

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Ashendorf.

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

PRESENTATION:

1. ARTS IN THE PARK

Ms. Astrid Perez from Coastal Corridor Alliance presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jim Fitzpatrick: Encouraged the Arts Commission to be bold, exercise its authority, and pursue stronger community impact. He also expressed concern that resident voices had previously been limited, suggested that some staff recommendations warranted reconsideration, and urged commissioners to seize their opportunity to do meaningful work for the community.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Ashendorf: Acknowledged City staff member, Megan Gurrola, for her behind-the-scenes work and her role in assembling the exhibition at the Senior Center. She also recognized fellow commissioners, the Poet Laureate, and community members involved in the Brentwood Park sidewalk poetry process, encouraged review of the regularly updated arts calendar, and highlighted Urban Workshop as a valuable local maker space supporting diverse artistic expression.

Vice Chair Derderian: Expressed enthusiasm for the new year and commended staff for their work on Snoopy House, noting the variety of performances and community effort involved. He also shared that he had served on the Brentwood Park poetry selection group, described the process as rewarding, and expressed excitement about expanding the City’s artistic presence.

Chair Ochoa: Highlighted the sidewalk poetry as an exciting example of meaningful community engagement and expressed hope that it could be expanded citywide to increase accessibility to public art. She also praised the success of the Senior Center dance concert by Backhausdance. Congratulated Commissioner Wondercheck and Ms. Thomas on their recent achievements, and expressed appreciation for the Commission and anticipation for the year ahead.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. MINUTES – 11/06/25 Draft Minutes

Jim Fitzpatrick: commended the thoroughness and quality of the meeting minutes and acknowledged the work of the individual preparing them. He suggested that the City consider utilizing AI technology to transcribe and produce minutes in order to increase efficiency and allow staff to focus on other priorities.

MOTION/SECOND: Commissioner Wondercheck made a motion to approve November 6, 2025 meeting minutes/Seconded by Chair Ochoa.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Commissioner Ford

Motion Carried: 6-0

MONTHLY REPORTS

1. ARTS SPECIALIST UPDATE

Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Vice Chair Derderian inquired about the projected timeline for bringing the contract back before City Council. He also asked about the proper process for reporting graffiti on utility boxes and 311 app.

Chair Ochoa asked whether the Planning Department had been in communication with staff regarding the concrete poetry project.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Vice Chair Derderian and Commissioner Wondercheck presented.

Commissioner Lucia expressed appreciation for the multi-generational approach and offered her support.

Commissioner Ashendorf asked whether there were plans to memorialize the process, such as through video or audio recordings, to preserve it as part of the City's history.

Commissioner Wondercheck shared that one potential rehearsal location was the Costa Mesa Senior Center to ensure accessibility for seniors and support a multi-generational experience. She expressed enthusiasm about making the event inclusive and accessible.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Ms. Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager, presented.

MOTION/SECOND: Commissioner Wondercheck made a motion for Alisa Ochoa to stay on as Arts Commission Chair/Seconded by Commissioner Mann.

No public comment.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Commissioner Ford

Motion Carried: 6-0

Commissioner Mann asked if we could nominate Commissioner Erica Lucia?

Commissioner Lucia respectfully declined and nominated Commissioner Mann.

MOTION/SECOND: Commissioner Lucia made a motion to nominate Commissioner Allison Mann to be Arts Vice Chair/Seconded by Commissioner Ashendorf.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Commissioner Ford

Motion Carried: 6-0

2. **ART IN PUBLIC PLACES DRAFT ORDINANCE REVIEW**

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Correspondence was received for this item.

Public Comment:

Ana Gromis (Building Industry Association of Southern California, Orange County Chapter): Expressed support for public art but raised concerns that the proposed 1% fee on private development could create a barrier to housing production and increase costs for consumers. She urged the Commission to exempt housing from the requirement and instead consider incentive-based approaches, such as zoning flexibility or expedited processing, and offered to collaborate on alternative solutions.

Jim Fitzpatrick: Opposed mandates related to public art, stating they could increase housing and business costs and create regulatory burdens. He advocated for incentive-based strategies, suggested leveraging larger public works budgets, and expressed opposition to the cost of the arts master plan consultant, encouraging greater efficiency and alternative approaches.

Vice Chair Derderian asked for clarification on the development review process related to the Art in Public Places requirement, including how projects would be assessed, how funding allocations would be determined, and what role the Commission would have in approving proposed artwork. He also inquired about potential legal authority to reject proposed art, whether applicants could be required to submit revised proposals, and whether incentive-based alternatives had been considered.

Commissioner Mann supported an incentive-based approach rather than a mandate and referenced her own experience navigating the homeowner permitting process as an example of the need for incentives.

Chair Ochoa asked whether the Planning Commission had reviewed the draft and suggested referring the item for further exploration of incentives, including expedited permitting. She noted that successful examples of voluntary public art projects already existed in the City.

Commissioner Ashendorf reflected on the historical success of 1% for art programs but acknowledged the changing development climate and emphasized the need for creative incentives to advance public art locally. Also supported exploring strategies such as streamlining permitting and collaborating with developers, citing successful art-integrated projects along Bristol Street.

Commissioner Lucia stated that public feedback was valuable to the discussion and suggested conducting broader outreach to developers and business owners who had voluntarily incorporated public art to gather insights. She described the discussion as an important study session in advancing the City's identity as the *City of the Arts*.

Chair Ochoa: echoed commissioner comments.

Vice Chair Derderian advocated for art to be incorporated earlier in public works projects and sustainable public art funding source.

3. ARTS AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-27

Ms. Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager, presented.

Vice Chair Derderian inquired about the current and prior fiscal year cannabis tax revenue amounts allocated to the arts and requested clarification on the proposed funding structure for the Arts and Culture Master Plan update, including whether previously requested funds had been approved. He also asked about the anticipated timeline for contract approval, plan development, and Council adoption, expressing concern that implementation might realistically not occur until Fiscal Year 2027–28 given budget cycles and scheduling constraints.

Chair Ochoa asked whether the proposed \$60,000 budget was sufficient based on the applications received for the Arts and Culture Master Plan update.

Vice Chair Derderian sought clarification on the \$60,000 allocation for large-scale installations.

Chair Ochoa noted that the sidewalk poetry initiative currently lacked funding and asked whether existing allocated funds could be redirected to support it or incorporated into upcoming Parks CIP projects. She also inquired about the existence of a municipal arts fund with rollover or interest-earning capacity and reiterated her request to explore sustainable public art funding options, including grants and other revenue strategies.

Commissioner Ashendorf expressed frustration regarding budget uncertainties and questioned the measurable impact of higher-cost line items, specifically free Segerstrom Center campus tickets and park performances. She requested attendance and outcome data to evaluate whether those expenditures were providing sufficient community benefit compared to smaller programs such as Art Crawl.

Commissioner Wondercheck asked whether Segerstrom Center might be willing to donate tickets rather than relying solely on City funding and noted that the proposed allocation had already been reduced from prior years. She emphasized the importance of identifying available funding sources.

Vice Chair Derderian suggested that during the two-year period awaiting completion of the Arts and Culture Master Plan, the Commission could consider developing a strategic framework to guide interim priorities and potential recommendations to City Council. Also expressed interest in exploring what actions or funding requests could be advanced independently of staff limitations.

Chair Ochoa asked whether Vice Chair Derderian was proposing the formation of another study group to explore those ideas.

Vice Chair Derderian With pending approval, expressed interest in collaborating with interested commissioners to develop a conceptual framework for the next one to two years that could later be brought forward for full Commission consideration.

Chair Ochoa emphasized the importance of aligning any interim framework discussions with the City's General Plan goals and requested that staff report back regarding the feasibility of such discussions.

Commissioner Mann expressed appreciation for the increased arts grant funding and sought clarification on whether the existing master plan remained in effect, noting that the \$60,000 allocation was intended for an update. She questioned whether the full \$60,000 was necessary for the update process.

ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER MEMBER & STAFF COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT Chair Ochoa adjourned at 7:37 PM.