

City of Alameda

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION (PAC) MEETING January 22, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Liz Rush called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Jackie Keliiaa present as staff to the Commission. Absent: Dwayne Dalman

Remote Participants: None

3. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. MINUTES

4-A 2025-4712 Review and Approve Draft Minutes of December 16, 2024

Chairperson Liz Rush asked to fix her designation from Vice Chairperson to Chairperson in the meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes as amended was given by Commissioner Platzgummer and seconded by Commissioner Lisa Martin. **The motion was not voted on (4:55 of video)**

5. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

5-A 2025-4709 Recommendation to Cancel the March 19, 2025 Public Art Commission Meeting and Approve a New Meeting Date in April, 2025

After clarifying questions, discussion and feedback, all commissioners agreed the next PAC meeting will be on Monday, April 14, 2025. Staff member Keliiaa reminded the commissioners that the meeting will be longer since they'll be deliberating and discussing this year's grant applications.

A motion to approve the next PAC meeting date of Monday, April 14 given by Commissioner Ferguson and seconded by Chairperson Rush. The motion was adopted 5-0.

5-B 2025-4710 Recommendation for the Public Art Commission to Discuss Eligibility Criteria for Cultural Arts and Arts Programming Grantees

Clarifying Questions

Staff member Keliiaa reminded commissioners that due to past public comments that have

been received about repeat grantees as well as equitable distribution of resources, staff are recommending that the PAC discuss whether the eligibility criteria should be modified.

So, for example, when we had our applications last year, there were two grants that were approved for the same organization. So, we received comments: should there be a limit on the number of grants that an individual organization can receive, or should there be a limit on frequency? For example, an organization gets a grant one year and then must sit it out the next year?

So, staff member Keliiaa said this is an open discussion with our commissioners about whether there should be a cap on the frequency an organization may receive a grant. Also, in any given year, organizations may apply for more than one grant in a year given that the proposed programs are different. Currently, there's no limitations.

And the outcome of this discussion will impact the eligibility criteria for the 2025 Request for Proposals for Cultural Art and Arts Programming (RFPs).

Public Comment

Rachel Campos de Ivanov of RADIUM and board member of West End Arts District (WEAD). She said Alameda Arts Organizations, big and small, are really challenged now. The demographics in town work against us often to get funding from some of the other major foundations. So, it puts a lot of need and pressure on the funds that are available to us. With the requirements for cultural arts programming, it changes the dynamic of the types of variety of different things that we can offer because grant funding is only one avenue. And that means we're down to selling alcohol at our events to generate revenue, and, if we're lucky, getting some sponsorships. So, that's what it's like on our side.

Tara Pilbrow, Executive Director of WEAD, said you should consider if the free element is 100 percent necessary. Performances high in the air allow plenty of people to see it but as soon as you're doing anything that requires site lines on a smaller scale, then you must restrict your audience, which is logistically very complicated when it's a free event. And you can't repeat performances five times due to costs.

Commissioner Lisa Martin asked Pilbrow how long WEAD has been receiving grants? Pilbrow said initially in 2018 and then with gaps during the Pandemic, and two years after that.

Discussion and Feedback

Staff member Keliiaa put up on the screen the list of 2024's 21 grant applications and eight awardees. There were four in the \$5,000 category and four in the \$10,000 category.

Chairperson Rush said what we're discussing is whether the PAC would like to modify the criteria for awarding grants? Staff member Keliiaa said that the alternative is that there are no changes, and we continue as is.

Commissioner Ferguson said he didn't think a change was necessary. And just the fact that some people are successful at applying for grants doesn't mean they should be excluded just because they happen to do it in one year. Are you going to tell me that that people you see out there now are ineligible next year? All these people are worthy of consideration.

Commissioner Platzgummer said he didn't think we should change the eligibility based on former recipients, which is we don't have enough other funding systems to make that happen. If large arts organizations in Alameda would get annual funding, then I would be very much in favor of doing this and using programming to support new arts organizations that have not had a chance yet. But in this case, that's not possible.

He said I do think that it could be a consideration when two candidates have the same number of points and we're essentially running out of out of grants, which could be an option. He said one thing is eligibility for receiving grants in general and the other is receiving more than one grant. Last year we had an organization that received two grants, so that meant other organizations didn't receive any. I wouldn't change the criteria, and I would still allow it, but I would make sure that this is a point of discussion when we are deciding who would receive it and who won't.

Commissioner Lisa Martin said she wouldn't want to make any changes to the grant eligibility criteria for at least 12 months so that current grantees would have time to adapt and plan for that change in the future.

Commissioner James Martin said he didn't see any reason to narrow the pool of applicants. If anything, he said we should be expanding the pool of applicants and the kind of projects that we're looking at. Narrowing it down based on automatic criteria doesn't make sense.

Commissioner Ferguson said the system now is a good one. Our job is to put the best art projects on the road, to get them on their feet. We can only give them so much money. Chairperson Rush said a lot of these organizations work the grants into their budget. They submit professional proposals but there's a lot of other things to take into consideration when we look at these proposals.

A motion to make no changes to the eligibility criteria was given by Commissioner Ferguson and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Platzgummer. The motion was adopted 5-0.

Ms. Pilbrow added that the ability to apply twice is unique and valuable and that she has not seen it anywhere else.

Commissioner Lisa Martin initiated a discussion about the free admission question for grantee's events, but everyone agreed it would be a topic for discussion or an agenda item at a future meeting.

Commissioner Ferguson asked and it was clarified that grantees can't charge for their events. But he said they can ask for donations, right?

Ms. Pilbrow said one of the issues that we have with free events is not only that the money's not coming in. It's also a question of whether you get 150 of the people who reserved it don't turn up because it was free, then you've got a half full event and a wasted opportunity to give it to other people.

Commissioner Lisa Martin asked to table further discussion of the issue since it wasn't on the agenda. All commissioners agreed.

5-C 2025-4711 Recommendation to Accept the Update on the City of Alameda's Public Art Fund Balance

Staff member Keliiaa projected the Public Art Fund Balance on the main screen. She said there are several projects on hold now, including Multifamily, a big one, due to our current economy.

The Pennzoil site was a little over \$300,000; that was the most recent contribution to the Fund. We also have the \$150,000 project that will be delivered at Storehouse Lofts by Alameda Point Redevelopers. So aside from those recent contributions, we are not anticipating future contributions to the Fund anytime soon. All the development is currently on pause. She said she can continue to provide this update at meetings and update anything that changes. Right now, according to Planning and Building, we don't have anything new coming.

Staff member Keliiaa reported the current balance in the fund is \$1,310,307.12. We're about to commit to \$60,000 in cultural arts grants and we'll be putting out a RFQ for a physical art piece, which could be about \$150,000 or more. So, she said we must be mindful of the balance since there doesn't appear to be contributions coming anytime soon, however that could change with new development.

Clarifying Questions

Commissioner Lisa Martin asked why the Aquatic Center contribution wasn't on the list. Staff member Keliiaa said it could be an error, adding that it will be approximately a \$300,000 contribution. The Aquatic Center is all preliminary planning at this time, while all the other projects on the list are permitted projects.

Commissioner Platzgummer asked, and staff member Keliiaa confirmed, per the Public Art Ordinance, the City will have to make a one percent contribution for artwork for the Aquatic Center development. Chairperson Rush said that from the December meeting's minutes it says there will be a contribution, and the City wants to work with us very tightly on the artwork.

Chairperson Rush said she'd like the Aquatic Center's one percent artwork contribution clarified. Staff member Keliiaa said the only waiver she requested before was for the Alameda Food Bank for about \$50,000. It was granted but it was only specifically because of their contribution to the redevelopment of historic Alameda Point and also for their focus on working with the most vulnerable populations in Alameda.

Commissioner Platzgummer asked, and staff member Keliiaa replied that two development projects are on hold now: one along Clement and the other one on West Midway Ave. Base Reuse shared that their multifamily projects are on hold now due to the economy.

He added that in accordance with the Master Plan, PAC is trying to do \$60,000 in programming each year. And then we're trying to do a sculpture every two years roughly

going for the same amount of \$150,000 to \$200,000. That means that in the next five years, we would pay \$300,000 for programming and another \$300,000 to \$400,000 for sculptures. Ms. Keliiaa confirmed that estimate.

Chairperson Rush asked about PAC's money: How is it held? How is interest paid on the money? How is it invested? Are we maximizing our returns on this money?

Ms. Keliiaa said she knows it's in an account in the Finance Department that we draw from whenever she sets up contracts.

Chairperson Rush said it would be a shame if it's just sitting there and not earning anything. Because our biggest problem is how do we keep this going? Our land is limited which means future construction is limited.

What happens when building stops, our money dries up and then where's the PAC? Staff member Keliiaa said she will ask the Finance Department, but she didn't think the money is generating interest annually. It means we're also losing money to inflation, Commissioner Platzgummer said.

Chairperson Rush said she'd like to see an endowment. You need about \$1,000,000 to get something like that started, but there's a lot of public arts organizations that do have endowments. I don't know if that's possible here. Staff member Keliiaa said she would get clarification from the Finance Department.

Commissioner Platzgummer said he wanted to remain conservative and spend about \$60,000 per year on programming. Could we spend \$10,000 extra if we have so many good projects in a year? Chairperson Rush said there's no set amount and staff member Keliiaa said she was just following what PAC has done in previous years. It's written into the RFP that we're going to have \$60,000. She said she'll have to find out if that could be amended mid-process. She'll talk to the City Attorney.

Commissioner Ferguson asked if it isn't possible for us to have a contingency emergency fund? Last year we said we couldn't do it. If we did, wouldn't we open ourselves up to other people showing up for help?

Chairperson Rush said PAC needs to meet our goals and stick to the Master Art Plan, even though it's not perfect. We can make little changes but not pick it apart.

Public Comment

Ms. Pilbrow of WEAD said she thought that awarding extra money is a lovely idea but thought it sounded problematic. We as organizations can't rely on PAC to fund the same events year after year. And the money is a small portion of our budgets. We need more corporate sponsorships and other people giving us money.

Discussion and Feedback

Commissioner Platzgummer said it feels that we have six or seven years of money in the Fund, if no new money comes in, we're safe, but then we'll be out of money. He wants to be conservative. One thing he doesn't like about the programming is that we have a grant system where we're missing the hotel tax and we're essentially making the general support

for arts organizations on a case-by-case basis. He'd prefer an annual contribution and no discussions about ticketing so organizations can split their funds however they want. All these things are impossible now. He'd like to see in a year that PAC has a conversation about issues we're having with the Public Arts Master Plan. After some testing, there should be time to go back into the document and add what works, what doesn't work.

Commissioner Ferguson said the Fund contributions from new construction will dry up. It won't be there in five years. We already have a slowdown due to various factors.

A discussion ensued about alternative financing for the Fund. Chairperson Rush said staff discouraged us from pursuing a hotel tax, which Commissioner Platzgummer agreed wasn't a good idea. He said the City could provide a direct contribution, but Chairperson Rush said how difficult it is to decide from the City's budget who gets money and who doesn't.

Commissioner Platzgummer said there's a point when the money runs out, in five, eight to 10 years. A sustainable way of doing it is to have discussions about alternative funding options. We need to have the discussion at some point.

A motion to accept the update on the City of Alameda's Public Art Fund balance was given by Commissioner Platzgummer and seconded by Commissioner James Martin. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairperson Rush suggested to staff member Keliiaa that in the future the update be presented with a tally of contributions and dates of when the items came to us. A tally of all our public art value, job value, which staff member Keliiaa agreed to do.

6. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Staff member Keliiaa said the 2025 Cultural Arts and Arts Programming grants are opening next week. They open on January 30th and the applications will be due on March 20th. It gives our artist community eight weeks to apply. She's hosting an orientation webinar on February 6, 2025, about the application. The application was streamlined with organization information at the top and we have a template for the budget. The form also collects some demographic information that's just for us so we can know who we're reaching in our artist community. The webinar will be uploaded to our website so people can watch it. We'll collect Q & A on it, too.

She said the Special Events Permits grants will also be due on March 13. She will have Eric Fonstein, the program manager, join the February 6th webinar to give permit information to the applicants who will need it for cultural arts programming.

Commissioner Platzgummer asked about the Façade Grants for murals. Staff member Keliiaa said the murals were done before the Pandemic. Since then, they changed the eligibility for it. Now it's focused on painting, signage, awnings, repairs. There's \$125,000 annual budget for the program. There is a public art update email list of about 4,300 people that receive all our program updates, grant applications, webinars. We will also have a press release we can send to *The Alameda Post*.

7. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Non-agenda communications

None

Oral Communications and Written Communications

None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Rush adjourned the meeting at 7:06 pm.