



# CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION MINUTES

**DRAFT**

Newport Beach Public Library  
1000 Avocado Avenue, Newport Beach, CA 92660  
Thursday, September 11, 2025 – Regular Meeting

***City Arts Commission Members:***

Heather Ignatin, Chair  
Vanessa Moore, Vice Chair  
Melissa Kandel, Secretary  
David Anastos, Commissioner  
John Blom, 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

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**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Heather Ignatin called the City Arts Commission Regular Meeting to order at 5:05 P.M.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Chair Heather Ignatin  
Vice Chair Vanessa Moore  
Commissioner John Blom  
Commissioner Tiare Meegan

Commissioners Absent: Secretary Melissa Kandel (excused)  
Commissioner David Anastos (excused)  
Commissioner Laurel Tippet (excused)

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 - Waived**

**V. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**A. Consent Calendar Items**

**1. Minutes of the August 14, 2025, City Arts Commission Meeting**

**2. Financial Report**

Review of financial information.

Vice Chair Moore requested metrics on the Facebook advertising for the Pacific Symphony concert.

Chair Ignatin opened the item for Public Comment, and there were none.

**Motion** made by Chair Ignatin, seconded by Vice Chair Moore, to approve the Consent Calendar, and carried 4-0-0-3 (with Secretary Kandel and Commissioners Anastos and Tippet absent)

**VI. CURRENT BUSINESS**

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

**3. General Plan Update for Arts and Culture**

Receive and file the draft Arts and Culture Elements of the General Plan Update.

Planning Manager Ben Zdeba reported on the General Plan being the policy-making framework for the future of Newport Beach through the year 2050. He stated that the City's General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2006 and reported on the updating progress to date, led by a citizen-led General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) and General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). He noted that former City Arts Commissioner Arlene Greer serves as the GPAC's Co-Chair and serves as Chair of the GPAC's Arts, Culture, and Historical Resources Subcommittee.

Planning Manager Zdeba stated that the goal is to have the General Plan approved by the City Council in early 2026 and reported that the updating process' current stage includes having draft elements presented to their relevant boards, commissions, and committees for input ahead of a pair of October open houses to generate mass community feedback.

Planning Manager Zdeba reported that the Arts and Culture Element is not State-mandated but is something that the City elects to include as a reflection of the importance of the arts in Newport Beach. He added that the current draft includes new policy support for musical programming, as music was greatly overlooked in the current General Plan, along with enhanced policy support for art in both public spaces and larger private development projects. He reported that the draft policies include a focus on marketing efforts to promote arts events in the community.

Planning Manager Zdeba reported that the GPAC would like to receive the Commission's feedback by November 17th and noted that some other boards, commissions, and committees have elected to form an Ad Hoc Subcommittee. He added that the drafts will return to the Commission in the first quarter of 2026, seeking a formal recommendation to the City Council for adoption, and provided a variety of methods for the Commissioners to get involved with the GPAC's work in the interim.

GPAC Co-Chair Greer reported that her colleagues on the GPAC Arts and Culture Subcommittee include past Board of Library Trustees Member Paul Watkins and Newport Beach Film Festival team member Dennis Baker, adding that she also served on the City Arts Commission from 2011-23 and now serves as the President of the Newport Beach Arts Foundation. She requested the Commission's input on the Draft Elements to bring back to the GPAC and reported on their updating progress to date. She encouraged all to attend Art in the Park on September 20th.

Vice Chair Moore commended the thoughtful and thorough work on the Draft Elements. She cited the Recreation Element's Draft Policies R-4.3 and R-4.5 and recommended inclusion of a similar policy regarding programs for people with disabilities.

GPAC Co-Chair Greer agreed on the need for programming for those with disabilities and added that this would be helped if the City continues to support Cultural Arts Grants.

Vice Chair Moore recommended adding a culinary arts aspect to the Art Foundation's existing programming, lauding the City's chefs and restaurants.

In response to Commissioner Meegan's inquiry, Chair Ignatin recommended discussing the Commission's next steps, including the possibility of forming an Ad Hoc Subcommittee, following public comment.

Chair Ignatin opened public comment.

Jim Mosher stated that he is a GPAC Member but is speaking here as an individual. He reported that there is confusion over who has oversight of the City's beaches and added that the City's cultural aspects are also fragmented, noting that the Recreation and Senior Services Department also provides cultural programming, ranging from art classes to live performances. He recommended consideration for how these activities could be better coordinated. He reported that there is also a background report serving as an appendix to the General Plan and encouraged the Commission to review the report for accuracy. He added that the Commission is supposed to advise the City Council about historical resources per the City Charter and added that they should also review the Historical Resources Element.

Chair Ignatin closed public comment.

Chair Ignatin noted that three Commissioners are absent and recommended bringing the City's General Plan updating team back to a future meeting so the absent Commissioners can be heard on such an important document.

In response to Vice Chair Moore's inquiries, Planning Manager Zdeba confirmed that the GPAC would like to have comments from the Commission by November 17th. He confirmed that he will send a representative to be present at the October meeting.

In response to Planning Manager Zdeba's inquiry, Chair Ignatin agreed that it is permissible for the GPAC to share the drafts with the community concurrent with this Commission feedback window. She acknowledged that they are drafts.

Commissioner Blom agreed with Commissioner Meegan's call to form an Ad Hoc Subcommittee, adding that they do not have to select the members at this meeting. He

stated that he would like to serve on a Subcommittee but acknowledged that the absent Commissioners may want to serve as well.

Chair Ignatin recommended deciding about forming an Ad Hoc Subcommittee when the General Plan update returns at the October meeting.

Library Services Director Melissa Hartson stated that this would be acceptable.

Commissioner Blom noted that there is no guarantee that all seven Commissioners will attend the October meeting.

Chair Ignatin agreed but stated that they have a month to review the Draft Elements to provide feedback to the GPAC in October.

Commissioner Meegan requested that Planning Manager Zdeba also present the Draft Historical Resources Element in October, noting Mr. Mosher's comments.

Planning Manager Zdeba stated that he can share the Draft Historical Resources Element with the Commissioners and include it in the October presentation.

Chair Ignatin received and filed the report.

#### **4. Sculpture Exhibition Phase X Progress Report**

Receive and file updated progress on Phase X of the Sculpture Exhibition.

Library Services Manager Rebecca Lightfoot reported that the call for artists for the Sculpture Exhibition Phase X opened on August 1<sup>st</sup> with a September 29<sup>th</sup> deadline for submissions. She reported that a ranking will be performed by the Commissioners and guest jurors following the deadline.

Arts Orange County (ArtsOC) President Patrick Brien reported that the call for artists has so far yielded 26 submissions. He reported that for Phase VIII, there were 23 submissions by this date, with 50 submissions arriving in the final week, to bring the final number of submissions to 78. He added that there were nine submissions for Phase IX as of this date, but the Exhibition ended up having 71 submissions after 44 arrived in the final week.

Mr. Brien reported that the outside jurors will be City of Irvine arts curator Virginia Arce and GW Contemporary Founder Genevieve Williams. He requested scheduling a webinar for the week of September 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss the scoring system in greater depth.

ArtsOC Program Coordinator Nicholas Thurkettle reported that their goal is to get the most and best candidates for the Exhibition, adding that he meets with the artists as they submit work to ensure its eligibility and answer rules questions. He confirmed that he renders no aesthetic judgments in assessing the eligibility of the work. He reported on the computer-based platform the Commissioners and outside jurors will use to evaluate the entries, with the highest rated works to be included in a public poll. He added that history has shown optimal public participation occurs when asked to choose from about half of the sculptures.

In response to Commissioner Meegan's inquiry, Mr. Brien confirmed that the webinar would be for Commissioners and outside jurors. He inquired about preferred dates and times.

The Commissioners were unable to produce a mutually agreeable date for the webinar.

Mr. Brien stated that the webinar could be scheduled individually. He added that ArtsOC would make itself available for the Commissioners to learn about the voting system.

The Commissioners remained unable to produce a mutually agreeable date, and Mr. Brien noted that three are absent. He offered to host a webinar on September 26th for all who could attend and schedule other Commissioners separately. He added that the webinar would discuss a standardized scoring methodology in addition to merely how to use the software.

Vice Chair Moore requested that City staff coordinate available dates and times for the seven Commissioners.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot agreed.

In response to Commissioner Blom's inquiry, Mr. Thurkettle confirmed that the Commissioners will be able to see every image the artist submitted of their work, adding that there will have to be at least two high-quality images shared to be eligible for the call for entries, with a maximum of four.

Commissioner Blom expressed concerns about past entries that should not have qualified due to a lack of durability.

Mr. Brien clarified that it sometimes is not completely apparent until thoroughly inspected whether the work is sufficiently durable or has other issues, such as sharp edges that could pose a public hazard. He reported that ArtsOC has already received an insufficiently durable wooden submission, prompting a discussion between Mr. Thurkettle and the artist.

Mr. Thurkettle reported that in the past, ArtsOC has leaned on the side of having works of questionable durability submitted for Commission and juror consideration so that they can at least be discussed. He added that they determined presenting the recently submitted wooden sculpture was not necessary because it was untreated and clearly could not survive a three-year installation.

In response to Commissioner Blom's inquiry, Mr. Brien confirmed that City staff has a list of the rules for submission. He added that the rules are also included in the call for artists. Mr. Thurkettle confirmed that every artist is required to affirm acceptance of all rules.

In response to Commissioner Blom's inquiries, Mr. Thurkettle reported on the process behind issuing the call for artists and how it is advertised through ArtsOC and other promotional outlets focused on art opportunities. He added that ArtsOC uses the Call For Entry platform in part because there are already tens of thousands of artists registered with the online system, including their portfolios.

In response to Commissioner Blom's inquiry, Mr. Brien confirmed that the website CallForEntry.org (CaFE) will allow users to find the Newport Beach call for artists and added that they can also steer artists unfamiliar with CaFE to the platform.

Chair Ignatin opened public comment.

Mr. Mosher expressed concerns about Brown Act issues related to inviting all Commissions to participate in a webinar together. He added that the webinar would need to be public if it includes all Commissioners to allow the public an opportunity to comment on the judging process. He recommended that ArtsOC record an instructional video rather than schedule a webinar and send it to the Commissioners individually, with an opportunity to directly ask follow-up questions to ArtsOC. He inquired if the Commissioners and outside jurors would all see the art pieces in the same order or a random order, in case they become fatigued from judging so many, and the later works on the list are placed at a disadvantage.

Chair Ignatin closed public comment.

In response to Chair Ignatin's inquiry, Library Services Director Hartson stated that she will need to consult with the City Attorney's office to confirm whether the webinar would constitute a Brown Act subject meeting.

In response to Commissioner Blom's inquiries, Mr. Brien confirmed that the webinar would be purely instructional and that no decisions would be made.

Vice Chair Moore endorsed obtaining a Brown Act applicability confirmation from the City Attorney about a full-Commission webinar.

Chair Ignatin received and filed the report.

## **5. 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 lauded the turnout for the Pacific Symphony's August performance, with approximately 3,500 attendees providing great feedback on the event. She reported that Bill Lobdell was named the City's Historian Laureate at the August 26th City Council meeting, adding that he was extended an invitation to a future Commission meeting for an introduction. She added that there will be a Summer Concert on the Green on Sunday evening featuring the Tijuana Dogs and echoed GPAC Co-Chair Greer's promotion of Art in the Park on September 20th. She reported that the annual Spooktacular will be on October 25th and invited the Commissioners to participate in the City's booth.

Chair Ignatin commended the Pacific Symphony event, including its record attendance and local media publicity.

Chair Ignatin opened public comment, and there was none.

Chair Ignatin received and filed the report.

**B. Monthly Reports**

**6. Art in Public Places Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan

Commissioner Meegan reported that they will meet next week with City staff to discuss Commissioner Blom's comments at the August meeting about works being sold by the time they are displayed and determining an appropriate process for this situation.

**7. Art Week Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Tippet

Vice Chair Moore reported that they will meet next week and added that a significant number of businesses and associations want to get involved with the event.

**8. Music and Live Entertainment Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Secretary Kandel

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting.

**9. Cultural Arts Grants Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Vice Chair Moore, Commissioner Meegan

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting.

**10. Newport Beach Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Secretary Kandel

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting.

**11. Public Relations and Marketing Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, Secretary Kandel

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting.

**12. Sculpture Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Chair Ignatin, Secretary Kandel, Commissioner Blom

Chair Ignatin reported that there was no meeting.

**13. Student Art Exhibition Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Commissioner Anastos, Commissioner Meegan, Commissioner Tippet

Vice Chair Moore reported that there was no meeting.

**14. Newport Beach Arts Foundation Liaison**

Vice Chair Moore

Vice Chair Moore reported that they are working on Art in the Park and are requesting volunteers on the afternoon of September 19th to help get the event set up. She added that the Foundation is requesting that Commissioners attend the event. She noted that they are taking notes from the Art Exhibition and getting a livelier band along with food and drink options to encourage lengthier attendance, so there will be Caribbean—themed food, beer, wine, champagne, and Mark Wood and the Parrothead Band playing Jimmy Buffett cover songs. She added that there will be over 100 exhibitors and 20 sponsors.

**15. Historical Resources Liaison**

Commissioner Blom

Commissioner Blom reported that the Corona del Mar Historical Society met this morning, but he was unable to attend. He stated that he will request an update from the event where Historian Laureate Lobdell spoke to the group.

Chair Ignatin opened public comment, and there was none.

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

Vice Chair Moore requested that Historian Laureate Lobdell address the Commission.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot confirmed that she invited him to a future meeting.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None

**IX. ADJOURNMENT – 6:11 P.M.**

Chair Ignatin adjourned the meeting.