



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

August 26, 2025
Agenda Item No. 32

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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TITLE: Appointment of William Lobdell as the Newport Beach City Historian
Laureate

ABSTRACT:

At its May 27, 2025 meeting, the Newport Beach City Council adopted Resolution No. 2025-24, establishing a volunteer, historian laureate position for the City of Newport Beach. Pursuant to the resolution, Mayor Joe Stapleton appointed himself and Councilmember Robyn Grant to serve on an ad hoc committee tasked with considering qualified applicants. The ad hoc committee completed its review and Mayor Stapleton is nominating William Lobdell to serve as the City's historian laureate.

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;
- b) Appoint William Lobdell to the volunteer position of historian laureate for the City of Newport Beach.

DISCUSSION:

At the request of Mayor Stapleton and Councilmember Grant and pursuant to Council Policy A- 1, at its April 15, 2025 meeting, the City Council considered creating a historian laureate program to increase public awareness of the history of the city. The City Council voted unanimously, via a straw poll, in favor of staff returning with an item.

On May 27, 2025, staff brought forward, and the Council voted unanimously to adopt, Resolution No. 2025-24, which created the position of historian laureate and outlined its duties and responsibilities. The resolution also established the process for appointing the historian laureate. The ad hoc committee was created to consider candidates for the volunteer position and as a result, Mayor Stapleton is nominating William Lobdell to serve as the historian laureate.

William Lobdell has resided in Newport Beach since 2015. Lobdell worked as a writer and editor for both the Daily Pilot and the Los Angeles Times.

He launched the podcast “Newport Beach in the Rearview Mirror” in 2021 and has dedicated his time to preserving the unique stories and rich history of Newport Beach.

If appointed historian laureate, Lobdell will interpret past events in the city and provide thoughtful, educational and enjoyable narratives and presentations when required. He will also carefully document current events for the benefit of future generations.

This position is a volunteer position, appointed by the City Council to a four-year term with no term limits. Suggested responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Acquire, prepare, record and report facts of historical significance to the City of Newport Beach;
2. Collaborate with the city’s historical societies;
3. Collaborate with City departments, including Library Services’ Cultural Arts Division, to identify meaningful event opportunities;
4. Provide presentations to organizations;
5. Develop activities to help raise awareness of the city’s history;
6. Responds to inquiries regarding the city’s history;
7. Participate in civic and patriotic events;
8. Coordinate historical research;
9. Report to the City Council annually and as required on history-related issues.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

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 - Resolution No. 2025-24