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THE COSTA MESA ARTS COMMISSION

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FEBRUARY 6, 2025  
6:00 P.M. – OFFICIAL MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER** by Chair Wondercheck at 6:00 P.M.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** by Commissioner Derderian.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE**

The following Commissioners were sworn in: Fisher Derderian, Alisa Ochoa, Allison Mann, and Debora Wondercheck.

**ROLL CALL**

☒ = Present    ☐ = Absent

**Commissioners**

☒ Charlene Ashendorf  
☒ Fisher Derderian  
☐ Brendan Ford  
☒ Erica Lucia  
☒ Alisa Ochoa  
☒ Allison Mann  
☒ Debora Wondercheck

**City Staff**

☒ Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Svs. Director  
☒ Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist  
☒ Ashley Thomas, Sr. Recreation Supervisor  
☒ Laura Fautua, Executive Assistant  
☒ Kathia Viteri, Office Specialist II

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Flo Martin: Costa Mesa resident and dedicated supporter of the performing and visual arts, has been a subscriber to numerous cultural organizations. She recalls a particularly moving experience at the Pacific Symphony's *Symphonic Soul: A Celebration of African American Artistry*, which brought her to tears and evoked memories of her student days at UC Berkeley.

Samuel Helms: A poet and hobbyist in AI-generated music, has transformed 325 of his poems into songs and encourages the commission to explore the potential of AI in supporting local poets and musicians. He also proposed a structured cultural presentation before city council meetings, featuring an "Artist of the Month," a poet, a musician, and a craftsman or specialist artist. Helms suggested that local college students in communication fields could moderate and produce these segments, providing them with valuable public access TV experience while enriching the cultural engagement of the community.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

**Commissioner Ochoa:** Expressed gratitude for returning to the commission and shared highlights from recent art events in the community. She also echoed praise for Commissioner Wondercheck's *Symphonic Soul*, noting its emotional impact and sold-out success.

**Commissioner Ashendorf:** Took a moment to acknowledge former Vice Chair Arts Commissioner, Heidi Zuckerman, for her contributions, and encouragement within the community and encouraged the community to read her book and blog, *The Importance of Art*. She also highlighted the Costa Mesa High School event featuring *Backhaus Dance*, a grant-funded program that greatly benefited students. Additionally, she announced a free artist talk by muralist Alicia Rojas at the Norma Herzog Center on March 9 and requested staff updates on new public art bike racks in the city.

**Commissioner Lucia:** Commended City staff and the Arts Commissioners for their work on the utility box art program, noting the increased number of submissions from both local and countywide artists. She expressed appreciation for the growing community engagement in the program over the past two years.

**Commissioner Derderian:** Thanked Councilmember Pettis for his reappointment and shared his enthusiasm for continuing his work with the commission. He also voiced support for Samuel Helms' suggestion of incorporating artistic performances or exhibits at the start of commission meetings, stating that he would like to see the idea implemented in some form.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

### **1. MINUTES**

10/03/2024 Arts Commission Draft Minutes

Commissioner Ochoa requested adjustment to Ronald Chi's name throughout the minutes.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Commissioner Ashendorf motioned to approve the amended minutes for November 7, 2024 minutes/Seconded by Commissioner Ochoa.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Mann, Commissioner Ochoa, Chair Wondercheck

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford

**Motion Carried:** 6-0

## **OLD BUSINESS: NONE**

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Services Director presented.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Commissioner Mann motioned to nominate Commissioner Ochoa as Chair/Seconded by Commissioner Ashendorf.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Mann, Commissioner Ochoa, Commissioner Wondercheck

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford

**Motion Carried:** 6-0

**MOTION/SECOND:** Commissioner Ashendorf motioned to nominate Commissioner Derderian as Vice Chair/Seconded by Chair Wondercheck.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Mann, Commissioner Ochoa, Chair Wondercheck

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford

**Motion Carried:** 6-0

## **2. REVIEW AND APPROVE NEW POET LAUREATE AND SCOPE OF WORK**

Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Poet Laureate, Danielle Hanson, introduced herself to the Commission.

Commissioner Ashendorf welcomed the Poet Laureate and acknowledged the long-awaited nature of the appointment. She also inquired about the timeframe for receiving official updates from the Poet Laureate, suggesting a six-month report to keep the community informed about progress and future plans.

Commissioner Ochoa expressed enthusiasm for the Poet Laureate and raised a question about the non-exclusive license outlined in the agreement. She suggested setting a clear time limitation to protect both the city and the artist and proposed an attribution clause to ensure proper credit whenever the writer's work is displayed.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Commissioner Lucia motioned to approve inaugural Poet Laureate/Seconded by Commissioner Mann.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Mann, Commissioner Ochoa, Commissioner Wondercheck

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford

**Motion Carried:** 6-0

*Scope of work will be brought back to the Commission.*

## **3. APPROVAL OF UTILITY BOX ART PROGRAM APPLICATIONS**

Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Commissioner Derderian highlighted several submissions that stood out, specifically praising works by Harlow Brezeale and Karen Gallo. However, he pointed out the art formatting of Lisa Corinne Kelson's box, which appeared distorted, and asked whether this would affect the final display. He also raised concerns about Craig Barker's submission, finding its depiction of the female form potentially inappropriate for public display, as it could be perceived as objectifying.

Commissioner Ashendorf recalled that Craig Barker had previously designed a utility

box that sparked controversy, questioning whether the same concerns applied to his current submission.

Commissioner Ochoa echoed some of Derderian's concerns, noting that while the artwork's title, *Mesa Girls Are the Cutest in the Land*, had a playful tone, it did not fully capture the depth and strength of the women in the community. She suggested a title that better reflected their resilience and multidimensional nature.

Commissioner Mann shared an appreciation for Craig Barker's work, acknowledging that his artistic style might take time to grow on viewers. She felt that the artwork captured the spirit of local "punk, cool, and beachy" Mesa girls and did not find it objectifying. She particularly admired the inclusion of Doc Martens in the design, seeing them as a nostalgic representation of a specific era and cultural identity.

Commissioner discussion ensued regarding the selection process and alternate box options.

No public comments.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Commissioner Wondercheck made a motion to approve numbers 2-12 utility box art applications and have box art application number one artist work with staff for a resubmittal/Seconded by Commissioner Mann.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Mann, Commissioner Ochoa, Commissioner Wondercheck

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford

**Motion Carried:** 6-0

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

### **1. ARTS SPECIALIST REPORT**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Commissioner Ashendorf celebrated the Spotlight series featuring *Location 1980* and emphasized integrating the Poet Laureate into community events.

Commissioner Lucia highlighted the May Art Crawl as a great opportunity for the Poet Laureate to engage with the community and discuss poetry's connection to music.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER MEMBER & STAFF COMMENTS**

Mr. Gruner gave some department highlights.

Staff thanked Chair Wondercheck for her term as Chair and congratulated Commissioner Ochoa (Chair) and Commissioner Derderian (Vice Chair) for their new terms.

**ADJOURNMENT** Chair Wondercheck adjourned at 7:05 P.M.