

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

May 10, 2016

Manhattan Beach City Council Chambers
1400 Highland Avenue
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Ramezani called the meeting to order at 6:24 PM.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Dunn, Gill, May, Samuels, Chairperson Ramezani

Absent: None

Staff Present: Martin Betz, Cultural Arts Manager (until 7:00 pm), Eilen Stewart, Ceramics Supervisor and Rosemary Lackow, Recording Secretary.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 26, 2016

Cultural Arts Director Betz advised that the minutes from April 26 will be placed on the next meeting's agenda.

D. CEREMONIAL.

Recognition of outgoing Commissioners Russ Samuels and Loli Ramezani

Cultural Arts Manager Betz presented certificates of thanks and appreciation to Commissioners Russ Samuels and Loli Ramezani, and noted that the City Council will also be recognizing their service on the Commission at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Betz also presented Light Gate commemorative metal plaques to Commissioners Samuels and Ramezani and noted that the plaques will also be distributed at some time to the other Commissioners and members of the APPC when Light Gate was approved.

Commissioner May presented outgoing Chair Ramezani and Commissioner Samuels each with a commemorative blue sidewalk tile from Downtown as well as a framed photograph of her work.

Commissioner Samuels expressed his gratitude for the unique opportunity to serve on the Commission for 6 years and to be a voice in the community, noting that it was personally very rewarding. He stated that when he started, he had a significant learning curve, and he witnessed both the staff and Commission evolve over the years, and he appreciated that discussion on the Commission was open and honest. He noted that it can be a challenge because when people talk about the arts, it can be said that art is just about opinions; however he feels strongly that the role of an Arts Commissioner is not about personal opinion, rather it is about making recommendations about what will be good for the community as a whole. He concluded by again thanking his fellow commissioners and staff and offering encouragement to the Commissioners to maintain a constant dialogue with the City Council to understand what is important to the community.

Cultural Arts Director Betz acknowledged the accomplishments of the Commission noting that Light Gate has been nominated for an award as one of the 100 best pieces of public art in the United States. The rest of the Commission recognized Commissioner Samuels. Commissioner May recognized his work on the Library Commission and for choosing the art for the Library and Commissioner Dunn recognized his service and greatly appreciated his passion, dialogue and vigilance and for being a sort of compass on the Commission. Commissioner Gill recognized Commissioner Samuels for always having a strong voice with well-founded points and making being a Commissioner also fun, and Chair Ramezani stated her appreciation for his guidance and knowledge.

Chair Ramezani expressed her appreciation for the privilege of serving on the Commission, stating that she has learned so much and the experience was especially personally very rewarding knowing that the work of the Commission can affect so many lives. She stated that she came to the Commission as a long-time lover of art and found the Commission's work very stimulating. Chair Ramezani noted her appreciation for each Commissioner and Cultural Arts Administrator Betz for listening and being responsive with a supportive attitude and approach, and making her feel welcome.

The Commissioners thanked Chair Ramezani for her service and a group photo was taken.

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (3-Minute Limit)

Robi Hutás has lived in the City many years as he came from Hungary after the revolution in 1957. After serving in the army he returned to Manhattan Beach and became a painter and photographer. Over the years he has photographed "every corner" of Manhattan Beach including Manhattan Village when it was being developed, Venice, and many places along the entire length of California. His love is to paint and take pictures of what he sees in his spare time and he has photographed many city volleyball tournaments. He is present tonight to show the Commission a photograph he took 15 - 18 years ago of a monkey painted by an unknown artist on a City wall near the Strand near what is currently Bruce's Beach which caught his eye when he was bicycling. After he took pictures of the monkey image, it was painted over by the City. He learned later that the unknown painter of the monkey was someone well known but he feels that the artist did a masterful job, using stencils and spray paint.

Commissioner May noted that she believes that the artist of the image captured by Mr. Hutás is Banksy who is from England and is well known for his urban art, which is stenciled on surfaces.

Mr. Hutás stated that he would like to donate his framed photograph to the City. The Commissioners briefly discussed and it was determined that Staff would look into the appropriate procedure for accepting a donation of art from a private party, such as this photograph from Mr. Hutás, and would provide a report at some time in the future back to the Commission.

Fred Manna, 704 30th Street, has served on the Manhattan Beach Parks and Recreation Commission for 6 years and is very excited to be appointed to the Cultural Arts Commission.

He stated that he has served on the Beach Cities Health District Blue Zones Livability Committee and if the Cultural Arts Commission were interested, he would be more than happy to make a Power-point presentation to them on the Complete Streets program that is being promoted by the Blue Zones Livability Committee as he feels there is a relationship between public art and streets. In response to a question from Commissioner May, Mr. Manna stated that the Complete Streets topic does relate to a Master Plan being reviewed by the City, and although it may not impact the Cultural Arts Commission as much as it does some other City Commissions he feels it is important and educational.

Motion: it was subsequently moved and seconded (Samuels/Dunn) and unanimously approved to place the Complete Streets presentation by the Beach Cities Health District, on a future agenda, subject to City Council approval of such.

F. STAFF ITEMS

Update on Sculpture Garden

Ceramics Supervisor Eilen Stewart updated the Commission, noting that staff is in touch with artist Asher Kelman who is making progress in the fabrication of his sculpture piece. Most of the components have been already manufactured and the installation date is still targeted for September. Staff has also contacted all of the other artists and is awaiting responses, to confirm that they want to stay in the program and renew their agreements.

Chair Ramezani inquired as to the status of the overall Sculpture Garden program going forward. Ms. Stewart noted that she was not aware of any new information and would consult with Mr. Betz. Chair Ramezani explained that this is an issue that has been raised prior by the Commission and clarified that the idea was that the Commission would have a discussion as to whether the procedures of the Sculpture Garden program should be changed. For example, should the terms of the artist agreements be changed from one year to something longer, such as 18 months? The intent is to come up with a practical solution to the issue that has arisen where it becomes difficult to determine the program start and end dates due to the fact that target dates are missed by artists.

Commissioner Dunn suggested that the overall Sculpture Garden program be agendized on a future agenda under General Business so that the Commission can discuss possible changes and in advance, staff do a historic analysis of the existing program timeline covering the entire process from selection of pieces to installations.

Commissioner Samuels recalled that the program timeline was intended to be from February to October and suggested that whenever the next installation occurs, then let that determine the start date for the next cycle for whatever length is decided to be appropriate.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded (Dunn/Samuels) that the overall Sculpture Garden Program, focusing on the timelines for artist agreements be agendized on General Business at the next meeting.

Discussion on the motion followed. Chair Ramezani stated her reservation in that the Arts Manager is not currently present to comment and give feedback and Commissioner Gill stated that he believes that this topic is already on a list of open items and Staff is aware of the Commission's concerns. Ceramics Supervisor Stewart noted that she was not sure there would be enough time to research all the past artist agreements in time for a full report at the next meeting. Commissioner Samuels clarified that it is his intent that by agendaizing this under General Business, the Commission can have at least some discussion about reviewing the timeline with whatever information the staff can gather and this would be some progress. Commissioner Dunn concurred, noting she believes it's very important to make progress.

Ayes: Dunn, May, Samuels
Noes: Gill, Ramezani
Abstain: None
Absent: None

Motion passed (3-2).

Update on Cultural Arts Division

Ceramics Supervisor Eilen Stewart reported that Manhattan Beach has just very recently joined the cities of Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach and El Segundo as a participant city in a youth film festival which will be occurring in early June. Manhattan Beach will host one day of the festival at the Arts Center. Ms. Stewart stated that each Commissioner would get an email from Staff with more specifics.

Ms. Stewart also reported that staff is currently installing the Intergenerational exhibit at the Arts Center in accordance with an email of the exhibits schedule that has been emailed to the Commission. The opening of the show will be tomorrow (Wednesday) from 5 to 7 p.m. After this exhibit, the Ed Moses show will be installed.

G. COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner May reported that the artists group met again and also hosted a booth at the city's Earth Day event in Polliwog Park. The group is in need of more assistance and more outreach is needed. Commissioner May also noted that Mr. Hutas who addressed the Commission earlier is a South Bay icon and can be a great resource for cultural arts. It was agreed that Commissioners May and Gill would arrange to meet with Mr. Hutas to explore ways to access his art as a resource to the City and Commissioner May, including possibly collaborating with the Historic Society.

Commissioner Gill suggested that Commissioner May, after becoming Chair, meet at least once a month with Cultural Arts Manager Betz and review the list of open items and Commissioner May also suggested that she and one other Commissioner could meet with the Mayor.

Chair Ramazani commented that she felt it was important to note there are a number of ideas or potential projects that have been mentioned at their meetings and discussed (example: Commissioner May’s suggested kiosk concept) but they have been put on the “back burner” and their status is unknown. She stated it is unclear as to what involvement of the Commission is expected and it is therefore difficult to make progress. The Chair noted that some open items include: 1) the list of projects with updates (so it can be determined if practical); 2) a joint session with the City Council; 3) policy on decommissioning art pieces; 4) City Hall interior mural (what are options?); 5) the Jon Van Hammersveld exhibit graphic frieze to be placed on the Art Center exterior. Ms. Stewart noted that the frieze design that was shown to the Commission will be the final design but the length of time to be exhibited has not been determined. In general Chair Ramezani noted that she feels the Commission has been very productive but she feels there should be a report with a status of each open item, including what if any action is to be taken by the Commission.

Commissioner May asked Ms. Stewart if Director Mark Leyman could attend one of the Cultural Arts meetings. Ms. Stewart noted she was not aware of Mr. Leyman’s schedule.

Commissioner Gill mentioned a City of Los Angeles graffiti art program in Venice, and there was a brief discussion among the Commissions that a mural would be desirable, possibly with a volleyball theme.

H. GENERAL BUSINESS

Selection of 2016/2017 Cultural Arts Commission Chair

Chair Ramezani announced it was appropriate for the Commission to select a new Chairperson and it was moved and seconded (Samuels/Ramezani) that Jacki May serve as Chair and that James Gill serve as Vice Chair.

Ayes: Dunn, Gill, May, Samuels, Chairperson Ramezani
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

I. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded (Gill/Samuels) to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 PM to 6:00 PM on June 14, 2016 in the Council Chambers.

Ayes: Dunn, Gill, May, Samuels, Chairperson Ramezani.
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None