

City of Alameda

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION (PAC) MEETING Tuesday, May 28, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Adam Gillitt called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Adam Gillitt, Vice Chairperson Liz Rush, Commissioners Peter Platzgummer and Robert Ferguson. Absent: Jennifer Hoffecker.

Lois Butler, Jackie Keliiaa, and Abby Thorne-Lyman present as staff to the Commission.

Two remote participants, one in person.

3. MINUTES

2024-4096 Review and Approve Draft Minutes March 25, 2024 - A motion to approve the minutes was given by Commissioner Ferguson and seconded by Vice Chairperson Liz Rush. The motion was adopted 4-0.

2024-4097 Review and Approve Draft Minutes April 15, 2024 - A motion to approve the minutes was given by Vice Chairperson Liz Rush and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. The motion was adopted 4-0.

4. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

2024-4094 Continuation of the Evaluation of the Cultural Arts and Arts Programming Request for Proposals

Purpose: Staff is recommending that the Public Arts Commission revisit the Cultural Arts and Art evaluation scores due to a calculation error. When the scores were tallied, a column of numbers of Commissioner Jennifer Hoffecker's was omitted from the totals.

Background

The Cultural Arts and Arts Programming Request for Proposals was released on January 22, 2024, and proposals were received by the March 21, 2024 deadline.

On April 15, 2024, the PAC convened to review and evaluate a total of 20 proposals. Following adjournment of the meeting, it was determined that there was an error in the grant applications scoring spreadsheet.

Ms. Butler gave the staff presentation and presented the corrected spreadsheet.

Comments on Scoring

The Commission added 5 additional points to the Equity and Accessibility category, but during its scoring the Commission's comments mainly referenced accessibility, primarily as the number of attendees who would be served, rather than the contributions applicants were making to diversity and equity.

In the spirit of implementing accessibility and equity, staff recommends that in future rounds of Cultural Arts Grants, the City collect demographic information about applicants, and the PAC ensure scoring is based solely on the information in the applications and not prior knowledge of arts organizations, which can create bias against less well known or connected applicants.

Outlier Scoring Examples Highlighted in Table - During staff evaluation after the last meeting, it was noted that the difference between some commissioners' scores was great, sometimes varying well beyond 10 points. In the future, Ms. Butler said commissioners should negotiate between each other so that the largest gap is no more than 10 points for the lowest high score and the highest low score between commissioners for any one proposal. This will prevent outlier scores.

Ms. Thorne-Lyman said that a staff discussion led to a conclusion: if you're awarding these grants based upon the average score, and somebody is using a completely different curve to grade than someone else, it gives that person an outsized voice in this. So, if someone gives a zero to somebody, and everyone else is giving a 50, it drags that average score down considerably. She said we want all commissioners to have an equal voice in the process.

Chairperson Gillitt said all five commissioners come from different experiences who have different views and values for what they're looking for in projects. It may prove difficult to get commissioners to agree to negotiation based upon principle and the extra time it would take.

Ranked Scores Table Presented – Given the number of outliers in the scoring, staff put together a ranked scoring table for your consideration. Average scores are the same, but the ranking scores are different for some proposals. It would take the outliers and change their score based upon what PAC members think their top is and what their bottom is. You can consider this new table today for ranked scoring, or you can stick with the averages that are there. Ms. Butler said in the future, staff recommends a ranked scoring approach instead of average scoring for arts grant proposals.

Staff recommends a vote to approve Cultural Arts and Arts Programming grants based on new and corrected information.

Clarifying Questions

Chairperson Gillitt said for the ranked scores, when there is the same total score, it seems to affect the scoring. He said his equity and accessibility scores were high, all 8 and above. Ms. Butler said in a review of scoring, staff didn't find much differentiation in equity, but we did find most comments were based upon accessibility, not equity. We also found in the RFP, we didn't have the demographic information for commissioners so you could make a

knowledgeable decision on equity, so for next time we're recommending we ask for demographic information so that we don't have this category and not look at it.

He asked as part of the process, can we first score and then used the scores to determine rank? Ms. Butler said it's a valid question that staff can look at for the future.

Vice Chairperson Rush asked if in the future, would commissioners be asked to separate equity and accessibility? Ms. Butler said staff would propose to do that.

Public Comment

Trish Herrera Spencer said accessibility and equity are very different issues. She didn't agree with the staff's stated definition in its presentation of accessibility as the number of attendees that would be served. For her, the definition of accessibility is people of all abilities can fully engage including providing resources, support and accommodation. She said it's very important for PAC to consider serving everyone as one of the factors; however, looking at the programming the PAC has offered the past three years, though they've been offering different types of programming, we can't expect every season to have all the needs and interests met, but, hopefully, over time, we offer different types of art that's interesting to more people.

Commissioner Discussion

Vice Chairperson Rush said is accessibility the right term to use? Accessibility is who can access this, where as accessibility in our context is how many people can we serve. Should we be using a different term?

Commissioner Platzgummer said he was of the opposite opinion. He cited the Public Art Master Plan, page 76, the section that discusses best practices in identifying locations for public artworks: "Evaluate accessibility: Ensure that the location is accessible to all members of the community, regardless of physical abilities, and consider factors such as curb cuts, sidewalks, and other accessibility features."

Vice Chairperson Rush said, therefore, accessibility is not how many people we can get in, but how easily they can get in (via wheelchair, for example).

Chairperson Gillitt asked to have the corrected spreadsheet posted again for reference.

Commissioner Platzgummer expressed frustration with the outlier scoring part of staff's presentation. PAC is supposed represent all Alamedans perspectives, but how can we do that if our scores are all within 10 points of each other? He said PAC members aren't here to make averages of public opinion.

Ms. Butler said keeping all commissioners' scores within 10 points of each other is a staff recommendation, not something the commissioners must follow, but, in the future, should consider in scoring RFPs.

Chairperson Gillitt said if you want to talk about outliers, we have somebody who made it into the top eight when all of us it between 11 and 14, but because for Commissioner Hoffecker it was her favorite thing, that elevated it higher than it would have been. That's something that's both the good and bad of the outliers: it brings a

proposal up that others of us might not have considered and it takes a proposal down that someone has a specific problem with. He said he believes having a wide variety of voices is what makes this a strong commission rather than trying to compress commissioners' votes into one narrow range.

Staff member Jackie Keliiaa said based upon her experience supporting the arts, cultural arts and serving on arts panels, there's nothing conventional about the way this process was reviewed. You don't have to change your score, just take the opportunity to discuss an outlier as needed. Maybe one commissioner may have different expertise in an area and see more merit in an application where others with less experience don't. It's not about questioning your knowledge, or telling you what you need to do, as commissioners, but, rather, there are best practices in the industry, so it's a good way to make sure artists are judged for the content of their application, and not about our knowledge outside of it or our workings with those organizations beyond their applications so everybody has a fair chance.

Following a discussion of the corrected scoring spreadsheet and change in the scoring results, Chairperson Gillitt made a motion to award grants in the following amounts to the following organizations:

Rising Seas - \$10,000

Rhythmix in the Parks - \$5,000

Together in Motion - \$10,000

RE-CYCLE - \$10,000

Fiesta Alameda - \$5,000

Alameda: Here is Anywhere - \$5,000

The Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Festival - \$10,000

La Bayadere - \$5,000.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferguson.

Commissioner Platzgummer commented that due to Commissioner Hoffecker's scoring of 48 for ArtPush—lowest by 31 points of any commissioner—and her scoring of La Bayadere 28 points higher than any other commissioner, it moved ArtPush to the number nine position of all grant proposals and, therefore, out of a grant award, and gave Bayadere the number 8 position and therefore, the last grant award. He cited this as a good example of an outlier score that had direct impact on the outcome of the grant awards. He said the outlier isn't just not shown in ranked positioning, but is even worse than the ranked ones, so, therefore, the ranking system doesn't work.

Ms. Butler said if it was a true ranked system, it would have worked but there were several 100 percents in the scoring, so that's causing the ranked system to be skewed. Chairperson Gillitt said the choices we are making are based upon the ranking based on our scores, not based on the totals of any scores.

The motion was adopted 3-1, with Commissioner Platzgummer voting against it.

After Commissioner Platzgummer suggested a discussion of the outlier issue was in order, Chairperson Gillitt and Vice Chairperson Rush said any discussion of the outlier issue should be done at another time when the ranking system is taken up, not today.

6. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Butler formally introduced Jackie Keliiaa, the new Development Manager, who has a lot of work experience in public art. In addition to PAC, she will be working on the Façade Grant Program, economic development, recruitment, expansion, retention, and development. She previously worked for the city of Alameda in 2017 before leaving to work for the East Bay Economic Development Alliance in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Ms. Keliiaa said she looks forward to working with everyone and streamlining processes.

Chairperson Gillitt welcomed Ms. Keliiaa and said with her experience and qualifications, PAC is in really good hands. He said he was glad she has so much knowledge because it will make the PAC so much more efficient and productive.

7. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS

No written communications.

Commissioner Non-agenda communications

Commissioner Platzgummer said he was surprised to see a survey about the future of public art in Alameda on Facebook last week. It wasn't announced at PAC meeting, nor did commissioners receive an email about it. He requested that PAC members be informed so they can answer any questions the public may ask them about the survey in the future.

He also said the Synergy locations for future public art was ignored in the Synergy report but also the recommendation from the Public Art Master Plan, p. 76. Ms. Butler said that the Synergy location was considered by Fellow Jack Denham Conroy but was weighed and ruled out for one reason or another. She said Denham Conroy presented what the weights would be at a prior PAC meeting. Mr. Denham Conroy will return to give a report to PAC. If you disagree at that point, then staff can reconsider it, she said.

Ms. Thorne-Lyman, Director of Base Reuse and Economic Development, said she will be attending the next few meetings as Ms. Butler retires and Ms. Keliiaa assumes her new role with PAC.

Vice Chairman Rush invited everyone to attend the annual sandcastle contest at Crown Memorial Beach on Saturday, June 1, 9-11am. She'll be one of the judges.

Ms. Butler invited everyone to the Open House at Alameda Point on Saturday, June 1, 2-5pm. There will be five stations for the public to visit to learn more about what's going on with development and housing at The Point.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Gillitt adjourned the meeting at 7:15pm.