly Reports

7. Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan

Commissioner Anastos reported that there was no meeting held.

8. Art Week Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Tippett

Vice Chair Moore reported that the Art Week Participation Interest Form is live on the Cultural Arts website and that Backhausdance is considering partnering with Sherman Garden for the 2026 Art Week.

9. Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore noted that they had received applications for Concerts in the Park and will meet soon to review.

10. Cultural Arts Grants Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Meegan

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting held.

11. Newport Beach Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that their recommendation was already discussed on the agenda.

12. Public Relations and Marketing Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that the Subcommittee was working on promoting Art Week Participation Interest Forms through the City Manager's Week in Review and through social media. They were also looking into having a videographer for the concerts.

13. Sculpture Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Commissioner Blom

Chair Ignatin reported that there was no meeting.

14. Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan, Commissioner Tippett

Commissioner Tippett reported that the Subcommittee met to review the entries and select winners, as well as consider a few proposals for the next Student Art Exhibition.

15. Newport Beach Arts Foundation Liaison

Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting held.

16. Historical Resources Liaison

Commissioner Blom

Commissioner Blom reported that there was no meeting but that he enjoyed Historian Laureate Lobdell's presentation.

17. General Plan Update Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Ignatin, Moore, Blom

Chair Ignatin reported that there was no meeting held but that she expected the General Plan City staff representatives to return to the Commission in 2026.

**VII. CITY ARTS COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS
WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, OR
REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)**

Commissioner Blom suggested that the Chair form an ad hoc subcommittee to explore asking City Council to change their policy prohibiting the Commission from fundraising directly to support the City Arts Commission.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Jim Mosher commented that it is possible for people to make donations directly to a city, which is just as tax-deductible as donations to a foundation. He also expressed appreciation for the historical presentation and inquired whether there would be future installments covering the years after 1906.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – 6:28 P.M.

Chair Ignatin adjourned the meeting.