

**City of Alameda**

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION (PAC) MEETING**

**Monday, October 21, 2024**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Liz Rush called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Liz Rush, Peter Platzgummer, Robert Ferguson, Lisa Martin, and James Martin.

Jackie Keliiaa, Dwayne Dalman and Amanda Gehrke present as staff to the commission.

**Remote participants:** none.

**2. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**3. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS**

**3-A 2024-4465** Presentation on the History of the City of Alameda Public Art Program and a Summary of Lessons Learned - Staff member Amanda Gehrke presenting.

**Informational presentation only; no PAC action is required.**

The Public Art Program the City began in 2003 with the adoption of the Public Art Ordinance. There was a public art program prior to it that was handled by the Park and Recreation Department.

The Public Art Ordinance requires most development projects that cost over \$250,000 to dedicate one percent of their construction costs to public art. Artwork can either be located on-site (on-site artwork), or the developer can choose to contribute money to the Public Art Fund (PAF), and that money in turn is used to fund physical and cultural arts grants. For art that is funded through the Public Art Fund and installed at other sites, we call it offsite, or in-lieu artwork.

One of the things that is unusual about the City of Alameda's program within the state of California is that we can use our Public Art Fund for cultural arts grants, but it is limited to 25 percent of the total.

A large part of the program is issuing and administering the Public Art Fund (PAF) grants. We also facilitate the review and approval of onsite public artwork from applications to presentation of proposals to PAC for approval. Once approved, we make sure there is

proper documentation, timely installation, and maintenance of the artwork. Staff also manage and maintain an inventory of public art, staff the PAC, and perform other tasks.

During the period of 2003 to 2015, the majority of developers chose to put their public art onsite. There were nine public artworks installed during this period with a combined value of over \$750,000. Prior to 2015, there wasn't much money put into the PAF; the average balance between 2007 and 2015 was about \$55,000. During this time, the program didn't issue any grants due to a lack of funds and a dedicated staff person to do the work.

The turning point came in 2015/2016 when the first program staff person (Amanda Gehrke) was hired to administer the program, and we received two large contributions to the PAF. Then, the Public Art Ordinance was amended by City Council. The language was revised to allow grants for nonprofits. Also, there was a contribution cap, the maximum contribution to PAF was \$150,000, regardless of the size of the project, that was removed.

From 2017 to the present, PAC has sponsored six RFP cycles for a total of about \$600,000 of public art funding through more than 40 individual grants. During that time, PAC oversaw the approval of seven new onsite public artworks, revised the Public Art Ordinance language and its approval by City Council, and managed the development and approval of the Public Art Master Plan.

**Public Art Grant Application Process** – We asked applicants to submit a lot of information: a conceptual design, a budget, a material sample, fabrication processes. RFPs are very common in government, but this isn't the best practice for public art proposals we discovered. Request for Qualifications (RFQ) are better since it allows artists to submit more general information about their work and references. From that pool, evaluators can establish a short-list of artists they want to work with. Then they can give the artists more information so they can create a site-specific artwork proposal. For RFPs, artists didn't want their ideas in the public realm without compensation, so they were reluctant to apply; this impacted the quality and number of applications PAC received. Another big decision that impacted the applications was to not identify the location for the public art ahead of time, instead leaving it to the artist to choose and get permission for it.

This created a lot of confusion and created more work for the artists. It was also contrary to best practices for cities since in many cases, the city identifies the location so they can think strategically about public art's location.

Ms. Gehrke said that the Rockspinner's artwork from 2018 created unanticipated issues and problems that delayed the construction and installation of the art, which also cost an additional \$23,000 beyond the \$150,000 budget. The project was completed in 2022 about four years after the grant was awarded. She also discussed the mural project, *Egrets with*

*no Regrets*. It took over a year to enter into contract with the property owner and ultimately, the property owner decided not to install the art. Staff worked with the PAC to identify a new location which required a new design. It took 16 months and six public meetings to manage the relocation of the artwork. The artwork was completed in 2022, many years later.

Ms. Gehrke said that the process led to staff and PAC's realization of the Complexities of Having Public Art: maintenance, insurance, and compliance with state and federal laws.

Lessons Learned:

1. Staff work that goes into the backend that isn't seen by City Council or public
2. Doing an RFQ instead of an RFP process to increase the quality and number of applications as well as compensating artists for their work.
3. Recommend staff/PAC identify a location for the art before issuing an RFQ.
4. Put public art on public property as much as possible to save time and money

Staff time and resources should be used as efficiently as possible so we can maximize the amount of public art in Alameda. We have 30 percent (10-12 hours/week) of one full-time staff person dedicated to the Public Art Program.

**Clarifying Questions – None.**

**Public Comment – None.**

### **Commissioner Discussion and Feedback**

Vice Chairperson Platzgummer said that having worked with lots of public art sculpture over the years, you never know what issues will arise, and the property owners are often responsible for them ultimately. He suggested an addition to the Public Art grant checklist of clarification of stakeholders for each part of the process and what information about the foundation the City can offer before the design phase of a proposal begins. Payment issues for artists is another concern.

Commissioner Ferguson said that the experience in 2017 of trying to bring a piece of art to Alameda was stopped by the reality that preparation of the site by a contractor would've consumed all the grant money he would have gotten for the piece of art. He liked the idea of separating the site preparation costs from the cost of the artwork itself.

Ms. Gehrke replied that she wants everyone to think ahead of time about cost and staff time as it relates to site preparation and how we can best work with artists.

Chairperson Rush said the PAC will look forward to the RFQ process since it will be new for the commission.

## Comments

Commissioner Platzgummer said he prefers the RFQ process though it takes longer than an RFP, and it requires communication between the PAC and the artists, so they don't miss opportunities.

Ms. Gehrke agreed that the City needs to be sure that we get out the word so a wide variety of artists can apply for projects. In the past, we have gotten the word out via press releases, PSAs, local papers, the City's website, mailing lists, website called Café that gets the word out to artists locally and internationally, and sent information to local arts organizations. Commissioner Platzgummer is part of the art installations at Burning Man, so he will also help get the word out to his contacts.

Commissioner Platzgummer said all public art projects should include a phase that engages community stakeholders for input about a project. Ms. Keliiaa agreed and said that in discussions she's had with other local city arts administrators about best practices for RFQs, several emphasized the importance of obtaining community and artists' input for any public art potential location.

### **3-B 2024-4464 Recommendation to Accept the Public Art Biennial Work Plan**

Ms. Keliiaa presented the plan. Public art and public programming are important to our city's social identity, our diversity, and the history of our city, and helps create a unique sense of place for our residents, workers, and visitors.

### **Summary of Public Art Master Plan's Overarching Activity for Next Five Years**

1. Year One – Building resources, communicating with developers who are looking to develop onsite art, maintaining the City's Public Art collection, issuing cultural art and arts programming RFPs, and continuing to administer them over time.
2. Year Two – Selecting a site and releasing an RFQ for physical art; simplifying the grants process; talking to local arts philanthropy groups; starting a new work plan; having cultural arts and arts programming on an annual basis for the next five years; and doing an RFQ every other year.
3. Year Three – Prioritizing and selecting sites for upcoming projects that our arts fellow Jack DenhamConroy has been working on; being nimble and flexible to new opportunities as they arise; and performing cultural arts and administration.
4. Year Four – Creating a visibility plan for the Public Art Program; assuring the community and its artists are aware of it; advertising open positions on PAC, which we did this year; interviewing, selecting, and orienting our two new commissioners; and celebrating new artwork.

5. Adopting a De-Accessioning policy, which is a plan to remove art from the Public Art collection; and doing the annual cultural arts programming RFP and its administration.

We are already in year one. We have completed the cultural art grants and successfully awarded them. We are doing the work plan; we also have a Public Art Map on our website that we are updating and streamlining; we are researching ways to simplify our grant process; prioritizing and selecting sites for upcoming projects; and finally advertising the open PAC positions.

Following her presentation, Ms. Keliiaa requested that PAC consider and accept the biennial work plan as presented here tonight.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Clarifying Questions**

Commissioner Platzgummer asked if commissioners could volunteer to help staff. He shared that a past on-site artwork installation process was challenging and it would be good to find a way for the PAC to have more say in the on-site artwork selection process.

Ms. Keliiaa said it was possible but, given the Brown Act, a subcommittee would likely be the way to proceed to achieve transparency in all such activities. Ms. Gehrke said that in the past a commissioner did outreach to help identify a site for a public art project.

Commissioner Ferguson asked if more than one RFQ could be done in year two; Ms. Keliiaa said that it would be challenging since it can take four or five years to install one piece of art and that it's something to consider since you don't want two different projects competing for staff time and resources, and also possibly cutting corners and lowering the quality of work, if you take on another RFQ beyond what's stated in the biennial work plan.

Vice Chairperson Rush asked how many sites the PAC will be issuing for the RFQ. Ms. Keliiaa said city will be issuing an RFQ for a primary site and the following RFQ will draw from the next primary site in the research Mr. Denham Conroy has been doing. He said there is a third site that has been chosen as a backup if there are complications with either of the first two sites.

Ms. Keliiaa notes that the upcoming RFQ will be the second call for physical artwork for the Public Art Program and that it will be a learning process.

Commissioner Platzgummer proposed to add the creation and adoption of PAC bylaws to year two and to add RFQ feedback to year three of the biennial workplan. He clarified that the RFQ feedback could be a postmortem discussion among the PAC commissioners and an email to RFQ respondents on the application process. Commissioner Rush said that there was a postmortem for the last RFP process.

Commissioner Platzgummer made a motion to accept the recommendations of the biennial work plan for year two, adding the creation and adoption of bylaws; and for year three, adding feedback or a debrief for the RFQ process that we engage in year two in a PAC meeting and soliciting it via email too from artists. Ms. Keliiaa said she needed time to review the changes and bring them back for the November meeting. Commissioner Platzgummer made a motion to delay the vote for the acceptance, and Chairperson Rush seconded it; the motion carried 5-0.

#### **4 STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Keliiaa introduced Dwayne Dalman, the new Economic Development Division Manager, who will attend PAC meetings going forward.

##### **4-A Recognition of former Public Art Commissioner and Chairperson, Adam Gillitt and former Public Art Commissioner, Jennifer Hoffecker.**

Ms. Keliiaa recognized former PAC commissioner and Chairperson, Adam Gillitt, with a certificate of appreciation for his eight years of service to PAC. Mr. Gillitt praised Ms. Gehrke's work for PAC during his time and said he was proud of the work that the PAC was able to accomplish during his tenure. Mr. Gillitt said that seeing tonight what the PAC is working on makes him excited for the future of public art in Alameda. He said he's grateful to have been a part of it. He thanked everyone.

Ms. Keliiaa had a certificate of appreciation for former Commissioner Jennifer Hoffecker and her four years of service on the PAC, but Ms. Hoffecker wasn't present to accept it.

#### **5. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS**

No written communication.

##### **Commissioner Non-agenda communications**

Commissioner Platzgummer reported that he attended the CODA Summit on Art, Technology and Place in Cincinnati, Ohio from October 16-18. He'd be happy to share with anyone what he learned from it. While there, he met Stephanie Dockery, the Manager of the Public Art Challenge from Bloomberg. He told her how important it was for Alameda to have been a finalist for the city public art grant in December 2023/January 2024.

Commissioner Ferguson expressed his gratitude for commissioners Gillitt and Hoffecker's service, and in helping him learn the ropes of the PAC when he began his tenure.

Chairperson Rush expressed her gratitude to Mr. Gillitt for being a role model, his mentorship and all his hard work on the commission.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairperson Rush adjourned the meeting at 7:22pm.