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# **NEWPORT BEACH**

## **City Council Staff Report**

January 13, 2026  
Agenda Item No.19

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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**TITLE:** Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park – Phase X

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**ABSTRACT:**

At its December 11, 2025, meeting, the City Arts Commission approved 10 sculptures and four alternates for the exhibition within Civic Center Park, as selected through a survey of Newport Beach residents. The City Arts Commission requests the City Council's consideration and approval of the selections and alternates. If approved, the 10 Phase X sculptures will be on display for a three-year period, with installation commencing in June 2026.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- b) Approve 10 sculptures and their placement and four alternate sculptures within Civic Center Park as selected by the public and recommended by the City Arts Commission for the temporary sculpture exhibit.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park (Exhibition) is an integral feature of the Newport Beach Civic Center. Civic Center Park, which turned nearly half a million square feet of undeveloped land into a new public park, was designed by renowned landscape architectural firm Peter Walk and Partners (PWP). PWP developed a master plan for art in the park, and identified various spots in the park where art, particularly sculpture, may be exhibited. The City Arts Commission (Commission) determined that a rotating exhibition was an optimal approach to bringing sculptures to Newport Beach in a cost-efficient manner. In August 2013, the Newport Beach City Council authorized the Commission to implement an inaugural rotational sculpture exhibit in Civic Center Park.

The acquisition program developed by the Commission for the Exhibition created a model in which pieces are loaned for a two-year period (or phase). In 2025, this program was

modified to a three-year exhibition period. The artists are provided with a small honorarium to loan their work to the City of Newport Beach.

The City is responsible for installing the art, while the artists are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their work. Admission is free and the Exhibition continues to be enjoyed by residents and guests of all ages and sensibilities. In essence, the Exhibition has become a “museum without walls” that offers the temporary display of public art in a unique, natural setting. Moreover, the City can exhibit a well-balanced representation of public art, with artistic merit, durability, practicality and site responsiveness as criteria in the selection of work. The rotational nature of the Exhibition ensures that residents and guests are exposed to a variety of work. Borrowing the pieces remains a cost-effective alternative to owning and maintaining permanent public art.

Since 2014, the Commission has presented nine phases of the Exhibition, with the installation of Phase IX occurring in June 2024. The City entered into a professional services agreement with Arts Orange County (Arts OC) for \$135,080 for Phase X of the Exhibition. This amount includes project coordination and management fees, in addition to installation and de-installation fees.

Arts OC was established in 1995 as the nonprofit, countywide arts council of Orange County, California. Arts OC has been recognized by the California Arts Council as a model agency based on the quality of its work and has served as the officially designated arts agency and state-local partner of the County of Orange since its inception. The Arts OC project team successfully managed all previous phases of the exhibition and has strong working relationships with the Commission and City staff.

### **Community Input**

Since the Exhibition’s inception, the Commission has increased public engagement by offering residents opportunities to become part of the selection process. For Phase X, the CAC included the following elements in the process:

- a) As in previous phases, the CAC did not utilize an ad hoc subcommittee for Phase X. The entire Commission reviewed the submitted pieces for inclusion in the Phase X Exhibition online survey, during City Arts Commission regular meetings.
- b) For Phase X, the Commission turned the selection process over to the public. Through an online survey, Newport Beach residents voted for their favorite sculptures and voted for the pieces for inclusion in Phase X, resulting in 10 sculptures and four alternates selected by the public.

Prior to launching the public survey, the Commission, along with a curatorial panel, consisting of arts professionals Genevieve Williams and Virginia Arce, evaluated all

submissions for Phase X at the October 9, 2025, City Arts Commission meeting. Pieces that met the following criteria were included in the public survey:

1. Artistic Merit — the artist has strong professional qualifications, and the artwork is of high quality and demonstrates originality and artistic excellence.
2. Durability — the artwork is made of high - quality materials, requires minimal maintenance and can withstand the outdoor elements of coastal Orange County.
3. Practicality — the artwork is appropriate for audiences of all ages and does not exhibit unsafe conditions that may bear on public liability.
4. Site Appropriateness — the scale of the artwork is suitable for the environment, and the artwork is suitable for viewing from all angles.

Using these criteria, the Commission approved 30 submitted pieces for the public survey.

The online public survey launched on October 15, 2025, and closed on December 5, 2025. The survey was publicized through Stu News Newport on multiple occasions, included in the City Manager's Week in Review, and posted to social media and on Arts OC's website, SparkOC.com. In addition, the survey was disseminated to the 35,000+ subscribers to the Library and Cultural Arts email distribution list and the City's email subscribers for current news and topics of interest. Survey flyers and Library website banner advertisements rounded out the survey marketing.

Survey participants were required to provide a valid email address, report the ZIP code of their residence and complete a CAPTCHA security step to affirm that they were not a bot.

Arts OC deleted any entries that did not provide a Newport Beach ZIP code. The poll also captured the IP address, time of voting and type of device used to vote. Arts OC used these tools to identify potential cases of double-votes. For example, if two votes from the same IP address happened within minutes, voted for the same works and had similar enough email addresses, Arts OC deleted one of them. If the email addresses were different enough, Arts OC deferred on the side of permitting them, since it could have been the product of multiple people voting on the same computer from the same household.

After these steps were completed, the Commission had a validated total of 230 voters, casting 1,736 votes. The results are ranked in the following table.

Artist	Work	Votes	Public Ranking	CAC Ranking
<b>Ten Final Selections:</b>				
Daley, Catherine	<i>Cosmos: Starry, Starry Night</i>	132	1	1t
Harris, Diego	<i>Wind Tree</i>	126	2	7t
Linke, Harold	<i>Spiral Dance</i>	101	3	24t
Knecht, Zan	<i>Coming Through</i>	99	4	16t
Robertson, Tamara	<i>Open Heart</i>	94	5	5t
Martinek, Clark	<i>Intended Destination</i>	77	6	24t
Gall, Alex	<i>Voyage of a Giant</i>	71	7t	10t
Plaisted, Chris	<i>The Wave</i>	71	7t	24t
Bassoff, Solomon	<i>Joy Ride</i>	65	9	10t
Banks, John	<i>Art in Old English</i>	63	10	10t
<b>Four Alternate Selections:</b>				
Meyer, Nicholas	<i>Emergence</i>	54	16t	1t
Seese, Kirk	<i>Dragonfly</i>	62	11	5t
Idelchik, Ilya	<i>Reaching for Life</i>	61	12	16t
Muzzarelli, Aldo	<i>The Butterfly Enchanter</i>	57	13	21t
Behan, Sonny	<i>Abhaya</i>	56	14	24t
Johansen, Nathan	<i>Germination</i>	55	15	41t
Pettit, Michael	<i>Escargot</i>	54	16t	21t
Reinertson, Lisa	<i>Wolf Rider-Ophelia's Return</i>	53	18	7t
Bannon, John	<i>Drop</i>	52	19	4
Kimball, Tyler	<i>Celestial Gates; Lunar Gate and Solar Gate</i>	51	20	41t
Nelson, John Randall	<i>Yip, Yip, Yip</i>	47	21	21t
Vogel, Patrick	<i>Dragon's Tail</i>	44	22t	7t
Rench, Chris	<i>Caught Up</i>	44	22t	16t
Elliot, Marguerite	<i>From Earth to Sky</i>	36	24	10t
Benefiel, Joan	<i>The Space Between</i>	25	25	19t
Litman, Adrian Susnes	<i>FRUTTI DI MARE</i>	23	26	19t
tal, lee	<i>Blooming Reflection – Purple Clematis</i>	22	27	10t
Barrett, Alex	<i>TOOTHFAIRY</i>	21	28	10t
Wise, Jess Glode	<i>Focused Anomaly</i>	15	29	3
Mang, Tiimo	<i>Warning Beacon</i>	5	30	24t

At its December 11, 2025, regular meeting, the Commission received the public survey results. The 10 pieces that received the highest number of public votes were recommended for installation, and four alternate sculptures were selected. The motion to approve the full slate of 10 sculptures passed unanimously (7–0). Chair Heather Ignatin noted objections to two pieces—Clark Martinek’s Intended Destination and Solomon Bassoff’s Joy Ride—but voted in favor of the overall package.

Subject to the City Council’s consideration and approval, installation of the 10 pieces will commence on June 1, 2026, and continue through June 19, 2026.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The adopted budget includes sufficient funding for the Phase X installation. It will be expensed to the Exhibition’s Phase X Project Account No. 01060603-811059-L2601.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

**NOTICING:**

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

**ATTACHMENT:**

Attachment A – Newport Beach Civic Center Sculpture Exhibition Phase X Recommended Selections