



**City of El Segundo
Arts and Culture Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes
for April 27, 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, Maureen Kingsley, Mark Knight, Brian Mitchell, Samantha Smith-Strassner (arrived 5:47PM), Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong, Eva Sweeney, and Chairperson Neal Von Flue
2. City Council Liaisons present:

Councilmember Lance Giroux (left at 5:55PM)
Councilmember Scot Nicol (arrived at 5:48PM, left at 5:55PM)
3. City Staff Liaisons present: Community Services Director Melissa McCollum and Senior Librarian Julie Todd

C. PRESENTATIONS - NONE

D. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

1. El Segundo resident Di Xu submitted a presentation to Julie Todd, originally shared in July 2020, asking that Julie forward it to ACC members. Di's presentation highlights other utility box projects throughout Los Angeles representing diverse artistic styles and voices. Di is not in favor of the proposed Centennial Utility Box project.
2. Julie Todd read an email sent in by El Segundo resident and Arts and Culture Committee member Michael Kreski. Michael feels that as presented, the designs do what the project has intended to do, showcase the City's history; what it looked like and how it has changed over time. He understands that no project will please everyone, but the box designs are snapshots of history. Michael supports the project and would like to see a commemorative piece of artwork or plaque installed celebrating the centennial.

3. Julie Todd read an email sent in by El Segundo resident Tracy Weaver. Tracy supports the Centennial Utility Box project as a former member of the Centennial Committee and 5th generation resident with family history dating back to 1917 as refinery employees. She is sensitive to what is going on today, but feels the project represents El Segundo's history.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES for March 23, 2021

1. Approval of minutes of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee Regular Meeting of March 2021.

A verbal vote was taken by Julie Todd.

MOTIONED by Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong and SECONDED by Jeff Cason to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2021 with suggested edits in Section G, Item 1, changing Vice Chairperson Natalie Von Flue to Natalie Strong. Motion CARRIED 7-0.

F. SPECIAL BUSINESS

1. Debriefing of Chairperson Neal Von Flue's ACC Big Idea List Top 5 Presentation to Council on April 20th.
(Chairperson Neal Von Flue/15 minutes)

Chairperson Neal Von Flue is pleased with Council's response to the ACC presentation on April 20th. He also thanked all involved for their hard work and time in getting the top five ideas into a presentable form. The five ideas shared with Council include TEDx El Segundo, Festival of Holidays, Poet Laureate, Enhanced Outdoor Dining and IDEA, a visual art program for youth in grades elementary through high school.

Councilmember Lance Giroux shared his insights with the group and complimented the committee on their well-organized presentation. He also expressed the Council's concerns with the IDEA program and suggested clarifying further to distinguish between education and advocacy to have a successful outcome moving forward.

Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong expressed that the IDEA program was always intended to expose students to a diverse representation of artists and styles and does not see where the connection to advocacy comes in. Chairperson Neal Von Flue explained that a mention of one community group led to a misunderstanding that they were partners, which in fact they are not. Chairperson Neal Von Flue also explained that with additional refinements, the committee should identify the differences between partners and supporters of the 5 ideas and possible lesson plans as examples of what an IDEA program will look like.

Councilmember Lance Giroux explained to Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong that he believes the ACC's proposed programs are strong ideas and that he doesn't want the semantics of a presentation to prevent a good idea from moving forward.

Councilmember Scot Nicol concurred with the previous comments regarding the five programs presented, but also added that some of them are more time sensitive than others such as the Outdoor Dining Enhancements and Festival of Holidays. Councilmember Nicol also complimented Neal for his professional and concise presentation.

Eva Sweeney added that she recalls Councilmember Carol Pirsztuk commenting during the ACC presentation about longevity and sponsorships for some of the proposed programs. Eva Sweeney believes that Cultural Development Fund should support successful City programs.

Jeff Cason suggested the ACC considers how much money the group would like to allocate to maintain early established programs vs investing in new ideas. Jeff also recognized Samantha Smith-Strassner for help putting together the presentation.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue asked if funds incurred from ticket sales or booths during ACC programs would be allowed to go back into the Cultural Development Fund. Melissa McCollum will check with the City's Finance Director, but the Cultural Development Fund was structured to accommodate donations, so she felt it was likely if it is the will of City Council. Jeff Cason also asked if the new Cultural Arts Coordinator position will be responsible for seeking grant and partnership opportunities and Julie Todd responded that it would be part of the position's responsibilities.

Melissa McCollum shared that there will be a budget study session with City Council on May 4th and the new fiscal year budget, including funding for new Cultural Development Fund projects, will be adopted on June 15th.

After discussion, the ACC decided to shelve the IDEA program for a later date to work out additional details and bring it back to Council at mid-year January or February 2022.

A verbal vote was taken by Julie Todd.

MOTIONED by Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong and SECONDED by Chairperson Neal Von Flue to shelve the IDEA program initiative, allowing for more time to flush out the details to bring it back to Council during mid-year. Motion CARRIED 8-0.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Centennial Art Project – Utility Box Wraps
Discussion and possible action
(Julie Todd/60 minutes)

Julie Todd recapped that the City celebrated their Centennial in 2017 and allocated leftover funding to support a public art piece to commemorate the milestone. When the Centennial Committee disbanded in 2018, they asked former Recreation and Parks Director Meredith Petit and Jeff Cason to move forward with a utility box project on Main Street utilizing historical photographs from 1917-2017.

After an RFP process, Designer Joe Natoli was selected to design a series of box wraps celebrating El Segundo's history. Julie Todd shared the designs with the committee prior to the meeting.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue asked the committee for input. Mark Knight does not think the project should be installed on Main Street. Mark referenced Di Xu's presentation that mentioned not feeling invited or welcomed in El Segundo. He felt it would further enhance a feeling of exclusion in some of the community members.

Maureen Kingsley asked if the consideration of the project was an all or nothing decision and she felt some of the box themes might be worth moving forward with.

Jeff Cason would like clarification on who owns the project, whether it's the Centennial Committee's project, the ACC's project, the Library's project, and knowing that would help inform decisions. Julie Todd shared that when the Centennial Committee disbanded, they trusted Meredith Petit and Jeff Cason to make decisions involving the Centennial commemorative artwork.

Melissa McCollum added that Meredith Petit reached out to Chairperson Neal Von Flue and Julie Todd to help with the project after the Centennial Committee disbanded. As some reservations about moving forward have been voiced by creators of the project in addition to community members, the City is requesting a recommendation from the ACC whether to move forward as is, pause the project for another time, or permanently shelve it. Melissa McCollum also reminded the ACC that whatever they decide tonight, it is just a recommendation.

Jeff Cason's concern is that the ACC has been given a project that they haven't formerly chosen to take on as the responsible entity. Chairperson Neal Von Flue added that the first ACC decision should be if the committee recommends putting the Centennial Utility Box project up as is, and if the first vote is no, a second vote identifying how the project can become more palatable.

Eva Sweeney feels it is important to revisit the whole project and not to invest any more money in the current project. Mark Knight agrees with Eva about revisiting this project under the ACC's purview. Natalie Strong is not supportive of the project as is. She would like to see a more culturally diverse project and one that makes people from all backgrounds feel welcome. Jeff Cason emphasized that ownership of the project really matters in moving forward and that it is hard to translate the Centennial Committee's scope of project into one that the ACC can make decision on and accept the consequences for.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue reminded the committee of ACC member Michael Kreski's comments earlier on and that all projects will not please everyone, and how do we balance that? Also, Neal asked if the project needs to say everything about El Segundo? Eva Sweeney expressed that since there will need to be more money invested into the Centennial Box Wraps, she feels it is a better idea to create a project that is more up to date and that the committee is artistically proud of.

Julie Todd took a verbal vote.

MOTIONED by Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong and SECONDED by Mark Knight to recommend not moving forward with the installation of the Centennial Utility Box project as designed. Motion CARRIED 8-0.

Eva Sweeney feels that the ACC should readdress the Centennial Celebration and not only consider the last 100 years of the City but look at the City's potential for the future 100 years when envisioning a project. Jeff Cason made it clear that it is not his project, but that his involvement is due to having been on both the Centennial Committee and a current member of the ACC. He feels that it is important to not dismiss the last 100 years as they have significance to many members of the community, but he recognizes that El Segundo is experienced differently from a variety of backgrounds and that the decision to not move forward with the project at this time as designed is more about meeting the present day needs of the community. Unity is a very big part of what the ACC seeks to achieve artistically in El Segundo. It is not about eliminating the City's history, but to be more inclusive of the whole community.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue has made himself available for anyone who wishes to talk to him about the nuances of this discussion and about the decision the ACC has made to recommend not moving forward with installation of the Centennial Utility Box project as designed.

Julie Todd took a verbal vote.

MOTIONED by Samantha Smith-Strassner and SECONDED by Maureen Kingsley to add a project commemorating the Centennial to the ACC's list of future projects. Motion CARRIED 8-0.

H. NEW BUSINESS - NONE

I. GOVERNANCE

Julie Todd reminded the Committee about the Book to Action program book discussion of The Nature Fix on Wednesday evening, April 28th, 6:30 p.m. with author Florence Williams.

Melissa McCollum added that recruitment of the Cultural Arts Coordinator is progressing and there will hopefully be an announcement at the May 25th meeting. Melissa also shared that the City will recommend 75% of the Cultural Arts Coordinator's salary is covered by the Cultural Development Fund during the upcoming budget session as the position will dedicate approximately 75% of their time working on Cultural Development projects. With the current level of business development in El Segundo, funding for the position will not impact the ACC's proposed list of projects for the upcoming year.

ACC members Mark Knight and Chairperson Neal Von Flue expressed their support of helping to fund this position at the 75% level.

Eva Sweeney suggested that the ACC send out thank you notes to businesses paying into the Cultural Development Fund recognizing both when they contribute to the fund and when a public art piece is completed.

J. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairperson Neal Von Flue – Thank you to all for their dedication and hard work.

Vice Chairperson Natalie Strong – Thank you to all who continued to help prepare for the presentation and she is very proud of the presentation and work.

Jeff Cason – Jeff thanked all on the committee and the City liaisons and is happy to see the progress the ACC has made over the years. He is working with the ESUSD on a special socially distanced celebration for the class of 2021 and on Friday at 8:30 p.m., a very special surprise will take place on Main Street in front of the high school.

Maureen Kingsley – National Poetry Month is wrapping up and she enjoyed working on the Poetree Project, poems tied on the trees on Main Street.

Mark Knight – Excited to share that his film Black in Mayberry will be previewed on May 11th, both in person and virtually, followed by a panel discussion on May 12th.

Brian Mitchell – Added his congratulations to those who worked on the April 20th presentation.

Samantha Smith-Strassner – Enjoyed working on the presentation and thank you Neal for presenting to Council.

Eva Sweeney – Happy that City Council is excited for the presented ACC projects. Proud of the film Mark Knight worked on.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMENTS – NONE

Councilmember Lance Giroux – not present

Councilmember Scot Nicol – not present

K. CITY LIAISON UPDATES

Julie Todd mentioned that Mishia Jennings is hoping to now schedule the ACC interviews for May as the April date was too soon.

L. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 8:07PM.

NEXT MEETING: on Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., held virtually on Zoom.

Posted by: Julie Todd

Date & Time: May 21, 2021, 11:00 a.m.