

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

October 11, 2016
Manhattan Beach City Hall, City Manager Conference Room
1400 Highland Avenue
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson May called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Gill, Manna, Prigozhin, Chairperson May.

Absent: Dunn

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

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 13, 2016

A motion was made and seconded (Gill/May) to approve subject to one change requested by the Chair:

Under Commission Business, Chair May items, 3rd bullet: strike "after daylight savings time ends" after Polliwog Park and move to follow "at Sand Dune Park at night".

Roll Call:

Ayes: Gill, Manna, Prigozhin, Chairperson May

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Dunn

D. CEREMONIAL None

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (3-Minute Limit)

Gary McAulay, Manhattan Beach Historical Society, asked if there was a problem with the existing landscaping of the Art Center, if the building has historical significance and should be preserved, and whether there is a proposal for adding a sign and/or lighting. Also, he's not sure a recent proposal from an architectural firm to display a free standing structure displaying solar panels is a good idea. He suggested this is a matter that might better be considered by another City commission.

Commissioner Prigozhin responded that the architect's proposal is intended to start a public conversation about upcoming energy conservation code mandates. He informed that the Commission agreed to agendize the topic at a future meeting, if approved by council.

Regarding the Art Center, Chair May stated she believes the existing mature landscaping should be kept, and Arts Manager Martin Betz confirmed that nothing formal has so far been planned for the building except some trimming of bushes. Commissioner Prigozhin explained further that this was a conversation so far and anything significant proposal would have to be carefully studied.

Amelia Amell, lives and works in Manhattan Beach, is a painter and new media artist. She is here to meet the Commission and is looking for ways to contribute to the arts program.

F. STAFF ITEMS

Commission Work Plan Discussion

Cultural Arts Manager Betz summarized this topic and discussion followed about potential work plan items. Some examples include: a collaborative speaker series with the Library, something artistic at the skate park; having a discussion about the City Hall mural. The Commission will not be able to discuss this until after the Council meeting on October 18th or after the Council approves a new Commissioners Handbook. He suggested that the Work Plan will likely have 4-5 items per year, and the Commission will also need to consider costs and how the Plan will be implemented. There are currently about 30 items on the list and staff is excited and looking forward to the discussion.

Commissioner Gill stated that he hopes the Cultural Arts Master Plan will be on the Work Plan list, since the decommissioning policy has been developed. Chair May inquired whether there could be discussion of finding a speedier way to get approval from the City Council for Cultural Arts Commission agenda topics. Manager Betz explained that the list contains items that are both very time-consuming and others that are much more simple and all need to be organized. He would like to see it set up so that the Cultural Arts Commission can determine the items it wants to tackle in a year.

Puff of Wind Update

Mr. Betz stated that in about 2 weeks this piece will be fully installed. In response to an inquiry from as to the duration of the display, Mr. Betz explained that this would be up to the Commission. He also has observed that now that it is installed people are starting to like it. Ms. Stewart explained per the contract the display duration begins on the date the piece was fully installed and stated that the City will not be sponsoring a reception for this piece.

Cultural Arts Division Update

Mr. Betz summarized upcoming dates in the near term for various City exhibits and events such as Van Hamersveld, Cheech Marin and Chuck Johnson, baroque piano, and an installation at the Library. Signing of the Van Hamersveld exhibit posters will be on October 16, 2-5 pm. Mr. Betz also noted he has met with the Blanchard/Fuentes architecture firm, and they discussed how to make the proposed energy mandate display both artistic and technical; that conversation will continue.

Mr. Betz stated that the StArt project will have a reception on Friday, November 4, from 5-7 pm. The program will have meetings every Friday, with an exhibit at the end of the program at the High School, perhaps in the woodshop. Discussion ensued about this space, which has been closed down. It's very large, 10,000 square feet, and various proposals are being considered for future uses.

Eilen Stewart announced that two craft workshops will be held side-by-side on November 5th. One from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm has attendees learning about succulents and gourds, and taking home a Thanksgiving table centerpiece. The other one, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm focuses on jewelry.

Blanchard Fuentes Architecture project proposal update - see notes above.

G. COMMISSION ITEMS

Chair May updated regarding the artists group. They will be doing a show with the Chuck Johnson quartet and have also met with North Manhattan BID and there is much enthusiasm for organizing an art walk. All help is welcomed. Chair May stated that so far they are not sure how the art walk will manifest itself, but thinks it will may be like the downtown holiday sale. They are considering pairing artists with specific stores and having a surfing theme. Specific meetings to organize will be planned soon.

Regarding her radio show (Saturdays at 1:00 pm), any commissioner or city staff is invited to contribute.

It was announced that a brewery in the downtown LA arts district will be opening soon. Commissioner Prigozhin commented on how much this area has changed from 2002. There is building graffiti art currently in the vicinity of Alameda/3rd Street, 4 stories high attracting many tourists taking pictures.

H. GENERAL BUSINESS

15/1208.1 Sculpture Garden

Cultural Arts Manager Betz proceeded to review options A (Current structure), B (Fewer sculptures, more display time); C (Sculpture festival); D (Borrow major artworks); E (Permanent Sculpture Garden); and F (One day Sculpture Garden), pointing out pros and cons (see staff report). Mr. Betz also went over some new regulations suggested to be implemented regardless of which option is adopted.

For example, for A, there are hidden city labor costs for installation by Public Works, while there is “medium” time commitment for the Cultural Arts Division staff, translating to a cost of about \$10,000. Option C is a more radically different option and would be located on Veteran’s Parkway.

Discussion followed about the options. Commissioner Prigozhin brought up the general idea of a laser sculpture festival as a vibrant/fun event. Commissioner Manna suggested a laser festival if done in advance and in addition to another type of event could create a positive buzz. Manager Betz affirmed that other kinds of art could be included other than sculpture, if the Commission feels that it would be more consistent with their mandate of educating the public.

Mr. Betz noted that tonight staff is looking for more general direction and then Staff will develop an approach based on the vision of the Commission. He clarified that the Cultural Arts Commission can “pick and choose” parts of the options. Commissioner Prigozhin stated he would like to take some time and research some ideas and provide more info at the next meeting.

Commissioner Gill gave his opinion about each option: A would be very difficult, B sounds great; C sounds messy and doesn’t interest him. He likes D perhaps if blend with B. E similarly should be another thing focused on but he doesn’t think it needs to be part of the Sculpture Garden. Option F

seems to be too much work for just one day. Summing up, he likes B, but would like to see both D and E done.

Chair May stated she likes parts of each option, but also would like to see a one day festival. Mr. Betz pointed out that with festivals in general, unless others in the community help, the Cultural Arts Commission would have to do a lot of work.

Commissioner Gill thought the first night of the Sculpture Garden be something special and Commissioner Manna suggested a reception.

Commissioner Manna likes B in that there are fewer sculpture but higher quality; he is not excited about C or D; likes E; and is concerned that F involves too much work. He thinks that the art should draw people to the city.

Commissioner Prigozhin agrees with a lot of points and that generally, he likes less sculpture and more money spent but wants to go for something exciting; he doesn't particularly like borrowing sculptures and wants to emphasize local, and higher quality.

Commissioner Manna stated he likes more expensive but iconic or something that would really mark the City. Chairperson May pointed out Hermosa Beach already has a well-established art festival. Commissioner Gill observed that the 6 sculpture program had worked in the past because originally there was a good availability of pots and poles, but it has become unwieldy.

PUBLIC INPUT

At this point, Chair May invited public comment.

Gary McAulay, agrees with commissioner Gill in that the rapid turnaround is resulting perhaps in less quality work. He believes since there is a comfortable fund, they should spend it on some quality art. He is not a big fan of having a permanent garden in the parkway because that area is designed to be more natural. He does like: securing loans of pieces from major artists. The issue routinely is: such is indeed expensive but shouldn't the City use its funds? He urges to keep in to the program a high quality of art and another advantage of rotating art is that it helps keep public interest up, and iterated that the goal of this program is not to attract tourists – it's supposed to be for the City residents.

Commissioner Gill noted that the program fund is created by a 1% fee for any commercial development and if it is not spent it reverts to builders. Commissioner Prigozhin pointed out that sculpture like architecture is an object occupying space and has to have a place and relate to that place - there should be a historical context.

The Chair invited more comments from the Commission.

Mr. Betz directed the Commissioners to focus on four new proposed regulations. Commissioner Manna asked for clarification as to how to handle it when an artist has a specific site in mind? Commissioner Prigozhin stated that the City should establish site first and then choose the pieces for the sites. Mr. Betz added that the Parkway is also planned to be re-developed.

The Chair invited further comments from the public.

Seeing none, the Chair initiated more discussion, asking what the feasibility is of the City trying to accomplish option B, while at the same time, getting other new projects “on board”? Mr. Betz stated everything should be looked at as one package, unless the other projects become part of the Work Plan.

Commissioner Gill suggested going forward with one main option, and then explore what it would take to add on a borrowed artwork. Commissioner Manna pointed out that if they choose an option that simply takes a long time to develop, you run the risk of losing Commissioner engagement and support, since the composition of the Commission naturally changes over time.

Arts Manager Betz stated he concurs that the only real option is B but another item could possibly be added in, such as a reception.

ACTION

It was moved and seconded (Gill/Manna) that the current plan for the Sculpture Garden be rearranged to reflect Option B, as stated in the report, using the same budget but with solicitation for three more substantial pieces.

Discussion on the motion followed: Chair May stated she would like to see the City spend for something that is kept permanently. Mr. Betz acknowledged this is an important point, but it is a separate discussion.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Gill, Manna, Prigozhin, Chairperson May

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Dunn

With the motion passing, Mr. Betz advised that he will move forward and prepare a staff report for the City Council to approve this discussion for the next meeting. Commissioner Gill suggested that in its report to council, staff address points made by Councilmembers Powell and Burton.

Mr. Betz invited further input regarding the regulations. It was confirmed that item one reflects a current significant problem and discussion turned towards siting. Commissioner Prigozhin suggested that before the RFP is sent out, it would be fruitful for the City to first settle on sites and it was agreed that the pot/pole installation type should be an option. Mr. Betz confirmed that sculpture sites have already been vetted and chosen and Mr. Betz explained that in soliciting, the sites should come with parameters but without specifying exactly where the pieces are each to go. Commissioner Gill requested clarification: would staff have the final decision, with the artists suggesting sites. Mr. Betz noted that the RFP can address siting. Mr. Betz was not sure whether the spot outside the Joslyn Center would be available and it was noted that the Cultural Arts Commission has some leeway regarding pieces on the civic center plaza.

Commissioner Prigozhin stated that he felt that clear parameters should be given to the artists. Commissioner Gill suggested that Staff could plug the proposed regulations into the RFP template

which was very carefully crafted and then submit it back to the Commission for input. There was consensus on this approach with two further suggestions that the pot and pole option be incorporated and that artists be asked for a photo of some pieces already done (as generally required in regulation 2).

No objections, it was so ordered. Mr. Betz stated, as a review, that he would further refine Option B, and work the proposed regulations into the RFP which he would bring back to the Commission at the next meeting subject to approval by the Council.

I. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded (Gill/Prigozhin) and passed by voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 PM to 6:00 PM on November 8, 2016 in the Council Chambers (4-1, Dunn absent).