

APRIL 2, 2026
6:00 P.M. – UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Ford.

ROLL CALL

= Present = Absent

Commissioners

- Charlene Ashendorf
- Fisher Derderian*
- Brendan Ford
- Debora Wondercheck
- Allison Mann, Vice Chair
- Alisa Ochoa, Chair

City Staff

- Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Svcs. Director
- Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager
- Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist
- Laura Fautua, Executive Assistant
- Kathia Viteri, Recreation Specialist

*Commissioner Derderian arrived during Presentation 1 at 6:10 PM.

PRESENTATION:

1. NEWPORT-MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT - ARTS REPORT

Tamara Fairbanks from NMUSD presented.

2. THE CITY OF COSTA MESA'S POET LAUREATE IN CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Poet Laureate, Danielle Hanson, presented a poem and event updates.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Derderian: Expressed appreciation for the Poet Laureate's contributions, suggested incorporating recommended poetry list readings via public meetings into future laureate expectations, and noted City Council support and community interest in expanding arts in parks.

Commissioner Ashendorf: Highlighted the collaborative and community-driven nature of the poetry-in-the-park initiative and expressed enthusiasm for continued partnership between the Arts Commission and Parks.

Commission Ford: Commended the Poet Laureate, encouraged continued engagement with poetry, and emphasized his goal of integrating public art installations in all City parks.

Chair Ochoa: Shared appreciation for recent arts efforts, promoted upcoming grant opportunities, recognized contributors to the Brentwood Park sidewalk poetry, and emphasized expanding public art with consideration for accessibility beyond park spaces.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. MINUTES – 03/05/2026 Draft Minutes

The following corrections were requested:

- Commissioner Ashendorf - Page 1: Clerical adjustment to the motion/second.
- Chair Ochoa - Page 3: Adjustments to Chair's last name and Page 4: Remove repeated word, *Arts Specialist*.

MOTION/SECOND: Chair Ochoa made a motion to approve the March 5, 2026, amended meeting minutes/Seconded by Commissioner Derderian.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Ford, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Wondercheck, Chair Ochoa

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Mann and Commissioner Wondercheck

Motion Carried: 5-0

MONTHLY REPORTS

1. ARTS SPECIALIST UPDATE

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

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 Commissioner Lucia and Commissioner Derderian to present.

Commissioner Ford commended the presentation and supported the proposed funding strategies, but questioned the \$100,000 consultant cost and inquired about opportunities to reduce or offset the expense to maximize community benefit.

Ochoa expressed appreciation for the work presented, supported exploring adjustments to the transient occupancy tax, and suggested adding a public art ordinance as a potential additional recommendation.

Ms. Villasenor clarified that the public art ordinance is still in development and could be presented separately from the budget framework as part of a future item to City Council.

Public Comment:

Nancy Warzer-Brady: Expressed strong support for the recommendations, noting they were thoughtful and well-developed, and encouraged the Commission as it advances the item to City Council.

MOTION/SECOND: Chair Ochoa made a motion to approve Arts Commission recommendations/Seconded by Commissioner Ford.

Commissioner Derderian acknowledged concerns regarding consultant costs but supported including them in the proposed budget as a practical approach, noting it may streamline approval and serve as a temporary bridge until the Master Plan process further refines priorities.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Ford, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Wondercheck, Chair Ochoa

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Mann and Commissioner Wondercheck

Motion Carried: 5-0

NEW BUSINESS:

1. APPROVAL OF ARTS GRANT AWARDS FISCAL YEAR 2025-26

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Public Comment:

Ramon Guzman: Shared his grant application focused on a Hispanic Heritage Month art installation, expressed personal connection to Costa Mesa, and conveyed appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the community.

Nancy Warzer-Brady: Backhausdance Education & Community Engagement Director, thanked the Commission for prior support of the “Dance for Joy and Well Being” program, highlighted its positive community impact, and outlined enhancements for the upcoming proposal, including live music and a themed performance.

Commissioner Lucia emphasized the importance of arts funding, noting the growing number of applications and the need for increased resources to better support community programs.

Commissioner Ford thanked the review panel for their efforts, congratulated grant recipients, and expressed hope for increased funding to support more arts initiatives in the future.

Commissioner Ashendorf described the grant review process as rewarding yet challenging due to limited funding, commended the selected applicants, and expressed enthusiasm for the programs’ community impact.

Chair Ochoa commended applicants, emphasized the importance of supporting local artists, advocated for increased arts funding, and suggested future considerations for grant structure and eligibility.

MOTION/SECOND: Chair Ochoa made a motion to approve 2026 Arts Grant program awardees for 2025-26/Seconded by Commissioner Ashendorf.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Ford, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Wondercheck, Chair Ochoa

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Mann and Commissioner Wondercheck

Motion Carried: 5-0

2. ARTS COMMISSION PRESENTATION TO CITY COUNCIL

Ms. Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, Arts Specialist, presented.

Commissioner Derderian inquired whether the proposed budget language assumed adoption of the Arts and Culture Master Plan or if revisions were needed to better

reflect the Commission's intent.

Chair Ochoa clarified that the referenced language was a placeholder and should be updated to align with the Commission's discussion and direction.

Commissioner Lucia recommended revising the language to reflect the approved recommendation, including specifying the proposed increase to the cannabis tax allocation.

Commissioner Ford supported aligning the budget language with the Commission's formal recommendations to ensure consistency.

Commissioner Derderian acknowledged the Commission was entering a new phase with a formal proposal and inquired how the proposed budgets would be presented to City Council.

No public comments.

Commissioner Lucia recommended adding a purpose slide to clarify the intent of the budget priorities, emphasizing that the request focuses on structural improvements rather than new funding.

Chair Ochoa asked whether multiple fiscal years would be included in the proposed budget presentation.

Commissioner Lucia supported a multi-year budget approach to address inefficiencies and demonstrate forward-looking planning during the interim period without an updated Master Plan.

Commissioner Derderian suggested incorporating visual examples of completed public art projects into the presentation to highlight past accomplishments and support the case for continued investment.

Commissioner Ashendorf agreed with including visual examples, noting recent projects such as murals and sidewalk poetry as effective representations of the Commission's work.

Chair Ochoa discussed balancing visual content with presentation time constraints, emphasized the importance of strong visual impact, and invited an additional commissioner to participate in the City Council presentation.

Commissioner Lucia supported including visual content and suggested incorporating photos from arts programs to reflect a broader range of arts activities.

Commissioner Dederian expressed interest in participating in the presentation and recommended including collage-style slides showcasing various art projects to highlight accomplishments and support future investment.

Commissioner Ford highlighted the significance of the July 3rd choir event as a major community engagement opportunity that demonstrates the value of arts programming.

Public Comment:

Nancy Warzer-Brady: Encouraged the use of strong visual storytelling with minimal

text, emphasized the economic and community impact of arts programming, and offered support for presentation preparation.

Commissioner Ford encouraged strong attendance at the City Council presentation, including members of the arts community, to demonstrate unified support and reinforce the importance of the Commission's recommendations.

MOTION/SECOND: Commissioner Lucia made a motion to adopt the recommendation that were shared by the commissioners and the community during public comment for the presentation/Seconded by Chair Ochoa.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Ashendorf, Commissioner Derderian, Commissioner Ford, Commissioner Lucia, Commissioner Wondercheck, Chair Ochoa

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Vice Chair Mann and Commissioner Wondercheck

Motion Carried: 5-0

ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER MEMBER & STAFF COMMENTS

Commissioner Derderian expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts and support in advancing the Commission's work.

Chair Ochoa thanked participants for their contributions, encouraged advocacy with City Council members regarding the budget and recommendations, and congratulated grant recipients.

ADJOURNMENT Chair Ochoa adjourned at 7:30 PM.