



City of El Segundo
Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
for September 22, 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, Kristen Dorsey, Maureen Kingsley, Mark Knight, Michael Kreski, Brian Mitchell, Samantha Smith-Strassner, Natalie Strong, Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney, and Chairperson Neal Von Flue
2. City Council Liaisons present: Councilmember Lance Giroux (left at 6:45PM) Councilmember Scot Nicol – not present
3. City Staff Liaisons present: Library Director Melissa McCollum and Senior Librarian Julie Todd

C. PRESENTATIONS - NONE

D. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS –

Natasia Gascon of El Segundo TV announced a renaming and rebranding to El Segundo Media to focus on all media platforms. El Segundo Media will still be broadcasting on the same cable channels as well as live streaming on Facebook and YouTube.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES for August 25, 2020

1. Approval of minutes of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee Meeting of August 25, 2020.

A verbal vote was taken by Julie Todd.

MOTIONED by Michael Kreski and SECONDED by Natalie Strong to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting as presented. Motion CARRIED 10-0.

F. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Cultural Development Fund Budget Recommendations for FY 2020-2021 – Follow-up discussion after City Council Meeting on September 15, 2020 (30 minutes)

Approved Cultural Development Fund Budget for FY 2020-2021

- Gateway Project - \$300,000
- Library Park Activation - \$100,000
- Holding Account - \$86,000

Total: \$486,000

ACC members were asked to view the City Council's September 15th discussion on the Cultural Development Program budget recommendations for FY 2020-2021 prior to the meeting. Chairperson Neal Von Flue suggested the ACC discuss Council's decisions and strategize about the upcoming presentation to Council in October.

Chairperson Von Flue reported meeting with the City Manager Scott Mitnick and Melissa McCollum after the September 15th City Council meeting. He said Scott Mitnick did a good job of communicating the ACC's budget recommendations to the City Council. Based on the outcome, however, he communicated that ACC members want to better understand Council's expectations for ACC members and the Cultural Development Program in order to lessen confusion and frustration.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney said that most of the current CDP budget is now committed to the Gateway Project. She feels the project is wonderful, but would like to know the Council's expectations for ACC participation in the project beyond Michael Kreski's role as ACC liaison to the Gateway Committee. She would like clarification as to what will be asked of other ACC members.

Natalie Strong expressed frustration that the City Council established committees to work on projects that seem suited for the ACC, such as the Gateway Committee, which leaves ACC members struggling to find their role in these existing artistic/creative projects. Natalie also feels frustrated that money was taken away from the Downtown Beautification Project to fund more of the current Gateway Project. She requested clarification if the City needed to have all of the committed funding for the Gateway Project now, especially when the downtown area is in need of immediate improvements.

Melissa McCollum shared that the former City Manager set up the structure for the Gateway Committee, and current City Manager Scott Mitnick will likely utilize the ACC for similar future projects. Regarding budget allocations, funds do need to be committed and available when the City moves forward with RFPs and contracts for projects.

Jeff Cason stated his concerns that the majority of the CDP funds are under the control of a CCB other than the ACC. He said that if CDP funding is being used, the ACC

should have more of a role in the decision making/approval process for the projects. To clarify, Jeff Cason does not have concerns about the Council giving direction, but he is concerned about other CCB members having that decision making ability. Melissa McCollum reminded the ACC that the Gateway Committee will also need to go to Council for final approval of the project.

Kristen Dorsey expressed that she doesn't feel there is much more that the ACC could contribute to the Gateway Project this far in the planning stages, and wondered if ACC opinions would matter at this time. Both Brian Mitchell and Neal Von Flue agreed.

Councilmember Giroux mentioned that there is a large amount of development slated to come to El Segundo in the next year that will provide a substantial amount of funding into the CDP. Councilmember Giroux recognized the importance of Council giving the ACC autonomy in projects that they are assigned.

Mark Knight mentioned that the Gateway Project was supposed to have a budget of \$150,000 and decisions were made that doubled the project's budget. Mark Knight feels that the ACC's ability to establish a budget relies on the Gateway Committee's decisions, and because of this, he feels that Gateway Committee budget decisions should be made with ACC members present. Mark also mentioned that businesses are getting a lot of accommodation during COVID to stay in business, and he would like to see the arts and cultural organizations be given the same consideration.

Brian Mitchell added that he agrees with Natalie, Jeff, and Mark. Brian doesn't feel that the ACC has autonomy. With the current budget line items of Gateway and the Library Park projects, and even with the holding account funds of \$86,000, the committee still has to go before Council for approval. Neal Von Flue mentioned that it is very clear that the Council wants the funding to support the Gateway Project and that it is ACC's role to make recommendations as an advisory group, but ultimately it is the Council's final decision on how funds are spent. Brian agreed with Neal, but even with this information, there is still no direction in what the Council wishes the ACC to do. Chairperson Neal Von Flue feels that the Council would feel differently about funding programming if the Art Walk was allowed to take place this year.

Councilmember Giroux reminded the ACC that the CDP is a new program. Council is concerned about the unknowns, and how projects and public art are going to be perceived by the public. Councilmember Giroux also agrees with the ACC's opinions about the downtown parklets needing attention, but the Gateway project is the highest priority for completion.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue expressed to the ACC that if they see a need to assist art and cultural institutions at this time, then including that in the presentation to Council is encouraged, but the numbers and details need to be a part of that presentation for clarity. Jeff Cason sees at this point that no level of granting to cultural institutions would be acceptable to Council.

Councilmember Giroux stated the challenge is to convince Council that ACC proposals would have value to the community. Council also wants to see the CDP funds spent on tangible projects. He encouraged the committee to not give up on

grants if that is something they are interested in pursuing, but that the ACC would need to present their plans in a way that is understandable and enticing to Council.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue also expressed that he has heard about a cultural need for funding, but yet no one has showed up to ACC meetings expressing that need. That is the kind of data and case the ACC needs to share with Council.

Jeff Cason shared the value in being able to have open and honest conversations with Council and decision makers prior to the more formal Council meeting presentations to be on the right track in order to save time and be more productive in establishing projects to support as a whole.

Mark Knight reminded the ACC that the group did spend a lot of time coming up with a granular plan for the budget, but agreed with Jeff Cason that being able to have those informal conversations is essential to coming up with a budget plan that Council supports.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney suggested for the October meeting with Council that the committee give specific suggestions for the \$86,000 Holding Account; to give categories such as all City Gateways, Main Street, with project ideas to get a better idea how they may respond. But with the CDP being public funding, there must be an open call for artists/architects for any of the approved projects. Councilmember Giroux mentioned that Eva Sweeney's description of the grant process really is an RFP, and should be explained to Council that way, in terms they are more familiar and comfortable with. And if explained in these terms, Councilmember Giroux feels that there will be more clarity in the ACC's recommendations to Council.

Mark Knight asked about the benefits of standing subcommittees versus ad hoc committees. Jeff Cason reminded ACC members that the reason for subcommittees was to allow the group to be nimble in decision making and to get work done without having to gather together as a whole group, but in light of the Council's new guidance, he feels the subcommittees are not needed at this time. New ones can be formed when the need arises once specific direction is given from Council.

Samantha Smith-Strassner suggested that the ACC committee put subcommittees on hold until further direction is given by Council.

MOTIONED by Samantha Smith-Strassner and SECONDED by Natalie Strong to put subcommittees on hold pending more direction from City Council at October's meeting. Motion NOT CARRIED 6-4.

2. ACC Subcommittee Updates – Assignments, Priorities, and Expectations for 2020-2021 (30 minutes)

Consensus to postpone discussion until after ACC receives input from the City Council at the upcoming presentation.

H. NEW BUSINESS

1. ACC Report to City Council on October 20, 2020 (30 minutes)

Melissa McCollum suggested that the group focus on strategizing for their presentation to Council in October and identify ACC members to work on the presentation during the next month. Chairperson Neal Von Flue agreed with Melissa that this direction is the best use of the remaining time.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney reminded the committee that Council is against granting money to institutions for operational funding, and to use specific examples for projects or programming tied to cultural institutions that would additionally benefit the community could be a way to support cultural institutions and local artists.

Natalie Strong asked if the ACC could somehow suggest the grant concept be used towards nonprofits to beautify the downtown parklets. She feels that this would be a direction that could be executed quickly as well as make a big difference. Chairperson Neal Von Flue mentioned the Downtown Beautification Plan originated with the Economic Development staff and Barbara Voss to provide a grant program to restaurants to apply for funding to collaborate with local artists. Julie Todd added that the concept was to offer grant money to restaurants, and have the restaurants work as neighboring clusters to achieve a cohesive look for parklet beautification efforts.

Jeff Cason suggested avoiding making the process messy and complicated. He recommends that ACC shrink the number of those involved and push for a direction that ACC members decide on in order to retain as much decision making as possible in regards to the CDP funding. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney suggested a matching grant process; that restaurants invest matching funds to what they are awarded, resulting in a better project due to larger investment.

Eva also mentioned the previous permanent parklet project design where the contractor went bankrupt. She suggested using that approved design and taking it to completion. Samantha Smith-Strassner agreed that Eva's suggestion to complete the already approved parklet project was a good direction to consider. Natalie Strong reminded the committee that picking up the previous parklet project would again be taking someone else's project plans and designs into completion though she does like that it is doable, affordable, and adds tangible value. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney mentioned that both she and Michael Kreski were on the Downtown Committee and voted in favor of the approved parklet project.

Samantha Smith-Strassner asked if it would be possible to get feedback on their presentation prior to going in front of City Council. Melissa McCollum suggested Chairperson Neal Von Flue meet with City Manager Scott Mitnick to do so.

Chairperson Neal Von Flue mentioned that it might be the best use of the committee's 10 minutes with Council to present more on the lines of what the ACC has accomplished and then briefly mention what they would like to do with the intention of coming back to Council in the next month for a more detailed presentation on project proposals.

Mark Knight suggested using time in front of the Council to explain to them what the grant process is in regards to ACC's interests in supporting cultural non-profits and local artists and that the process would include RFPs within the City's framework of requirements. Mark Knight also liked the idea of pursuing the approved parklet design for an immediate project win for the ACC and also something that could be used as a model and an example to other businesses looking to install parklets for outdoor dining.

Jeff Cason brought the group conversation back to focusing on the Council presentation. Chairperson Neal Von Flue stated he believes 5 minutes of the presentation should be spent on sharing what the ACC has accomplished. Positive outcomes include the Creative Economy Report, basketball wall mural, and the Portals to Memory mural. Another 5 minutes Chairperson Neal Von Flue would like to spend addressing ideas moving forward on how to meet the needs of the creative economy as well as the El Segundo community, with specific details on the budget line items. Chairperson Von Flue believes the presentation would include what the ACC has done, what they are doing, and how they would like to move forward.

Jeff Cason added that he believes the presentation should stay vague and aspirational and mention that the group would like to come back next month with much greater detail on ideas. Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney believes the committee should discuss intentions for Gateway Projects, Main Street Beautification, and explain how the ACC envisions the grant process.

ACC members to work on the Council presentation will include Chairperson Neal Von Flue, Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney, Samantha Smith-Strassner, and Natalie Strong.

I. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

1. Anti-Racism Through an Intersectional Lens - none
2. Cultural Development Program - none
3. Events/Marketing - none
4. Grants – Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney mentioned the NEA Our Town Grant was intended to be a Gateway Project along the west side at Grand and Vista Del Mar, and the ACC could use this example at the Council presentation to illustrate what the group means by grants.
5. Projects – none

J. GOVERNANCE

Melissa McCollum reported that the Council also approved the FY 2020-2021 budget and proposed internal reorganization at the City Council Meeting on September 15th. The Library will merge with Recreation to create a Community Services Department that will include Library, Recreation, and Cultural Arts. The City Council also will consider reclassification of a vacant Librarian position into a Cultural Arts Specialist.

Former Director of Recreation and Parks Meredith Petit accepted a new job in Oregon, and Melissa McCollum will serve as the Interim Director of the Recreation and Parks Department until the Community Services Department is fully formed.

K. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairperson Neal Von Flue – Chairperson Neal Von Flue used to work for Rec/Park and so he is very happy for Meredith’s opportunity, but also very excited for Melissa and the positive contributions she will make in leading the new Community Services Department.

Vice Chairperson Eva Sweeney – October 3rd, ESMoA is having their virtual opening of Freestate. She encouraged all to join. It will most likely last a full year as they are not sure when everything will return to normal.

Jeff Cason – Congratulations to Melissa. He knows that she will do a fantastic job in her new role.

Kristen Dorsey – none

Maureen Kingsley – none

Mark Knight – none

Michael Kreski – Gateway Committee received the combined design from the two design teams. The Gateway Committee has not had a formal meeting on the current proposed design.

Brian Mitchell - none

Samantha Smith-Strassner – none

Natalie Strong – Thanked all for turning her around, giving her a constructive, doable mindset.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMENTS –

Councilmember Lance Giroux – not present at this time (left at 6:45PM)

Councilmember Scot Nicol – not present

L. CITY LIAISON UPDATES

Julie Todd mentioned her work with Eagle Scout candidate Jack Crawford and that the John Van Hamersveld DWP Tank Mural website is now complete and live through the Library’s Art and Culture subsite. She will share the link with ACC members so that they can view it.

M. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

NEXT MEETING: on Tuesday, November TBD, 2020 at 5:30 p.m., held virtually on Zoom.

Posted by: Julie Todd

Date & Time: