



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION MINUTES

DRAFT

Newport Beach Civic Center – Council Chambers
100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach 92660
Thursday, May 14, 2026 – 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 Tiare Meegan
Commissioner Laurel Tippett

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Corey Glass (excused)

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

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Heather Ignatin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. PRESENTATION

1. Presentation of the FY 2025-26 Cultural Arts Grants

Library Services Manager Rebecca Lightfoot presided over the presentation of the FY 2025-26 Cultural Arts Grant Awards, totaling \$30,000 distributed to eight organizations. Representatives were called forward individually to receive their checks and take a photo with the Commission.

Nancy Warzer-Brady, Education and Community Engagement Director of Backhausdance, accepted on behalf of the organization (\$4,000), expressing gratitude and noting that the organization had reached approximately 5,000 students and educators through its Dance Expressions program at Corona del Mar.

Brandon Elliot accepted on behalf of Choral Arts Initiative (\$3,000), noting the organization had been performing in Newport Beach for over 13 years and was a first-time grant recipient, with a performance scheduled for that Sunday.

Pacific Symphony (\$5,000) was unable to send a representative; staff indicated the check would be mailed directly.

Steven Garry, South Coast Repertory's (SCR) Annual Fund Manager, accepted on behalf of SCR (\$3,000), expressing gratitude and extending an invitation to the Commission for the upcoming season.

Azi Sharif, Founder and Executive Director of Wildlife Jewels, accepted on behalf of the organization (\$1,500), thanking the Commission for supporting arts programs aimed at inspiring community connection to wildlife.

The remaining grant recipients were represented by Dr. Vina Spiehler with Baroque Music Festival, Corona del Mar (\$4,500); President and CEO Rhett del Campo of Pacific Chorale (\$5,000); and Elena Otto and Susan Korell with Emerald Magic Events, Inc. (\$4,000) — were acknowledged per the agenda.

V. 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.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Consent Calendar Items

2. Minutes of the April 9, 2026, City Arts Commission Meeting

3. Financial Report

Review of financial information.

Prior to the vote, Commissioner John Blom raised questions regarding two entries in the April Financial Report under professional services, totaling approximately \$5,150, paid to sculptor Hector Dominguez for the restoration of a City-owned sculpture called *Metalfor*. Commissioner Blom noted that while the obligation had been approved by a prior Commission in 2019, he had never been informed of it and questioned why it had not been noted as a pending obligation on the monthly financial reports.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot explained that the sculpture had been in storage, was subsequently restored by Mr. Dominguez, and that the second half of payment was only

due upon completion of the work. She noted it was not standard practice to list indeterminate future obligations on financial reports, but agreed the situation was unusual. Chair Ignatin directed staff to research whether any similar outstanding obligations exist from prior Commissions and to report back. Staff also agreed to add a notation, such as an asterisk and explanatory note, to any future report where such an obligation may be pending. Manager Lightfoot confirmed the restored piece has been received by the City and that its placement will be brought to a future agenda.

No public comments were received on the Consent Calendar.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Tippett, to approve the consent calendar. Motion carried unanimously (6-0-0-1).

VII. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. Items for Review and Possible Action

4. **Application for Review and Consideration of Art – *Confluence #102* by Catherine Daley**

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission review and approve the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to reject an application to purchase Catherine Daley's *Confluence #102*.

Manager Lightfoot presented this item, explaining that *Confluence #102*, a sculpture by artist Catherine Daley, is part of Phase 8 of the rotating Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park and is set to be deinstalled at the end of June to make way for Phase 10. The artist submitted an application to have the City purchase the sculpture. The Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee reviewed the application and recommended rejection based on budget constraints, the size of the piece, and projected annual maintenance costs. There was no substantive discussion from the Commission beyond support for the recommendation.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Moore, reject the application to purchase *Confluence #102* by Catherine Daley. The motion passed unanimously (6-0-0-1).

5. **Application for Review and Consideration of Art – *Newport* by James Jarvis**

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission review and reject the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to accept an application for donation of *Newport* by artist James Jarvis, donated by Courtney Watson.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented the application submitted by Courtney Watson to donate *Newport*, a large metal relief artwork by artist James Jarvis, originally purchased by her parents. A previous iteration of the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee had recommended accepting the donation, contingent on obtaining restoration quotes. However, staff was unable to secure quotes because restoration contractors required the piece to be delivered to their studios, and the City could not

transport the artwork as it did not yet own it, and the donor could not transport it given its size — approximately 4 feet by 7 feet and 180 pounds. Staff recommended rejection of the donation application based on Council Policy I-11, *Acquisition of Art by the City of Newport Beach*, which requires that accepted art not require extensive restoration and be manageable in storage, transport, and display.

Vice Chair Moore, who had previously visited the piece with other subcommittee members, acknowledged it was visually compelling but agreed with staff's recommendation given the damaged framing, potential safety concerns related to metal spikes, the cost of plexiglass replacement, and the logistical challenges involved.

Chair Ignatin affirmed that the piece conflicted with Council Policy I-11, specifically the provisions that donated art should not require restoration or extensive conservation and should be manageable without difficulty.

Chair Ignatin opened the item for public comment. A member of the public, Jim Mosher, suggested that before outright rejection, staff might consider whether a department such as the Harbor Department could find a use for the piece as a historical artifact rather than public art, given that it depicts Newport Harbor as it appeared in the 1970s.

Motion by Chair Ignatin to deny the application for donation of *Newport* by James Jarvis. Seconded by Commissioner Anastos. The motion passed (5-0-1-1) with Commissioner Meegan abstaining.

6. *Seagulls in Flight* Recast

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission review and discuss the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to allocate funds to recast *Seagulls in Flight* in bronze and store the original piece to prevent further damage. Staff are requesting approval to move forward with either recasting or repairing the piece.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot reported that this item returned to the Commission following a request at the prior meeting for additional information. Staff obtained quotes for three options: (1) repair the existing sculpture at a cost of approximately \$8,105 (the piece was previously repaired in 2015); (2) a bronze recast at approximately \$7,580, as recommended by the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee, with an annual maintenance cost of approximately \$1,000; and (3) recarving the piece in stone, with quotes ranging from \$14,000 to \$17,000.

Vice Chair Moore expressed reservations about the recast option, noting that the Commission had never previously replicated a piece of public art and that doing so could set an unwanted precedent. She also raised the concern that decommissioning the original in order to replace it with a replica may not honor the original work or its donors, particularly given that the family had not been responsive to outreach. She stated her preference for repairing the sculpture and allowing it to continue in service, with the possibility of eventually commissioning a new artwork for that location in the future.

Chair Ignatin agreed, adding that recasting would alter the historical and memorial significance of the work and would conflict with the spirit of Council Policy I-11.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Vice Chair Moore, to preserve the original *Seagulls in Flight* sculpture in compliance with the spirit of City policy. The motion passed (5-0-1-1) with Commissioner Anastos abstaining.

7. Central Library Gallery Exhibit Recommendations

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission approve the recommendations made by the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee to approve exhibitions by Sandy Clark and Claire Miller in the Central Library lobby gallery space.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to approve exhibitions by artists Sandy Clark and Claire Miller in the Central Library lobby gallery space. Commissioners expressed enthusiasm for the work. No substantive concerns were raised.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Meegan, to approve the exhibitions by artists Sandy Clark and Claire Miller in the Central Library lobby gallery space. The motion passed unanimously (6-0-0-1).

8. Central Library Gallery Exhibit Additional Artwork

Staff recommend that the City Arts Commission approve the recommendations made by the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee to approve additional artwork to be exhibited by artists Jim Doody and Lawrence Sherwin in the Central Library lobby gallery space.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot reported that artists Lawrence Sherwin and Jim Doody, whose work had previously been approved for the Central Library lobby gallery, submitted additional pieces for consideration. The Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee reviewed the additional submissions and recommended their approval. No objections were raised.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Meegan, to approve additional submitted pieces by artists Lawrence Sherwin and Jim Doody in the Central Library lobby gallery space. The motion passed unanimously (6-0-0-1).

9. Student Art Exhibition Timeline and Program Changes

The Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee recommends that the City Arts Commission review and approve the timeline and program changes for the 2026 Student Art Exhibition.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented the Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee's proposed timeline and program changes for the 2026 Student Art Exhibition. The program has been held since 2021 and invites Pre-K through 12th grade students to submit original two-dimensional artwork for display at the Central Library.

The proposed timeline opens the call for entries from October 1 through November 30, 2026, with subcommittee review in December, winners announced at the January 14, 2027 Commission meeting, an opening night event on January 4, 2027, the exhibition on display January 4 through February 24, 2027, and an award presentation at the February 11, 2027 Commission meeting.

Proposed program changes include: incorporating a theme of "Newport Beach: Welcome to 120 Years"; expanding from three to four grade categories (Pre-K through 1st, 2nd through 4th, 5th through 8th, and 9th through 12th); inviting an outside juror from the local arts community; streamlining award names to first, second, third, and honorable mention; and adding an opening night event for participants and their families. The additional costs are approximately \$175 for the fourth prize category and \$325 for the opening night event, for a total program cost of \$1,500.

Vice Chair Moore and Chair Ignatin both expressed strong support for the opening night addition, with Chair Ignatin noting that the additional \$500 investment represented strong value for the program's community impact. Commissioner Blom asked for clarification on whether selections would be made by the outside juror, the subcommittee, or both; staff indicated the intent was for both to participate, and that the language was kept broad to preserve flexibility.

During public comment, Nancy Warzer-Brady of Backhausdance suggested that spoken word poetry be considered as an additional category, noting its popularity in local schools and the possibility of combining it with visual art components.

Motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Blom, to approve the timeline and program changes for the 2026 Student Art Exhibition. The motion passed unanimously (6-0-0-1).

10. Cultural Arts Activities

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

Library Services Manager Lightfoot provided the following updates on upcoming cultural arts activities:

The Central Library lobby gallery currently features Dennis Carrie's *Portraits of Integrity*, which is slated to be deinstalled at the end of May. Kathy Kehoe Bambeck's *Vintage Balboa* paintings will open June 1. The Central Library lobby gallery schedule is booked through May 7, 2027.

Some commissioners toured Witte Hall on April 28 to observe its progress. Staff is coordinating a second tour for commissioners who have not yet attended.

Art Week is scheduled for August 9–15, 2026, with the Pacific Symphony opening on Sunday, August 9, and the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition on Saturday, August 15.

The Balboa Island Art Walk is taking place that weekend, and commissioners were encouraged to attend to promote Art Week and the annual Art Exhibition.

B. Monthly Reports

11. Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan

No update reported beyond items already addressed under Current Business.

12. Art Week Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Tippet

Vice Chair Moore reported that the subcommittee has finalized the list of participating organizations for the first-ever Art Week. The lineup includes: Gallery Sonder, Lido Village Books and Pelican Hill, Newport Beach Historical Society, Backhausdance and Sherman Library, Kennedy Contemporary Gallery, The Tutu School in Newport, the Library Foundation, OASIS Senior Center, Art Therapy OC, Newport Beach Film Festival, Lido Surf Night, and Pacific Symphony. Staff is working on the event calendar and website page.

13. Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that the subcommittee did not meet.

14. Newport Beach Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that the subcommittee is actively reviewing submissions for the annual exhibition. As of the meeting date, 65 pieces from 36 artists have been received, with applications open through June 15.

15. Public Relations and Marketing Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that the subcommittee met and will meet again. Planned activities include marketing through the OASIS newsletter for Art Week and upcoming discussions on Instagram and Facebook advertising strategies.

16. Sculpture Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Commissioner Blom

No meeting was held.

17. Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan, Commissioner Tippet

Commissioner Anastos reported that the subcommittee met with the Newport-Mesa art representative, who is reaching out to public schools to gauge interest and timing for a performing arts showcase. Commissioners are separately reaching out to private schools, where strong interest has been indicated. The subcommittee is exploring an

evolving concept of a smaller, ongoing format rather than a single large showcase, given the limitations of the Witte Hall stage.

18. Newport Beach Arts Foundation Liaison

Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that the Newport Beach Arts Foundation's meeting was canceled, but confirmed that the Foundation will contribute \$10,000 at the annual art exhibition.

19. Historical Resources Liaison

Commissioner Blom

Commissioner Blom reported that the Historical Resources Committee did not hold a meeting. He noted that the committee's chair has resigned due to health issues, and a new designee has been appointed to take over.

Chair Ignatin opened up the monthly reports for public comment. Nancy Warzer-Brady of Backhausdance addressed the Commission, commending subcommittee activity and reiterating her suggestion that spoken word poetry be considered for the Student Art Exhibition. She also provided an update that Backhausdance is collaborating with Sherman Library on an Art Week event tied to the Sherman Library and Gardens' "Dog Days of Summer" exhibition, with the opening scheduled for the following evening.

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

No announcements or future agenda items were raised.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

X. ADJOURNMENT – 5:57 P.M.

Chair Ignatin adjourned the meeting.