



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

August 13, 2026
Agenda Item No. 5

TO: CITY ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: Library Services Department
Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
(949) 717-3801, mhartson@newportbeachca.gov

PREPARED BY: Rebecca Lightfoot, Library Services Manager

TITLE: City Poetry Contest in Conjunction with the 60th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition in 2027

RECOMMENDATION:

The Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee recommends that the City Arts Commission (CAC) review, discuss, and approve their recommendation to hold a City Poetry Contest in 2027 with the winning poet(s) invited to read their poem(s) at the 60th Annual Art Exhibition.

DISCUSSION:

2027 marks the 60th anniversary of the Newport Beach Art Exhibition, a milestone anniversary that presents an opportunity to broaden the Exhibition's reach into literary arts. A Poet Laureate program has previously been discussed as a potential initiative. The Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee is proposing a one-time poetry contest to gauge community interest.

The poetry contest would be open to all Newport Beach residents with a theme to be selected closer to the event. Guidelines for the contest will be developed by the Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee and presented to the CAC for approval at a future date. The winning poem (or poems) would be chosen by the Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee, presented to the entire CAC for approval, and the poet (or poets) would be invited to read their poems aloud as part of the 60th Annual Art Exhibition. Public performance would give the contest a meaningful platform without requiring new infrastructure. Promotion would include email messaging, the Cultural Arts website, and other communication channels, supplemented by a targeted Instagram advertising spend.

This approach allows the CAC to measure resident interest in poetry as an art form before committing resources to a Poet Laureate program. If participant and community response is strong, the Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee can return to the CAC with a Poet Laureate proposal informed by real engagement data.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Anticipated costs for advertising the contest are estimated at \$100, to be expensed out of the Cultural Arts FY 2026-27 Marketing and Advertising budget.

NOTICING:

This agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Arts Commission considers the item).