

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

October 16, 2017

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

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gill called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: May, Manna, Chase, Rubino, Chairperson Gill.

Absent: Prigozhin

Others present: Cultural Arts Manager Martin Betz, Ceramics Supervisor Eilen Stewart, Cultural Arts Supervisor Andrew Berk, Recording Secretary Rosemary Lackow.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 18, 2017

It was moved and seconded (Manna/ May) to approve the August, 2017 minutes as submitted. The motion carried 4-0-1 with a voice vote - ayes by Manna, May, Chase, Rubino, Chair Gill and 1 absence (Chase).

D. CEREMONIAL – None

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (3-Minute Limit) - None

F. STAFF ITEMS

Cultural Arts Division Update

Cultural Arts Manager Betz reported:

1. Late Night at Library October (Jose Lozano exhibit discussion); about 60 attendees mixed 80/20 residents/non-resident visitors; everyone had a good time. This will not be done for every exhibit and the next will be in January.
2. Andrew Berg, new supervisor working in cultural arts division was introduced. Andrew grew up in Manhattan Beach, and has been a City employee since 2005 handling the teen program and event coordination (the Skate Spot is his program). This staff change is a result of reorganization in that now events that are cultural arts oriented will be in the Cultural Arts Division and Mr. Berg will head up those. Most likely this will result in an increase in participation by the Cultural Arts Commission. The Commission welcomed Andrew.
3. Upcoming Exhibition (coming Wednesday) entitled “Unidentified Space” by internationally celebrated artist Cosimo Cavallaro. This is a Time4art production by Homeira Goldstein. Ms. Stewart gave a slide presentation, noting that the point of Cavallero’s work, which includes new very large sculptures beyond human scale, that explore elements and spaces that push boundaries beyond what is familiar. The materials used include acrylic vinyl and being melodramatic and hyper emotional, depict the space between life and death. He ventures into uncomfortable feelings and is controversial. Ms. Stewart noted his controversial “Chocolate Jesus”, ketchup and cheese rooms, Twiggy covered in cheese performance art, jelly bean

inflated sculptures and chair made of hard candy. The current City exhibit features work of inflated airbags which have many variations in terms of shapes and some are transparent.

G. COMMISSION ITEMS

1. Commissioner May noted that the September North End art walk in September was again very successful and this will be done again. She is not sure if this will become a regular event, and it's on a "see how it goes" basis currently. Commissioner Manna noted that he has talked to participating artists and they are pleased and excited and feel that not having an entry fee made a difference and it was reported that the North End businesses were busier than usual. Chair Gill noted it was suggested that there be a shuttle to address parking issues; Manager Betz noted that starting a shuttle should be an effort led by the business district (BID) and should not create a large staff burden. A proposal could be made to the CAC. Commissioner May stated that additional committed helpers are needed and Chair Gill suggested that the participating artists could form a committee. Manager Betz agreed and added that if they can't form a committee perhaps the BID should hire a consultant to form a proposal. Commissioner Rubino noted she enjoyed the art walk for the second time; there was a nice variety of art and it seemed to have expanded. Commissioner Chase agreed that there was a good variety and the day was beautiful.

2. Discussion of Arts Festival proposal- Commissioner Rubino

Commissioner Rubino stated her purpose tonight is to gauge interest by the Commission in starting a conversation about the arts programs involving more of the performing arts as well as visual arts. She wants to see whether there could be a melding of minds on the topic before too much time is invested in this; and also recognizes that the discussion needs to consider the budget. Commissioner Rubino envisions, as a first idea, a grass roots organized event that would include all of the arts. Where does the Commission stand on that? This would entail forming an organized group involving schools, parents and the Cultural Arts Commission. She feels that the visibility of the Commission would be enhanced if this could be funded jointly between the City and educational foundation. She asked for Commission input.

In response to Commissioner Chase, Comm. Rubino stated she is thinking currently of just one festival in partnership with the schools (two other ideas have come forward of a smaller scale) but she would like to judge Commission reception before moving on to other ideas. The target audience is the whole community.

Input from the Commission:

Commissioner Manna: He likes this idea and his main concern is, if this were to become a regular occurring event, would this become a burden on the event organizers? He recognizes that over time the membership of such special committees change and producing the event can become a substantial burden.

Commissioner Rubino recognizes this concern but believes that, with a partnership with schools, the burden would be joint.

Commissioner Manna likes going in a performing arts direction but raised the issue as to how this would fit in with the Commission's Work Plan, and would this be taking on too much – or perhaps this could become clearer as the Commission starts implementing the Plan.

Manager Betz noted that currently the Work Plan is 100% visual arts and a transitional plan would be needed as to how the festival would go forward and noted that a good model is the Hometown Fair (core volunteer with minimal city involvement). Commissioner Rubino stated that Torrance has a good model. She emphasized that tonight as a beginning, she is looking for feedback as she feels that with no backing this would be a waste of time.

In response to Commissioner May, Commissioner Rubino stated that a festival location has not been established, options may include at a school (Mira Costa or MB Middle School outdoor spaces).

Commissioner Rubino acknowledged she thought it's a good idea to meet with folks in Torrance, but also noted that she has professional experience in putting on festivals with schools.

Chair Gill summed up the Commission's input - that it is generally supportive but there is concern that this is a large concept and there are many aspects that need to be worked out including funding and who's going to do all the work. It may be a good idea to create a "501c3" organization.

Chair Gill invited public input.

Gary McAulay, Historical Society, commented that he is concerned in that the CAC with the approved Work Plan, has a lot of work to do, and perhaps this should be something that is led by some organization with initiative and not inaugurated by the City. He believes that this may be beyond the scope of the CAC. Personally he'd like to see the Commission focus on what they are already committed to do.

Commissioner Rubino reiterated that she envisions a combination of groups would take initiative and this would not be a burden on the CAC as a group. The Commission would have a hand in guiding but not taking on the entire burden. As to timing, she estimates this could come together within two years.

The Commission had further discussion. The question arose as to what inroads have already been taken; Commissioner Rubino explained that for now this discussion is a "crumb" of a bigger idea. The "festival" or event would be a celebration of the arts. A major benefit is that it would spur community participation on many levels and get the word out that the Commission exists which is active and dedicated to having a place for the arts in the City.

Manager Betz added that staff envisions a week long package of events, occurring separately but marketed as a single event. Staff doesn't want to do a typical thing where items are just sold. The Art Center provides a venue for visual arts but staff is trying to branch out with some performance art at other venues (e.g. jazz at the Joslyn Center). He encourages interested persons to form a group to identify various venues in a single package, with events on an evening here and an evening there.

Chair Gill confirmed he is supportive but encouraged Commissioner Rubino to meet with Martin Betz, formulate a plan and then bring the more developed concept/plan back to the Commission.

Chair Gill asked if there was any other Commission business.

3. Pumpkin races October 28 Marine Avenue Park. Cultural Arts Supervisor invited the Commission to attend this special event and he explained important details and RSVP to him.

H. GENERAL BUSINESS

16/1108.1 Discussion of City Council approved Work Plan and Review

Manager Betz noted first that the CAC meetings may be televised and then recapped the recent Council adoption of the CAC Work Plan. It's a multi-year plan, with a few adjustments by the City Council. At the next CAC meeting, staff will come back with specific time lines and plans for each program. He reviewed each item as prioritized:

Item 1: Sculpture Garden: \$36k budgeted; changes now there will be 3 artists doing \$12k projects; still looking at other programs. Staff is looking into available programs (e.g. CAFÉ) to help staff facilitate the competition. Mr. Betz noted that there will not be a community group that will be involved in selecting the participating artists. There is a City cost, but feels it will be worth it. An RFP will be ready before the end of this week. He will report back to the Commission. This will be a 2-year commitment.

Item 2: Conservation Assessment: \$20k budgeted, to be done in-house. Budget is reasonable based on small number of art pieces involved and a lot of work has already been done. Andrew Berg will manage. A report will be provided at the November meeting.

Item 3: Utility box local competition; \$30k budgeted, Eilen Stewart will manage. City Council would like to see range of artists expanded beyond the city; staff currently looking for specific utility boxes to be painted or wrapped; there is an opportunity for community involvement. A small discussion followed with inquiries from the Commission as to whether residents or business owners who are adjacent to a box will have any input and who would decide the winning artists. Manager Betz acknowledged these are good questions and will look into.

Item 4: CAC Fund Re-Grant Program: \$50k budgeted; may be the way to fund community programs authorized by City Council. Manager Betz believes this is a high priority in terms of assisting city staff; wants to start ASAP and clarified: there are programs that have come forward; some programs go to schools and some to the City; all still need Council approval to implement; there will be a time limit in which to use the budgeted funds. Chair Gill noted that it is critical to impress the City Council and if the Council is pleased, it's a better chance that more will be funded.

Item 5: Augmented reality/sculpture collaboration with Cal Institute of Architecture: The Council did not fund at this time; they would like a more detailed or developed proposal.

Item 6: Develop an exhibit of the works of A.C. Connor; will take at least one year to do; to be done after the conservation of art is completed.

Item 7: Mural contest: \$150k budgeted; need to come up with about 5 locations including Sepulveda, North End etc. He is not sure how this will be facilitated yet.

Concluding, Mr. Betz noted the City Council's priorities were: the art works assessment, Sculpture Garden, utility boxes, murals, and the grant program. As to a permanent art piece: the Council is interested in that but some existing art needs repair including piece hidden in City Hall lobby.

The Commission asked about the Art Center, and expressed interest in having an improvement plan for the Art Center especially to make it more **visible**, such as a permanent art work (Rubino); a sign that "pops" to visitors (electronic but artistic); banners visible to people driving by (Betz); and perhaps a topiary as a part of overall landscaping improvements (Manna).

Chair Gill invited public comment.

Gary McAulay noted that he had attended the City Council meeting and heard its discussion of the Plan, but had a lot of difficulty following the discussion and wasn't sure what was actually approved. Betz clarified that the Sculpture Program was approved to 3 pieces, not 6 but will double check. He expressed that anything that will be permanent has to be very good art. Buying art is a long term process and the public should be allowed to weigh in, not just go buy a bunch of stuff.

Chair Gill invited the Commission to make final comments held discussion with staff on the Work Plan as the City Council approved and discussed.

Commissioner May agrees with Gary's points and looks for the Cultural Arts Manager's guidance.

Commissioner Manna agrees with a lot of what Gary said and knows they have to spend money within a set time frame. Right now the notion is to get the ball rolling, but the city should be careful what art is selected and where installed with input from the public. There is time to formulate policy, but should perhaps start utilizing money from the grants program. He mentioned the success of Chicago's "B" installation which was controversial.

Commissioner Rubino noted her pleasure in seeing that staff got so much approved and that the Council is on board. She likes the Trust Fund Grant being useful in enhancing community outreach and getting new ideas.

Commissioner Chase stated she is very excited about the murals especially and also agrees with Gary's points and is excited for the future.

Chair Gill emphasized that the City has an opportunity here and recognizes it's up to staff to bring items to the CAC and he encouraged staff to get info to the group in advance. Manager Betz stated this is in line with city wide direction with Commissions and Arts Supervisor Stewart added

that there has been discussion suggesting that all PowerPoints should be attached to minutes forwarded to the Council.

Chair Gill closed the discussion with appreciation of all the hard work by staff.

Commissioner Rubino requested that staff give an update to the CAC as to all the projects in writing and Mr. Betz will follow up on that with Finance. Or, if the document can be made into a template which can be sent to the Commission along with the agenda.

Manager Betz will look at this.

Chair Gill reported on the City Council's review of the Wayfinding proposal that had been reviewed by the CAC, and noted that it doesn't seem that there is real interest in an overall Sign program and the obelisk signs in particular seemed to be shot down.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:33 P.M, Chairperson Gill adjourned to the regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. on November 20, 2017 in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 1400 Highland Avenue; and there being no objections, it was so ordered.