

MARCH 5, 2026  
6:00 P.M. – UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER** by Chair Ochoa at 6:00 PM.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** by Commissioner Lucia.

**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 Svcs. Director
- Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist
- Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager
- Laura Fautua, Executive Assistant
- Kathia Viteri, Recreation Specialist

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

**Commissioner Ashendorf:** Thanked staff for the February 19 “Nuts and Bolts” workshop, noting it was informative and productive, and encouraged attendance at the Frederick Weisman Foundation art exhibit at Coastline Community College.

**Commissioner Derderian:** Expressed appreciation to staff for the “Nuts and Bolts” workshop, stating it clarified commission roles, and shared insights from attending a national arts and culture summit in Washington, D.C., including upcoming July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

**Chair Ochoa:** Thanked staff for the informative training, sought clarification regarding the applicability of the work plan to commissions versus committees, and highlighted the upcoming poetry workshop at the Donald Dungan Library.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**1. MINUTES – 02/05/2026 Draft Minutes**

Chair Ochoa had the following corrections:

- Page 2 – Old Business:
  - Add clarifying language to reflect the outcome of the study group, noting that it was determined that Commissioner Wondercheck would organize and lead the 250-voice choir.
- Page 5 – Closing Comments:
  - Include Ms. Villaseñor’s remarks acknowledging Ms. Thomas’s departure.
  - Include the Chair’s comments recognizing Black History Month.

**MOTION/SECOND:** Chair Ochoa made a motion to approve the February 6, 2026, amended meeting minutes/Seconded by Commissioner Derderian.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

**Nays:** None

**Abstained:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Ford and Commissioner Wondercheck

**Motion Carried:** 5-0

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

### **1. ARTS SPECIALIST UPDATE**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Chair Ochoa inquired about the timeline for the Arts and Culture Master Plan, noting if a contractor had been selected along with the implementation timeline.

No public comments.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **1. ARTS AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-27**

Mr. Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Services Director, introduced Finance Director, Carol Molina, and Finance Officer, Peter Diminich.

Commissioner Derderian requested clarification on the historical allocation and rollover of the \$60,000 large-scale installation funds, including how unspent funds are handled and whether they carry over between fiscal years.

Ms. Molina explained that fund rollovers are typically allowed when sufficient reserves exist, but due to the structural deficit, rollovers require City Council authorization and additional funding.

Commissioner Lucia inquired whether other budget areas required General Fund backfill for deficits and whether reallocating the \$60,000 to active program areas would similarly require annual deficit coverage.

Vice Chair Mann asked about potential solutions to increase funding, including whether grant writing or other revenue-generating efforts could be pursued by staff or commissioners.

Commissioner Ashendorf asked whether the annual tax revenue generated from Costa Mesa's creative sector had increased or decreased since the Arts and Culture Master Plan was approved five years prior.

Chair Ochoa asked whether staff supporting other commissions were funded through the General Fund and noted concern that the Arts Commission staff salary contributed significantly to the commission's annual deficit.

Commissioner Derderian asked about long-term solutions to structural funding issues, including potential ordinance changes, future funding of staff positions, reallocation processes, interim financial planning without an adopted master plan, and strategies for effectively advocating for increased arts funding.

Public Comment:

Eric Jimenez: Spoke in support of the mural and poetry projects, highlighting the positive impact of arts on youth development, community transformation, and public safety, and expressed his organization's commitment to supporting arts initiatives in Costa Mesa.

Commissioner Derderian asked about interim funding approaches, including whether Council should establish a framework, how the \$60,000 allocation would be used, and whether it would support the Master Plan consultant or require General Fund funding.

Commissioner Lucia recommended using the existing Master Plan roadmap to guide interim decisions, including evaluating current allocations and considering reinvestment priorities.

Commissioner Mann emphasized prioritizing completion of the Master Plan update and asked about the process and timing for Commission action or approval.

Commissioner Ashendorf acknowledged the clarified \$240,000 funding constraint and suggested reevaluating allocations, including partnerships and program effectiveness, rather than increasing staff workload for grant writing.

Chair Ochoa suggested evaluating community impact of current programs, supported reallocating funds toward broader community access, and requested clarification on changes to specific program funding.

Commissioner Derderian supported developing a formal funding framework and recommendation for Council approval to provide clearer direction to Finance and stabilize arts funding decisions during the interim period.

Chair Ochoa inquired if the framework consists of \$228,000.

Commissioner Derderian encouraged commissioners to propose specific funding amounts and justifications for programming allocations as part of a formal framework to be developed for Council consideration.

Commissioner Ashendorf recommended using the previously presented annual report data as a foundation to support funding decisions and framework development.

Chair Ocho sought clarification on funding allocations to Segerstrom-related programs and supported forming a small work group to develop a framework and report back at the next meeting.

Commissioner Lucia emphasized prioritizing increased arts grant funding based on community feedback and identified it as a key focus area for the proposed framework.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. ART MURAL APPLICATION AT 2096 HARBOR BOULEVARD**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, introduced Robert Plant.

Commissioner Derderian expressed support for the mural project, noting it would enhance visibility of art along Harbor Boulevard and shared clarification received from the artist regarding the design's meaning.

Chair Ochoa expressed support for the mural, noting its dynamic design and anticipated positive impact on Harbor Boulevard upon completion.

Public Comment: None.

## **2. ART MURAL APPLICATION AT 2274 NEWPORT BOULEVARD**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, Arts Specialist, introduced Diana Mueller.

Commissioner Lucia praised the presentation and project, highlighting the local investment and expressing hope that other developers would incorporate similar arts elements in their projects.

Chair Ochoa expressed appreciation for the project, noting it would enhance an area lacking public art and commended the inclusion of a local Orange County artist.

No public comments.

## **3. SIDEWALK POETRY PROJECT REVIEW**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Commissioner Ashendorf expressed support for the Poetry Project, commending staff's direction on themes, emphasis on history, and inclusion of youth engagement.

Chair Ochoa asked how themes were selected and whether community outreach similar to Brentwood Park would be conducted for Shalimar Park.

Commissioner Lucia suggested including a definition of the Sidewalk Poetry Project and images from Brentwood Park to provide additional context.

Commissioner Derderian inquired about planned outreach efforts to engage teens and encourage participation in the Poetry Project.

Chair Ochoa inquired about a potential teen workshop at Shalimar Park, requested inclusion of a Spanish-language poem and clarification on translations, and expressed support for expanding stipends for participating poets.

Vice Chair Mann shared personal experiences highlighting the positive impact of murals on communities and expressed strong support for public art initiatives.

No public comments.

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

Derderian suggested exploring partnerships and future investments to expand public art, particularly in underserved areas like Shalimar Park, to enhance community identity and engagement.

**ADJOURNMENT** Chair Ochoa adjourned at 7:16 PM.