



City of El Segundo
Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
for August 25, 2020 5:30 p.m.
Zoom

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that we are holding this meeting on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Tongva. We recognize the Tongva people as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands). We also acknowledge that Los Angeles County is home to the largest Indigenous populations in the US.

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairperson Neal Von Flue.

B. ROLL CALL

1. Members present: Jeff Cason, Kristen Dorsey, Maureen Kingsley, Mark Knight, Michael Kreski, Brian Mitchell, Samantha Smith-Strassner, Natalie Strong, Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney, and Chairperson Neal Von Flue
2. City Council Liaisons present: Councilmember Lance Giroux (left at 6:24 p.m.) Councilmember Scot Nicol – not present
3. City Staff Liaisons present: Library Director Melissa McCollum and Senior Librarian Julie Todd

C. PRESENTATIONS - NONE

D. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS – NONE

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES for July 28, 2020

1. Approval of minutes of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee Meeting of July 28, 2020.

MOTIONED by Chairperson Neal Von Flue and SECONDED by Michael Kreski to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2020 meeting as presented. Motion CARRIED 10-0.

F. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Cultural Development Fund Budget Recommendations for FY 2020-2021 – Follow-up discussion after City Council Budget Study Session on August 5, 2020. (City Manager, Scott Mitnick/30 minutes)

Proposed Revisions to Cultural Development Fund Budget Recommendations:

- Gateway Project - \$250,000
- Library Park Activation - \$100,000
- Downtown Art and Beautification Project - \$100,000
- Holding Account - \$36,000

Total: \$486,000

Attached Supporting Document: Budget Recommendations approved by the ACC on July 28, 2020

City Manager, Scott Mitnick shared with the Arts and Culture Committee that in his past experiences, he has come to recognize that a community can be judged based on its commitment to education and to arts and culture. He also recognizes that the City Council has difficult decisions to make with limited resources.

During the October 5th budget study session, Council did express concerns with the ACC's line items and budget recommendations to the FY 2020 – 2021 Cultural Development Program's budget, and Scott would like to make sure the proposed CDP budget is in alignment with Council's expectations of the program. The four projects and funding allocations discussed with a meeting between ACC Chair Neal Von Flue, Melissa McCollum, and Scott Mitnick include the Gateway Project (\$250,000), Library Park Activation (\$100,000), Downtown Art and Beautification Project (\$100,000), and the remaining \$36,000 placed into a holding account. The revenues in the CDP fund currently total \$486,000, with more revenues expected to come in during the fiscal year 2019 – 2020.

Scott Mitnick's suggestion to the ACC is to be able to demonstrate success of the Cultural Development Program to the City Council, the businesses, and to the residents, using the Gateway Project and the Library Park Activation project as these successes. Once proven, additional line items to the CDP budget could possibly be added that would include grants to artists and programming.

Maureen Kingsley asked Scott Mitnick to elaborate on the parklets and the Downtown Art and Beautification Project, and if the Council has something in mind that they are envisioning. City Manager Mitnick mentioned Council's three-year strategic plan included improving Main Street and its infrastructure, as well as to reimagine or repurpose the full block that includes City Hall. Council would like to see downtown more energetic to help businesses succeed.

As City Council Liaison, Councilmember Lance Giroux would like to see tangible proposals for the Downtown Art and Beautification Project, leading to successful results that the ACC could be recognized for. And with these successes, Councilmember Giroux feels that businesses would see these successes as something to get excited about, resulting in opting in to paying the 1% fee, rather than electing to produce public art on site.

Melissa McCollum added that the idea behind the Downtown Art and Beautification Project was for the ACC to partner with Economic Development to establish a

program of matching grants to the businesses to provide funding for beautification of the k-rail barriers, if the parklet pilot program goes beyond Labor Day. This would also include partnering with local artists. Melissa McCollum also mentioned Councilmember Pimentel's original thoughts of a more permanent parklet program.

Kristen Dorsey asked for clarification on what Scott Mitnick felt the ACC's role was, given that the current suggested projects to fund are landscape-based, rather than public art projects. Councilmember Lance Giroux mentioned that in general, what may have caught the Council off guard was the language and semantics of the original proposed budget. Kristen Dorsey also added that the ACC recognizes that it is a very challenging time for artists and arts institutions and that the ACC feels this would be a great opportunity to show its commitment to the creative economy in El Segundo as well as to bringing in diverse artists and voices to create public art pieces, spreading the funding around.

Brian Mitchell added that what Kristen just shared is analogous to what the City is doing for the restaurants by providing parklets for outdoor dining, by assisting our existing cultural institutions during the pandemic. Jeff Cason mentioned that the vision of the ACC's original budget proposal was the concept of a partnership model. Due to ACC members volunteer status, partnering with other institutions such as the Library or Rec and Parks would enable the ACC to provide guidance as a partner in program and project implementation.

Scott Mitnick reminded the ACC that the CDP was developed as an art in public places program, that businesses would either pay into a fund or create a piece of public art on their property, whichever they chose. Melissa McCollum stated that there is potential for both more traditional art pieces as well as for artistic and cultural services built into the ordinance, but she also feels that the Council currently has a preference for more tangible art, but is hopeful that once proven a success, the Council would be more accepting of the CDP funds being used for programming and other cultural services. Melissa also added in response to Kristen Dorsey's comments, both the Gateway and Library Park Activation Projects have opportunity for programming and for public art and cultural gatherings.

Vice chairperson Eva Sweeney asked how the added \$250,000 from the CDP to the Gateway Project would make for a better project. Working the existing budget of \$300,000 (\$150,000 from the City and \$150,000 of ACC matching funds), would free-up \$100,000 for other public art projects, including funds for another City gateway. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney also mentioned that spreading the funds to more projects would equate to more public art projects funded by the CDP. Brian Mitchell added that more projects would allow for a greater portfolio of public art to point to when helping to promote to program's successes to businesses.

Mark Knight's concern is that the ACC was created as a body of art and culture experts and that he feels the ACC had little to no input on the decisions in regards to the Gateway and Library Park Activation Projects. Mark also feels that the directions taken to CDP project preferences seems to be more Public Works related than ACC. Scott Mitnick's response to Mark Knight's comments was to do

what can be done to ensure initial success and generate excitement and support to generate future success.

Councilmember Lance Giroux reminded the ACC that the Council's decision was to approve the CDP, and that there is going to be funding, and will continue to go on. Councilmember Giroux also mentioned that this program is new to the City, and art is a discussion point; people are going to either love or hate it, but in the end, it is the City Council who will ultimately be scrutinized for these public projects. He also advised that the language of the initial CDP budget was unclear, and the less ambiguity, the easier to comprehend the ACC's plan, the better chance of Council being amiable to the plan.

Natalie Strong mentioned that the current supported projects are projects initiated outside of the ACC and the frustration is in lack of project ownership. Samantha Smith-Strassner added that it then becomes more difficult for the ACC to prove their successes if the funding is only being used to augment other people's projects. Samantha also expressed the need to be more involved in City projects originating outside of the ACC, to be more of a visible voice in the community. Melissa McCollum reminded that at the last ACC meeting, Michael Kreski was assigned ACC Liaison to the Gateway Committee for that very reason.

Michael Kreski mentioned that after talking to Chris Hentzen, there isn't currently a scheduled meeting, but even so he felt that he wouldn't have direct input. Melissa McCollum reminded that the Gateway Committee is still waiting for the design proposals to come back.

Jeff Cason felt what is troubling is that the City leadership's expectations of the ACC is inconsistent with the expectations of what the ACC members feel their role is. He expressed a need for clarification of the ACC's role.

Mark Knight seconded Jeff's comments and also added that he felt that while it is important to advance something new, it was equally important to make sure that the existing artists and cultural treasures continue to exist. His concern is that if these existing entities fail to keep their doors open it would reflect the ACC as not being supportive. He would like to see the art community stay intact. Kristen Dorsey also asked why the Gateway Project has a sudden urgency to earmark the CDP funding, when there isn't even a clear start date at this time, yet there is a timely emergency to support existing art and cultural entities.

City Manager, Scott Mitnick suggested that the ACC members realize they have a tremendous revenue source and that there continues to be business development in town with or without COVID-19, and that more money will be coming into the fund. He advised the ACC to look at this as a comfort zone at getting started on how to initially spend the funds, but to look ahead to future projects that the CDP could fund. With successes will come new opportunities.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney understood that the Council had a problem with the word grants. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney tried to clarify that the ACC's intention of grant funding would be to create collaborations with existing institutions

in town that would help facilitate City projects. With the amount of time the Gateway Project is going to take to even get started, Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney suggested investing in smaller projects initially to show sooner successes. Melissa McCollum reminded the group that the new fiscal year is only a nine-month year and that additional funding for other projects will be available in the near future.

Councilmember Giroux felt that the ACC and City Council's visions for the CDP are much closer in alignment than thought, and that semantics and clarification is important in communicating to Council the ACC's vision for the FY 2020 – 2021 budget.

Natalie Strong asked for clarification on the \$36,000 holding fund, and asked if the ACC could use that funding for a small committee project to prove their success. Councilmember Giroux hopes that he was able to clarify what he knew, and wants to be supportive of the ACC. Brian Mitchell expressed that if the ACC is able to clear up the ambiguity in their budget language, Council would better understand funding intentions.

Mark Knight asked City Manager asked about allocating funding and if the money has to be given out through awarding grants or if funding can just be designated to support 501c3s. The City Manager felt that there is flexibility in the process, but that the process needs to be articulated better.

Public Works Director, Elias Sassoon expressed the importance of completing public art pieces properly to avoid complaints, and also consider the maintenance of a project and engineering, and looks forward to working with the ACC. Chairperson Neal Von Flue asked if in the future, will the ACC need to be mindful of upkeep costs of public art projects. City Manager, Scott Mitnick mentioned that maintenance will most likely come out of the City's General Fund. Melissa McCollum mentioned that considering best practices, maintenance of public art or the site is written into the ordinance as part of CDP funding.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue reminded the group that the Downtown Art and Beautification Project could include the use of diverse artists in efforts of public art. Brian Mitchell felt that with the current funding, the ACC should focus on meeting the needs of the moment with the existing CDP funding, rather than committing over half of the current funds towards the Gateway Project that has a longer timeline. Chairperson Neal Von Flue wanted clarification on the Holding Account and if any funds beyond the \$486,000 will be deposited into this account, or would they be designated for other projects? Melissa McCollum mentioned that with the Holding Account, the intent was to support the Art Walk if public programming was allowed at the time the event took place. With the pandemic, public programming is not very likely, and so with the \$36,000 in the Holding Account, there was hopes that City Council would allow the funds to be used at the City Manager's discretion to fund public art projects that would engage diverse local artists.

City Manager, Scott Mitnick sees his role as helping to get to a favorable outcome for both the ACC, the City Council, and for the art endeavor in general. Scott Mitnick reminded the ACC again that there is a strong interest with City Council in

moving the Gateway Project forward, and helping to support the project with CDP funding is a step towards building trust in the program. The City Manager also saw that using funding to help beautify the downtown area by enhancing the existing parklets would be a big win. Scott Mitnick also mentioned that the Holding Account could be funding to allow for flexibility in public art projects for the ACC to pursue, with the City Manager as liaison between the ACC and City Council for guidance.

Natalie Strong asked if it was possible to cover up the orange barricades and the City Manager agreed that it is possible to do so; there is a lot of flexibility for visual improvements. Scott Mitnick also mentioned that El Segundo is still in a state of emergency, and so paying for the barricades was the City's way to respond to the businesses' needs quickly.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney suggested the City still pursue permanent parklets. Chairperson Neal Von Flue added that in addition to helping to support local individual artists, the ACC recognizes that the existing cultural institutions in El Segundo are also at risk during this time and would like to be able to lend some CDP support to help them out.

The City Manager also mentioned that at the last City Council meeting, it was voted to move forward with an RFP to reimagine the Civic Arts Plaza. He sees that the ACC would play a role in helping to introduce art and culture to this project. Also, he sees that the community is very receptive to the outdoor dining on Richmond Street and in creating parklets in existing parking spaces, and encouraged the ACC to role public art projects into these outdoor dining initiatives.

Brian Mitchell mentioned that the reference to the CDP as "Art in Public Places" terminology minimizes the program, and lends itself to others perceiving it as just that. Brian Mitchell recommends that the program fund it be referred to as the Cultural Development Program. Mark Knight mentioned that he needs to see funding in the budget for cultural institutions, and suggested to meet half way on the Gateway Project, allocating \$200,000 of the CDP funding, and then add the \$50,000 to the Holding Fund, bringing that fund to \$86,000 that could be distributed to cultural institutions through grants.

Jeff Cason asked if there are any consequences if the City Council doesn't support the proposed budget. City Manager, Scott Mitnick encouraged the ACC to follow their heart and conscious, but that the Council looks at a much bigger picture.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney suggested renaming the Parklet Beautification Project. The name agreed on by the ACC is the Downtown Art and Beautification Project. Kristen Dorsey asked how specific with the language would the ACC be able to get to guarantee individual artists would be incorporated into the Downtown Art and Beautification Project. Melissa McCollum mentioned that Economic Development would be involved, and that Deputy City Manager, Barbara Voss is in favor of working with local artists on such project. A verbal vote was taken to get feedback from ACC members on their interests in supporting the revised budget.

MOTIONED by Natalie Strong and SECONDED by Mark Knight to approve the Draft Cultural Development Fund Budget for FY 2020-2021 with mark Knight's adjustment of allocating \$200,000

towards the Gateway Project and shifting \$50,000 towards the Holding Account, bringing the Holding Account to \$86,000. Motion CARRIED 10-0.

H. NEW BUSINESS

1. ACC Subcommittee Updates – Assignments, Projects, and Expectations for FY 2020-2021 (Neal Von Flue/30 minutes)

Taking a look at the subcommittees in light of other information from Council and the changing climate in the City, and ACC's role, to make sure the subcommittees are in place to be most effective and successful. The Council is in the process of preparing interviews for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and would like to see this new committee take the lead in any DEI efforts within the City. For this reason, the Anti-Racism Through an Intersectional Lens Subcommittee is going to need to be put on hold for now. During a subcommittee meeting, it was suggested to rename the Events/Marketing Subcommittee to Community Engagement and Marketing Subcommittee, mainly due to the current restrictions on programming.

Mark Knight also reminded that there is currently outreach to other CCBs and with the three existing ACC members on the Anti-Racism subcommittee, perhaps there could be ACC members assigned as liaisons to the DEI Committee. Chairperson Neal Von Flue mentioned that it is too premature to decide on how the ACC will interact with the future DEI committee.

Kristen Dorsey added that she wishes she would have had the opportunity to discuss the formation of the Anti-Racism Subcommittee with Council as it is something that takes time, and to be successful, it should not be limited to just the one DEI Committee. Brian Mitchell thought that perhaps after rebranding the Events/Marketing Subcommittee into the Community Engagement and Marketing Subcommittee, would allow room for addressing DEI.

Maureen Kingsley asked about clarification, that the new name of the subcommittee is the Community Engagement and Marketing Subcommittee. Chairperson Neal Von Flue confirmed. Jeff Cason felt that the group needs a bigger picture conversation about what the role of subcommittees is in general, reminding the ACC that the committee members are advisors to the City Council. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney agrees with Jeff Cason. She feels that City Council and the City Manager needs to provide the ACC with more precise feedback and direction moving forward. Melissa McCollum reiterated that the ACC know knows what the priorities are for the new fiscal year, including the gateway Project, Library Park Activation, and parklets. For the ACC, it is important to reach out to the public for feedback for those projects to be successful.

Jeff Cason still feels that there is a lot of uncertainty after discussing this with City Management. Brian Mitchell stated that with the City Manager's reference to the program being an Art in Public Places program, it is clear that there is not a clear understanding of the CDP ordinance that was passed, and that its intent was also to include cultural education in the plan.

Natalie Strong brought up the question – is the committee working with the ordinance that the ACC members thought they passed, or working with the ordinance that they thought they passed. Chairperson Neal Von Flue reminded the ACC that educating the Council on the CDP ordinance is always going to be evolving because the Council members changes every few years. Melissa McCollum offered that the Council is aware of the language and what the funds can be used for, it is just that they are choosing to focus on certain projects at this time.

Ultimately, it was suggested to continue the conversation next month with more information to decide on subcommittees. An oral vote was taken.

MOTIONED by Natalie Strong and SECONDED by Jeff Cason to continue the subcommittee conversation next month with more information. Motion CARRIED 10-0.

I. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

1. Anti-Racism Through an Intersectional Lens – no new additions to what was discussed earlier
2. Cultural Development Program – no new additions to what was discussed earlier
3. Events/Marketing – none
4. Grants – Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney mentioned that Eva, Natalie, Maureen, and Jeff have been busy working on the NEA Our Town Grant. After discussing further with Melissa McCollum, it was decided that a conversation with City Council was needed before proceeding, due to the requirement of collaboration between the City and non-profits.
5. Projects – none

J. GOVERNANCE

Melissa McCollum had nothing else to add.

K. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairperson Neal Von Flue – none

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney – ESMoA's upcoming show is going to open either virtual or in person. The exhibit is called Free State and opens October 3rd.

Jeff Cason – echoed Neal's words. He appreciates everyone's efforts on the committee. Jeff Cason also started a pop-up Disney-style castle projection show for kids' birthdays to produce art in a socially distanced, fun way.

Kristen Dorsey – Wants to go on the record for really understanding that she understands the current suffering of the art institutions and creative in town during this time. Kristen welcomes public comments to continue to be able to give

feedback to both City Council and to the ACC to be a voice for the creative community.

Maureen Kingsley – Trying to be patient during this time and appreciates being a part of the ACC and working with its members.

Mark Knight – Attended a spoken word event at City Hall Plaza led by ES for Black Lives. The students did a great job. There was also chalk art that followed the spoken word at zero cost to the City.

Michael Kreski – none

Brian Mitchell – Echoed the sentiment of others and also recognizes the opportunity of the committee to be bold and creative and has resources to do so, but being stifled by fund allocations is frustrating. He feels that the committee needs to continue to move forward to do the right thing.

Samantha Smith-Strassner – She is hopeful that with the passion and energy of committee members, the ACC will get to where they want to be in supporting art and culture in El Segundo.

Natalie Strong – Is looking forward to seeing what happens next with the ACC.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMENTS

Councilmember Lance Giroux – not present at this time (left at 6:24PM)

Councilmember Scot Nicol – not present

L. CITY LIAISON UPDATES - NONE

M. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 7:56PM.

NEXT MEETING: on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., held virtually on Zoom.

Posted by: Julie Todd

Date & Time: