

DRAFT  
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH  
*MINUTES OF THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION*  
October 24, 2006  
5:30 p.m.  
CONTENTS

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Cultural Arts Commission (CAC) of the City of Manhattan Beach, CA meet on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at 5:30 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners  
Sharon Greco- Chair  
Shelby Phillips- Vice Chair  
Candy Duncan  
Susannah Rosenthal  
Francey Seckinger

Richard Gill-, Parks and Recreation Director  
Juanita Purner, Cultural Arts Manager

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Postponed -

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

V. GENERAL BUSINESS

06/1024.1- Facility Strategic Plan Presentation

Consultants Jim Favaro & Steve Johnston talked about the current Manhattan Beach Facilities & Open Space Strategic Planning 2006.

This project is in the beginning stages of a process to build new Parks and Recreation facilities. This first stage includes assembling information about the current Parks and Recreation facilities, and asking the community of Manhattan Beach what their wants and needs are for this project. There has been one community meeting about this so far.

Most of the current facilities were built in the 60's and 70's and most of them have been admirably maintained and operated over the years. The activities and programs these facilities attempt to accommodate have outgrown the buildings and most of the facilities are in such a state of repair that the community and the City are faced with some important decisions about their future.

The project includes an aggressive and comprehensive program of outreach that includes large format community meetings, small group meetings with city staff, community groups, organizations and interest groups. This Commission is being approached to

1) keep them informed about the project and 2) to get their opinions/ perspectives on the project and finally 3) to encourage the commission to begin to rally support in the community for new facilities related to the arts.

Ideas for new facilities that have been floating around for a few years include a new library, a 99 seat theater, a new aquatic center, skate parks, senior center, cultural arts, and teen center. It was noted in the recent community meetings theater/ cultural arts center has not been getting top priority. The project is currently in the analysis stage and a steering committee has been formed.

The project consultants want to prioritize the City's facility needs and are here tonight to get feedback from the Cultural Arts Commission. Steve and Jim began with the following questions:

- How do you think existing facilities are working?
- What do you think of the positive and negative attributes of the current facilities?
- What are your ideas about what would be a comprehensive cultural arts program and related facilities in Manhattan Beach? What should they include?

The following responses from Commissioner Phillips focused on the Creative Arts Center:

- The performing arts room is not set up for any type of performance and it is also not a very good rehearsal space because the acoustics are bad.
- Several types of performances have been tried in that space and always end up with a triangular stage.
- The class has also tried performances in the gallery space which is unique and different but is not a stage and is not always available. "Because of the limitations students have stopped coming."
- The exhibition space in the gallery space is wonderful; everyone was very excited to have a gallery space when the building opened.

Question: Steve asked if there is evidence that students stopped coming?

- During the past three years, people have come and gone. One of the main reasons being that during the final class performance, the audience watches a live

performance with a wall of mirrors to their left with florescent lights on. It is inhibitive to the theater experience.

- In the last nine months, the mirrors have been covered with black fabric and a lighting tree was purchased. As far as students go, they have gone on to other things.

Question: Who are these students?

- Aspiring actors, community members, a couple of professional people who come to play, occasionally a teenager but for the most part it is an adult class. The class can take up to 20 students; this session we have five, so it fluctuates depending on the time of year.

Consultants: What we are hearing from the community is that the current location of the Creative Arts Center is not centrally located, in the terms of downtown business area, and that is not used as much as it could be. Do you feel this is a factor, or concern?

Commissioner Greco's response:

- There is limited parking at the Creative Arts Center; besides, the Center is not centrally located.
- The gallery is really nice and works for the exhibitions put on there. However it is not a performance space. There are probably not enough classrooms there, i.e. two.

Commissioner Duncan's opinion:

- She shares the community's desire to get a bigger and better library and understands that the community has always wanted a new pool, but didn't get it. Commissioner Duncan has a performing arts background.
- Commissioner recalled that in 1992 the City had theater-in-the-round in the City Council Chambers.
- She would like to see a theater built larger than ninety-nine seats, but wonders where in the city could a facility be built that has accessible parking?

Consultant points out the tentative sites for a new Cultural Arts facility have not been discussed by the steering committee.

Commissioner Seckinger commented:

- Some of the projects the Commission has been working on have to do with branding, i.e. developing a new city logo, and city entryway signage. So when we talk about facilities across the board, my goal would be to see that what we are working on has consistency across the board.
- When we are looking at developing art within the community, especially staged performances, I think it would be terrific to base that in an area where businesses

are located, so that people can have a cocktail before or dinner after a performance.

- When you have these (art) facilities at the Manhattan Heights area, it is not conducive to growing business or promoting business within our community.
- Lastly, looking at the current city space facilities (with the exception of the new buildings) they are not congruent with the upscale recent buildings/ businesses, and it is important to bring the facilities up to par.

Commissioners respond to the second question—“What their biggest dreams would be for a cultural arts facility.”

Commissioner Phillips comments are as follows:

- The possibility of having a cultural arts facility that encompasses both performing arts and visual arts that is complete with parking, and has access to downtown business is exciting.
- To have a true cultural arts facility located in the civic center area would be upscale and professional.
- At the same time our teens and our seniors definitely need a space, so a community center would be the answer.
- Keeping in mind that maybe an addition of a little black box theater could be incorporated into this community space. I just want performance space where our performers can be heard and can be seen.

Steve Johnston seeks a consensus by asking the Commission if the group agrees that there are benefits in combining visual arts and performing arts into one Cultural arts Center?

- Adding to that downtown would be the ideal location for this facility because of parking and easy access to the downtown businesses. Also, what is important that people milling around downtown will actually see what is going on at the theater as far as advertising.
- The Commissioners agree.

Commissioner Greco responds:

- What I am seeing is that the Library is priority number one and the an Aquatics center is number two, and what you are calling the multi purpose civic center is a strong contender for number three. I don't see the Cultural Arts Center as a strong contender, although I would love to have it. I think as an option we could have a 99 seat theater in or adjacent to the multipurpose civic center. There is precedence for that; we have had theater in the city council chambers (Theater in the Round) and other places.
- In my mind, we really don't have a theater in this area. Knowing that the Redondo Performing Arts Center is very popular, it is an old high school auditorium, and I don't feel like I am in a theater when I'm there.

- Hermosa Beach has a theater, a very large theater, which is hard to fill. A 99- seat theater could give us a lot of options; we could have readings, performances, we could hold children's events. I see it as a very popular and used venue.
- When we spoke in my group, I asked Steve about cost. Would it be costly to add a theater to a multi-purpose Community Center, and he said no. So I would vote strongly for the theater. I think there is a lot of feeling in this community about having a theater. When I became involved in the Commission, six years ago, there has always been talk.

Steve Johnston clarified with Commissioner Greco that as a minimum she would like to see right out of the starting block, a 99-seat theater.

Commissioner Greco confirms.

Steve asked the Commissioners if this 99-seat theater is a sloping floor amphitheater type space or a small black box with a flat floor.

- It is understood the sloping floor theater is the type of theater that is preferable. A small facility would be Equity wavered.
- Commissioner Greco shares that she has attempted to bring theater groups into the city, but they will not come because there is no appropriate venue for them to perform. So the community misses out.

Jim Favaro clarified Commissioner Greco's comment that perhaps combining the 99-seat theater with a revamped Cultural Arts Center would actually kill it, because it is attached to a facility that may never happen. But she would instead attach the theater to the multi-purpose Community Center, because that project seems to already have the community's support.

Steve Johnston comments that since the library is among the top priorities, a redeveloped library site could also include a theater as another option.

- Commissioner Phillips comments that the elementary school sites have no facilities for performances either; reiterating that a theater is needed and sorely wanted in the community.
- This (theater) space does not need to be large but would have the ability to accommodate sets. This possibility does not exist with Joslyn at all. Many conversations have taken place about how Joslyn could be made into a temporary performance space.

Richard Gill, Parks and Recreation Director, interjects that this meeting should invite comments from the guests who were invited to be here.

- Commissioner Seckinger suggested that, her fellow Commissioners are selling themselves short to only aspire to attain a 99-seat theater, instead of dreaming big and aspiring to a complete a Cultural Arts facility.
- A new aquatics center is getting a higher priority within the community now. However, Beach Cities Health District has had a new aquatics center on their docket for a while. Being a mom with swimmer kids, I have been all over the U.S. at different swimming venues. Not every community has a big aquatics center. South bay is pretty small so if Beach Cities is successful, maybe a new aquatics center in Manhattan Beach should not be so high on the priority list. This possibility lends itself to a complete cultural arts center getting higher priority within the community.

Richard Gill comments that he has heard the Beach Cities Health District has dropped the Aquatics Center as a possibility and they are not planning to pursue this.

- Commissioner Rosenthal adds comments about a new library by asking; what is a library of the future? It is not just about having computers in the building, but really having to rethink what a library is. Many times a library can be the heart of a city. It can be the place where teens come to study if it is conducive to them, and it can be a place where seniors come and feel comfortable and spend time there. There are studies out from people who have explored what a library of the future is. However, I really want to go beyond that, because there is something that happens in book stores that is much more alive than in our libraries. I would like to have that kind of a feel. When walking into a library, it is about books, knowledge, and communication.

The meeting is opened up to audience for participation and comments.

Kate Baggett is interested in theater, as a producer, writer and director and has worked in New York and Los Angeles.

- At our elementary school the lunch room is the multi-purpose room and it is limited in what can be done in that space.
- It is clear that the Library is a top priority, and the idea of a theater located in a multipurpose setting like a civic center is greatly appealing.
- With respect to managing a 99-seat theater in terms of equity waver rules, if possible dream bigger with a 199-seat theater in community center setting.
- Intimate theater is still possible; all you do to meet equity waiver rules is tape off the seats and sell for the front of the house seats only. When needed the larger 199-seat theater could accommodate a fourth-grade school performance, with all the students and parents in attendance.

Jim comments that a study completed in 2000 targeted the 99-seat theater as the ideal size for a theater and was considered ideal as far as what can be supported in the community.

- Commissioner Phillips interjects that the City of Torrance completed a 502-seat theater, and a black box theater as well.

Jim wonders how much support a larger theater would have, and raises the issue that to go much bigger would probably put the theater in jeopardy of losing support from the community and thus never happening at all.

Commissioner Duncan thanked Kate Baggett for thinking about a larger seat theater to accommodate, things like a school production, and pointing out that such a performance would not interfere with Equity rules and professional productions being held in the same theater.

- Commissioner Phillips notes that the Joslyn Community Center can accommodate 400 chairs, and that the same space could also be set up for a more intimate performance. Point being, that having a temporary program in place now is important to selling the idea to the community and will help with the possible transition into a more permanent setting like a new 99-seat theater.
- If selling the new theater in the multi-purpose community facility is more probable than getting a fully developed cultural arts center, then maybe that is the way to go.

Jim confirms this position and notes that a theater, or fully developed Cultural Arts Center, has not been bubbling up in the community meetings held so far. Stressing that this is the beginning of a long process and there is still room for this issue to get support in the community. The recreational people have been more aggressive about what they want and getting the support for it.

Commissioner Greco sees the need to start to rally people behind this idea of a theater.

Audience participant, Susan Narduli (an architect who designed the current Creative Arts Center). Ms. Narduli agrees that a theater in Manhattan Beach would be wonderful. She suggested the possibility of a building that could be flexible where exhibitions and events could also be held, because there would not be traditional fixed seating. This building would be larger than 99 seats. With an outdoor space that is adjacent that could hold outdoor performances, dance, caroling and exhibitions as well. The benefit of this type of facility is:

- 1) It is larger than a 99-seat theater
- 2) It is less than the big Cultural Arts Center that might not get support from the community and
- 3) It can do more than just be a theater. There are more activities for the community to imagine themselves doing there.

Ms. Narduli is also an advocate for a more decentralized approach to public amenities. Especially if going for the complete Cultural Center is something that might not get support. Classrooms for art making could be tucked into the new library. Or the senior

center could have a technology hub and art classrooms next to it. Instead of going for these static buildings with specific purposes, why not start to mix them up, and start to look for relationships in these priority facilities that might work to the advantage and lend it self to the arts in a dispersed way. There might be a real logic to applying things in an unexpected way.

Steve elaborates with a real good example of that idea at the teen center where art instruction is taking place, and is more appropriate for this instruction to happen there because of its location next to the middle school, instead of in the downtown area.

Ms. Narduli responds that creating outdoor space can be a cheap alternative for Cultural Arts programs. It is logical because the Southern California weather permits it

Alison Wright, the next audience participant, is on the steering committee for the Facilities and Open Space Strategic Planning project. However, she is at this meeting to represent community group Young at Art. The group is made up of 200 parent volunteers. The entire group is run on a volunteer basis. The group finds artists that come up with projects that are taught to 5,000 Pre-k to eighth grade students. Their needs are not great, but she would still like to bring them up so that these needs could be considered into the scope of higher priority projects being talked about.

The group meets six times during the school year. Six years ago, during the end of the school, the group presented all the artwork of the 5000 students at the mall. This has since ceased to happen. Since then, the group had been selecting only one or two projects from each grade level to display their artwork at the Creative Arts Center. In reality that is about 25 children who get their artwork put up out of the 5000 students who participate in the program

A student who was having difficulty in trying to get started on art projects may often have an empty page at the end of the project. My goal was to get him to achieve a full process, and he did. I made sure his project was displayed. The student came up to me the following year, and asked, if your project was returned and it had a frame on it, does that mean it was good? I answered, yes and he never had a problem again. Point being, there is a power behind displaying the children's artwork.

There should be a space in the city where all of the student's artwork can be displayed. Also, there should be a Sculpture Garden in the greenbelt area that lends itself to a walking tour.

Commissioner Duncan asked Richard Gill if the city owns the land where the LA County Library sits.

Mr. Gill answered no.



Mr. Gill elaborates that the City of Manhattan Beach is in negotiations with the County of Los Angeles to purchase the library facility and the land it occupies.

Commissioner Duncan's point about the library is with the possibility of a new Library being rebuilt somewhere else, like to a more central location in Manhattan Beach. The empty lot next to the civic center could be then used for a theater.

Richard Gill comments that this process is not done and advises the commission to please stay informed about the community/public meetings. He adds that the steering committee meetings are on the second Monday of the month; and finally adds that it is important that the commission does outreach into the community to get them to participate in the process and get theater and the arts on the priority list.

Commissioner Duncan asks Consultants Jim Favaro and Steve Johnston if they have an address, so people could write in support of their ideas of a theater or cultural arts center.

Commissioner Phillips holds up a letter from a community member, written in support of a theater and would like to know the best way to get this a part of the dialogue.

Steve mentions that there is a blog page, on the City's main website, where things like Commissioner Phillip's letter can be posted, and community members at large can create dialogues. It is a good way to be heard and to stay abreast as to what is happening with the process.

The commission adjourns for a 15 minute break.

06/1024.2- City entryway presentation by DeVa Communications.

This is the second power-point presentation by DeVa Communications integrates the Commission's previous comments on renderings for the city logos and new entryway designs. This presentation is the result of input given by the Commissioners at a prior meeting.

The presentation has two components: 1) a summary of the last meeting and 2) concepts for the City logo.

#### The Mission and Vision

- The logo development is based on the Manhattan Beach roundhouse icon and pier.
- To also develop street entry signs conducive to the various street conditions that exist at City of Manhattan Beach entry points.
- There is more than one option for each location. Like at Manhattan Beach Blvd, where a monument or pylon type of sign could be used.

### Personality and Positioning of logo

- Has to communicate elegance, sophistication, but also simplicity.
- Maintain a quaint small town feel.
- Have a relaxed and low key feeling.

DeVa adds that some of these terms might be contradictory, so narrowing the field down is helpful.

The Commission's comments follow:

- It would be difficult to communicate quaint and elegant together.
- The words are subjective and they mean something different to everyone.
- The Commission will review the logos to determine if the design conveys the right meaning.
- Past discussions have included something upscale but not too fancy; and classic yet simple.
- Manhattan Beach is "relaxed" and this word does work as a personality for the new logo. However DeVa is encouraged to show the Commission a design they will respond to and like.

DeVa insists that in other large corporate logo projects she has worked on, she must force everyone involved to come up with one word that is going to describe the look, feel or tone.

One response was the word, "simplicity," because the word can be elegant. It is not fussy and it could be relaxed.

### Creative and Approval Challenges

- Logo is based on the roundhouse; however there is a long City name involved-which is a challenge.
- Finding a consensus from the Commission and City Council.
- It was pointed out that it is really City Council making the decision and the Commission recommends.
- Who are the target audiences?
  - 1) The Commission, the City council, and business leaders.
  - 2) It was pointed out that visitor would also be a target audience. The logo would create an identity for the city. How does Manhattan Beach see itself compared to its immediate neighbors?
  - 3) Researching other cities' logos, it is important to see who our competitors are and to make sure Manhattan Beach is not similar to designs used by the surrounding cities.
- Are we replacing the City seal?

- 1) Cities will sometimes retain the city seal for letterhead and certain legal documents; where as the logo is retained for marketing purposes.
- 2) In this case, will the City seal be replaced?
- 3) Will the slogan remain? Do we need “City of” and “California” in the logo?

Ms. Purner clarifies that the seal portion should be retained and not changed.

Richard Gill further comments that the inner portion of the City Seal is to be changed.

One Commissioner confirmed the City’s work plan for the logo which states “Review the City’s logo for modernization; consider incorporating the roundhouse/pier, with the words sun, sand and sea.” Taking that literally, it is acceptable to have some options that vary from the current design.

DeVa indicates that this information is new to her. But is very important to her work to know what Council is looking for in a new logo and how to retain the city seal, so she can incorporate these specifications into her designs.

Logo discussion reviewed:

- Logo will take the place of the City Seal.
- Include the Name of the City
- Develop an icon of the Roundhouse/pier in a modern silhouette style
- The background elements are optional like the water, the reference to Palos Verdes, and the sun.
- Slogan and date of incorporation are also optional.

The three main views of the round house are

- Looking North
- Looking South, where you would see a land mass in the background
- Straight on view

DeVa never considered a view from the ocean and does not have a picture of it looking that way. Plus it is not the way most people see it.

The Commission’s comments about the designs were:

- The roundhouse needs to be more realistic and recognizable.
- The roundhouse design should have more detail and the pier should be included in the depiction.
- The view of the roundhouse should include the Palos Verdes’ peninsula on the horizon.

## VI. REPORTS AND OTHER BUISNESS

None

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting is adjourned at 8:30pm

