



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION MINUTES

DRAFT

Newport Beach Central Library – Small Conference Room
1000 Avocado Avenue, Newport Beach 92660
Thursday, July 9, 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 Tippet, 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 July 9, 2026, 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 Tippet

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. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Commission conducted elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary for Fiscal Year (FY)2026–27.

Chair:

Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Cory Glass, nominated Commissioner Vanessa Moore for Chair. Nominations were closed by a motion by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Glass, and the nomination was put to a vote.

The **vote** to elect Vanessa Moore as Chair carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

Vice Chair:

Incoming Chair Moore nominated Commissioner Cory Glass for Vice Chair. Nominations were closed by motion by Chair Moore, seconded by Commissioner David Anastos.

The **vote** to elect Cory Glass as Vice Chair carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

Secretary:

Chair Moore nominated Commissioner Heather Ignatin for Secretary. Nominations were closed by motion by Chair Moore, seconded by Vice Chair Glass.

The **vote** to elect Heather Ignatin as Secretary carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

The elected officers for FY 2026-27 were confirmed to be Vanessa Moore as Chair, Cory Glass as Vice Chair, and Heather Ignatin as Secretary.

V.

PRESENTATION

1. Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park – Phase XI

Arts Orange County (ArtsOC) will provide a presentation on the Phase XI Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park online public poll

Nicholas Thurkettle of Arts Orange County (ArtsOC) presented updates to the Phase XI public poll process, accompanied by ArtsOC Chairman and CEO Patrick Brien.

Mr. Thurkettle provided an overview of the existing poll process, noting that in prior cycles a jury curate a selection of submitted works for the public poll—30 out of 79 in Phase X, and comparable numbers in earlier phases. The poll is hosted on Sparkoc.com and administered using a tool called Total Poll, which integrates with their WordPress platform and randomizes the order in which sculptures are displayed to each viewer to help balance the field.

For Phase XI, ArtsOC has implemented several improvements. The introductory text was made more engaging and less process-oriented to increase public excitement and participation. A map of Civic Center Park was added to help voters visualize the exhibition context. The display layout was also changed from five sculptures per row to three, making individual images larger and more immediately viewable without requiring users to click through to see detail.

Commissioners engaged in a substantive discussion about the poll's mechanics. Commissioner Blom asked about the voting process, clarifying that participants may vote for up to 10 works but may submit fewer, and that votes are registered upon submission with a valid email address and a Newport Beach zip code. Mr. Thurkettle confirmed that voters can select and deselect their choices at any time before submitting. Commissioner Meegan suggested exploring a feature that would allow voters to review their selections as

a summary before final submission, which Mr. Thurkettle agreed to investigate with the platform's designers.

The Commission also discussed security measures, including IP address logging to prevent duplicate submissions. Mr. Thurkettle described how the IP-based voting cap was adjusted after it was discovered that library patrons voting on shared workstations were being inadvertently locked out.

Regarding participation numbers, Mr. Thurkettle reported that Phase X had 230 eligible Newport Beach voters casting 1,736 votes, and Phase IX had 239 voters casting 1,873 votes. Earlier phases had higher participation because voting was not restricted to Newport Beach residents; the residency requirement was introduced around Phase 6.

Public comment was received from Laura Curran, who asked about poll timing and marketing. Mr. Thurkettle explained that while exact dates had not been finalized, the public poll would likely open near the end of the year, with a window of approximately six to eight weeks, consistent with prior cycles.

Public commenter Jim Mosher raised several points: that increased public participation would improve the reliability of the results and that the City is better positioned than ArtsOC to drive outreach to residents; that commissioners need to align on a shared understanding of how to score works before the jury phase; and that a pairwise comparison polling format—where voters are shown two works at a time and select a preference—could allow all submitted works to be included without the need for pre-screening, and could produce a more statistically robust ranking. He also raised a concern unrelated to the poll: that the City's current capital budget includes \$1.5 million for preliminary police station design at a site that may overlap with the Sculpture Exhibition area in Civic Center Park, with a construction contract potentially issued as early as 2028–29, and asked whether artists submitting for Phase XI should be informed of this potential disruption.

Chair Moore emphasized that the Commission's marketing efforts should be significantly strengthened, noting that only \$11 had been spent on Instagram advertising to promote the poll. She requested that the Public Relations and Marketing Ad Hoc Subcommittee focus attention on expanding outreach. Commissioner Blom added that broader marketing of the sculpture exhibition itself—not just the poll—was equally important. Commissioner Tippet suggested that Art Week could be leveraged as a promotional opportunity given its engaged audience, and Chair Moore noted that the Newport Beach Art Exhibition would also be an ideal venue for promoting the upcoming vote.

VI. 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.

VII. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Consent Calendar Items

- 2. Minutes of the June 11, 2026, City Arts Commission Meeting**
- 3. Financial Report**

Review of financial information.

Cultural Arts Assistant Escareal-Garcia read the Consent Calendar notice.

Commissioner Meegan noted a correction to the minutes under the Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee section. Commissioner Blom asked about the financial report, confirming with staff that the year-end close-out statement would be presented the following month, as the City does not finalize its books until the end of July. Commissioner Blom further inquired about the treatment of unspent funds; Library Services Manager Lightfoot clarified that the Sculpture Exhibition honorarium funds are encumbered and will roll forward, while other unspent amounts are returned to the City.

Motion by Secretary Ignatin, seconded by Commissioner Meegan, to approve the consent calendar with the edits noted in the Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee Monthly Report. Motion carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

VIII. **CURRENT BUSINESS**

A. **Items for Review and Possible Action**

4. **Site Placement for *Metalfor***

Staff recommend the City Arts Commission review and approve the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to site *Metalfor* at Sunset View Park on West Coast Highway and Superior Avenue.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee recommendation to site the sculpture *Metalfor* at Sunset View Park at West Coast Highway and Superior Avenue.

Manager Lightfoot provided background on the piece: *Metalfor* was donated to the City in 1986 and was originally displayed outside the old Newport Beach City Hall on the peninsula, then moved to the Newport Center Library, and subsequently placed at the corner of Superior Avenue and West Coast Highway when that library closed in 1994. The sculpture was placed in storage when construction of a pedestrian bridge from Superior Avenue to Sunset Ridge Park displaced it from its prior location. During that time, the Commission arranged for the piece to be restored by conservator Hector Dominguez, and it has recently been returned.

Staff coordinated with the Municipal Operations Department (MOD) to identify an appropriate location on the bluff within the newly built Sunset View Park. An installation quote of \$8,550 was obtained from the City's art installer, covering the concrete pad, transportation, and installation. This cost will be expensed from the FY 2026–27 Professional Services budget.

Commissioner Blom, who visited the site, expressed some concern that the proposed location appeared more distant from Coast Highway than the sculpture's original placement and questioned whether visibility would be adequate. Manager Lightfoot and Cultural Arts Assistant Escareal-Garcia clarified, with the aid of a map, that the proposed site is adjacent

to the parking lot and will be visible both to park visitors and drivers on Coast Highway. Public commenter Jim Mosher noted that the original corner location cannot be reused due to a planned future bridge crossing at that intersection and clarified the geographic boundaries of Sunset View Park for context.

Secretary Ignatin expressed support for the Ad Hoc Subcommittee's and staff's recommendation.

Motion by Chair Moore, seconded by Commissioner Meegan to approve the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to site *Metallor* at Sunset View Park on West Coast Highway and Superior Avenue. Motion carried unanimously (7-0-0-0).

5. Request to the Newport Beach Arts Foundation to Purchase a Sculpture Entitled *The Memory of Sailing*

Staff recommends the City Arts Commission review, discuss, and decide whether to approve or to not approve the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to formally ask the Newport Beach Arts Foundation to purchase *The Memory of Sailing*.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot presented the Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation that the Commission formally request the Newport Beach Arts Foundation (NBAF) purchase the sculpture *The Memory of Sailing* and donate it to the City.

Manager Lightfoot explained that the work was part of Phase VIII of the Sculpture Exhibition, was deinstalled in June 2026, and that artist Zan Knecht had submitted a formal application for City acquisition. The asking price is \$14,000. Because the Commission has no budget to purchase the work directly, the Ad Hoc Subcommittee proposed that the Arts Foundation be asked to privately fundraise and purchase the sculpture on behalf of the City.

The discussion that followed was wide-ranging. Secretary Ignatin noted that the most recent formal request to the Foundation—approximately \$50,000 submitted in December for the Pacific Symphony and concert series performer fees—had yielded no funding, and that the Foundation had received no requests in the prior two fiscal years. Chair Moore expressed concern that the Foundation lacks the financial capacity to fulfill such a request, particularly given that their primary fundraising event, Art in the Park, had been canceled when the Foundation withdrew from its partnership with the Commission at the Newport Beach Art Exhibition. Secretary Ignatin agreed, stating that she felt uncomfortable placing another financial burden on the Foundation so soon after the previous unfunded request.

Commissioner Anastos acknowledged the systemic issue, noting that the Commission risks losing significant artworks if no alternative funding mechanism exists. He raised the idea of a citizen-based approach—such as donor-named plaques—to fund acquisitions. Staff noted that the City currently does not allow recognition plaques of this type, though the exact policy parameters were unclear; Library Services Director Melissa Hartson confirmed that City Council policy could be changed through proper process. Commissioner Tippet suggested that the Commission vote to affirm its desire to acquire

the piece and then communicate that approval to the Foundation as a project to support, rather than framing the request as a direct financial ask. Staff noted that a formal acquisition approval was not agendized for that purpose and would require separate consideration. Secretary Ignatin asked staff to investigate and report back on the City's policies regarding donor recognition and the Commission's fundraising limitations, to better inform future acquisition strategies.

After public comment, Commissioner Blom moved to approve the Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Blom, seconded by Commissioner Anastos, to approve the Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee's recommendation to formally request the Newport Beach Arts Foundation purchase *The Memory of Sailing*. Motion carried with abstentions by Secretary Ignatin and Chair Moore (5-0-0-2).

6. 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 an update on upcoming cultural arts programming. The Lobby Gallery is currently featuring *Vintage Balboa* by Kathy Kehoe Bambeck through the end of the month, with Lawrence Sherwin's photography opening in August. The Concert on the Green series opens July 19 with Redneck Rodeo, followed by the Pacific Symphony in August and Flashback Heart Attack in September. Art Week runs August 9–15, culminating in the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition on August 15. A Marina Park concert featuring Diego's Garage is planned for October.

Manager Lightfoot also reported that all Phase X sculptures have been installed. One selected piece, *Joyride* by Solomon Basoff, was damaged in transit due to a vehicle accident. The first alternate work, *Emergence* by Nicholas Meyer, was installed in its place.

This item was received and filed. No vote was required.

B. Monthly Reports

7. Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan

No additional report beyond items addressed under Current Business.

8. Art Week Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Tippet

Chair Moore reported that the Art Week calendar is live and tickets are available for purchase. Events including the Pacific Symphony and the Newport Beach Art Exhibition are listed, with one additional entry from Lido Books and Pelican Hill still pending.

9. Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Chair Moore reported that the Subcommittee met with Pacific Symphony representatives. Conductor Michael Repper, who grew up in Orange County, will lead the performance. The program will include John Williams selections, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, a piece from *West Side Story*, and a salute to the troops. Children's activities will also continue.

10. Newport Beach Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

Chair Moore reported that the 59th Annual Newport Beach Art Exhibition has received over 320 submissions, described as among the highest in recent memory. Local band BSide will return, catering will be provided by Tacos and Company, and docents from Sherman Gardens will lead tours of the Civic Center Park. Commissioners were asked to hold August 14 and 15 for volunteer support during installation and the event.

11. Public Relations and Marketing Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore

The Subcommittee reported that efforts are focused on Art Week promotion. Library Services Manager Lightfoot will increase posting frequency on the Cultural Arts Instagram account, targeting roughly once every two weeks to improve community visibility.

12. Sculpture Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Chair Ignatin, Commissioner Blom

No report was provided.

13. Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan, Commissioner Tippet

Commissioner Anastos reported that the Subcommittee has been meeting with schools and has identified a potential date for a student performing arts event that may work for several schools, pending confirmation with staff and parks scheduling. Commissioner Tippet clarified that the library-based visual art exhibition component will continue in the fall, while the subcommittee is separately exploring a performing arts component at the Witte Hall facility.

14. Newport Beach Arts Foundation Liaison

Vice Chair Moore

Chair Moore reported that the Foundation canceled its most recent meeting.

15. Historical Resources Liaison

Commissioner Blom

Commissioner Blom reported that he was not notified of the Historical Resources Committee meeting and was therefore unable to attend. He questioned the relevance of this liaison role to the Commission's arts mission.

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

Cultural Arts Assistant Escareal-Garcia noted that community member Laura Curran had invited Commission members to join a tour of Civic Center Park focused on native plants, scheduled for the upcoming Sunday, with an opportunity to speak about the Sculpture Exhibition.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Gianna D'Egidio addressed the Commission, noting that she has been attending Arts Commission meetings since approximately 2024 to advocate for a Poet Laureate program. While that initiative had not advanced, she has continued to participate in city events by crafting and presenting custom poetry. She proposed a scaled-back idea: an Art Week Poet Laureate component running August 9–15, during which she would volunteer to write or curate and read a poem each day. She expressed awareness of a possible K–12 poetry contest and indicated flexibility in how she could contribute. Commissioner Anastos noted that one of the schools the Student Art Exhibition subcommittee has been in contact with has an active student poetry program with interest in participating in the student performing arts initiative.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – 6:06 P.M.

Chair Moore adjourned the meeting.