
THE COSTA MESA ARTS COMMISSION

AUGUST 7, 2025
6:00 P.M. – UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Mann.

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
- ☐ Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager
- ☐ Ashley Thomas, Sr. Recreation Supervisor
- ☒ Laura Fautua, Executive Assistant
- ☐ Kathia Viteri, Recreation Specialist

*Vice Chair Derderian arrived at 6:08 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Ashendorf: Thanked the Costa Mesa Foundation and staff for the Concerts in the Park and July 3rd event, praised summer arts programming, highlighted upcoming arts activities, and appreciated the City Council's recent study session for clarifying commissioners' roles.

Commissioner Ford: Commended the success of the Concerts in the Park, July 3rd, and Make Music Day. Praised staff's hard work and expressed enthusiasm for collaborating on the Arts and Culture Master Plan.

Commissioner Mann: Praised the Concerts in the Park event for uniting the community, shared excitement for ARTventure, and suggested that the Arts Commission consider a presence at the OC Fair to increase public awareness and engagement.

Commissioner Wondercheck: Thanked staff and participants for the success of Make Music Day, praised Commissioner Ford's performance, and announced plans to formalize a Make Music Day committee for future events.

Vice Chair Derderian: Commended community engagement at the Concerts in the Park, summarized his July Council presentation on strengthening the Arts Commission's role, and thanked Councilmember Pettis and city leadership for their continued support of arts initiatives.

Chair Ochoa: Thanked commissioners and staff for their leadership and participation in community arts events, emphasized the public's desire for more art citywide, proposed creating an arts-focused Instagram or newsletter for outreach.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. MINUTES

06/05/2025 Arts Commission Draft Minutes

Public Comment: None.

MOTION/SECOND: Chair Ochoa motioned to approve the minutes for June 5, 2025/Seconded by Commissioner Wondercheck.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried: 7-0

MONTHLY REPORTS:

1. ARTS SPECIALIST UPDATE

Arts Specialist, Laurette Garner, presented.

Commissioner Ashendorf praised staff for the successful implementation of the utility art box program and expressed delight at seeing new artworks appear throughout the city.

Commissioner Mann thanked staff for their work supporting the Arts Commission and emphasized the importance of having a dedicated, paid staff position to ensure the success and organization of arts programs.

Chair Ochoa asked how many staff members the City of Cincinnati had in roles similar to Ms. Garner's within their arts department.

Public Comment:

Angely Andrade Vallarta: Expressed excitement for the upcoming Fairview Development Center project and encouraged the inclusion of creative and arts-focused spaces within its planned community center to support children and families on Costa Mesa's west side.

Eli: Shared their love of art, singing, and painting, thanked the city for showcasing art and inspiring kids, and hoped such opportunities would continue in the future.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. ARTS GRANT PROGRAM REVIEW OF GUIDELINES

Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Commissioner Mann praised the inclusion of the facility discount for grantees, expressed concern about grant eligibility restrictions tied to nonprofit sponsorships, and suggested exploring additional non-monetary support options through a possible subcommittee.

Public Comment: None.

Commissioner Lucia supported offering discounted use of city facilities for grantees as an effective and equitable solution.

Commissioner Ashendorf supported the discount program given reduced grant funding, urged future increases to grant amounts to better serve artists, and asked staff about marketing timelines for the January grant cycle.

Vice Chair Derderian commended staff for implementing the facility discount, reiterated his desire for stronger emphasis on funding new art over education programs, and suggested promoting grantee events through city marketing channels while supporting the guidelines as presented.

Chair Ochoa agreed with Commissioner Ashendorf on the need to increase grant funding and requested staff guidance on how to reallocate funds to restore previous funding levels.

MOTION/SECOND: Vice Chair Derderian motioned to approve the Arts Grant Guidelines for the 2025-26 grant cycle/Seconded by Commissioner Lucia.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

Motion Carried: 7-0

NEW BUSINESS:

1. SCOPE OF WORK ARTS AND CULTURE PLAN UPDATE

Laurette Garner, Arts Specialist, presented.

Public Comment:

Jeff Pettis: Spoke as a resident to commend the Commission's work, urged them to be bold in shaping Costa Mesa's five-to-ten year arts vision, and encouraged prioritizing visible, public art to reflect the city's identity as the City of the Arts.

Commissioner Mann praised the evolving scope of the Arts and Culture Master Plan,

Commissioner Ford supported emphasizing public-facing art such as murals and sculptures that reflect Costa Mesa's history and the unique cultural character of each district across the city.

Commissioner Mann suggested refining certain wording for clarity, shared her belief that art is inherently inclusive, and supported creative public art concepts such as artistic goat sculptures celebrating local history.

Commissioner Ashendorf highlighted the need for creative new funding sources to support the plan's goals and encouraged exploring innovative financing strategies beyond the current limited budget.

Commissioner Lucia agreed that identifying creative funding sources was essential to achieve the master plan's goals and expand the city's artistic initiatives.

Commissioner Wondercheck proposed exploring low-cost, high-impact public art options such as painted crosswalks near schools to engage children and local artists while increasing visibility of art in daily life.

Vice Chair Derderian emphasized developing a clear long-term vision of what it means for Costa Mesa to be the City of the Arts, suggested a study session for commissioners to refine proposals, advocated for expanding public art and the creative economy through incentives and zoning ideas, and called for planning future staffing needs to support the vision.

Chair Ochoa agreed that the current master plan provided a strong foundation for continued growth and development of Costa Mesa's arts initiatives. Praised the scope of work, highlighted the value of low-cost pedestrian art inspired by Redmond's model, encouraged stronger interdepartmental collaboration, supported including diversity, equity, and inclusion as a citywide value, and endorsed a five-year planning horizon.

Commissioner Ashendorf encouraged commissioners to attend school board meetings to promote the City's arts efforts and strengthen connections with local schools.

Commissioner Mann announced the upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony for Estancia High School's new theater on September 9 and encouraged commissioners to attend.

Vice Chair Derderian requested a future agenda item to explore Costa Mesa's participation in the America 250 celebration, proposing that the Arts Commission lead or contribute to an arts-focused citywide event.

ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER MEMBER & STAFF COMMENTS

Chair Ochoa shared that she and her son enjoyed attending the Arts in the Park event and encouraged others to join the upcoming Coastal Corridor community mosaic workshops and art project unveiling.

ADJOURNMENT Chair Ochoa adjourned at 7:20 PM.