

CITY OF ASHLAND

PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
May 20, 2022
Draft Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ken Engelund called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. via Zoom.

Commissioners Present:

Ken Engelund
Cassie Preskenis
Stanley Smith
Laura Bloom
Joel Frank
Jennifer Longshore

Staff Present:

Aaron Anderson, Associate Planner
Johanna Tuthill, Associate Planner

APRC Liaison:

Jim Lewis (absent)

Council Liaison:

Stefani Seffinger (absent)

Absent Members:

Destiny Young

Members of the Public:

Julie Akins, Mayor

II. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

III. PUBLIC FORUM - None

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Public Arts Commission Regular Meeting, April 15, 2022

Commissioners Smith/Preskenis m/s to approve the minutes as presented. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 6-0.

V. LIAISON REPORTS

- Community Development Liaison – Associate Planner Aaron Anderson informed the Commission that funding for the Golden Connections stone, plaque, and additional compensation for the artists had been approved. He also formally welcomed Associate Planner Johanna Tuthill as the new Staff Liaison for the Commission.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

- Acknowledgement of Service
Chair Engelund thanked Commissioner Longshore for her role as Chair of the Commission, highlighting her thoughtfulness, collegial inclusion, and general excellence in the position. He put forward the motion to formally acknowledge and show appreciation for Commissioner Longshore's contribution to the Commission.

CITY OF ASHLAND

Commissioners Engelund/Preskenis m/s to formally acknowledge and show appreciation for Commissioner Longshore's role as Chair of the Public Arts Commission. Commissioner Longshore abstained. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 5-0.

- Nominations for Commission Vice-Chair
Commission Smith agreed to continue in the role of Vice-Chair of the Commission.

Commissioners Preskenis/Frank m/s to elect Commissioner Smith as Vice-Chair of the Public Arts Commission.. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 6-0.

- Vote for Public Arts Commission Format
Ms. Tuthill informed the Commission that in-person or hybrid Commission meetings are not currently an option. Commissioners Smith, Engelund and Preskenis expressed interest in returning to in-person meetings. Chair Engelund suggested that the Commission begin holding hybrid meetings in July, if possible. Commissioner Frank commented that, because he also works during the Commission's Zoom meetings, he would be unable to attend in-person meetings for more than 20-30 minutes at a time.
- Vandalism of Public Art Works
 - Chair Engelund stated that vandalism has taken a greater toll on public works related to communities of color, including the BIPOC Mural, the Say Their Names installation, and most recently the Golden Connections art piece. He recommended that the Commission take this opportunity to confront this.
 - Commissioner Preskenis stated that, after the Say Their Name mural was taken down, she witnessed reluctance to confront the racism that exists within the City. She stated that the racism in the City needs to be acknowledged.
 - Commissioner Smith commented that tagging of art and public spaces is never going to cease, but that it can sometimes be done with passion and skill. He clarified that he is not condoning vandalism, and suggested that the City budget for graffiti removal and invest in sculpture materials that are washable.
 - Mayor Julie Akins agreed that graffiti and vandalism will always occur, and that the City's response should be to increase its output of public art. She added that vandalism and graffiti are a constant presence in a public forum, and that any public figure can be subjected to verbal vandalism as well. She concluded by saying that it comes with expressing oneself publicly.
 - Commissioner Longshore stated that those three acts of vandalism were racist in nature, and need to be regarded as such. She agreed with Mayor Akins that they should continue to celebrate and create public art pieces to combat this issue. She stated that there are different types of vandalism, and that the Commission should discuss a how to work with types that are mean-spirited.
 - Commissioner Smith pointed out that some types of graffiti arose from hip-hop culture, and expressed the view that not all types of tagging or graffiti is wrong despite their illegality. He stated that some graffiti artists are artists and some of those works should be celebrated as art.
- Presentation: Overview of Public Art with an Equity Lens
 - Commissioner Preskenis provided the Commission with a presentation on how the lens of equity can be used in the Commission's work. She stated that this presentation would barely scratch the surface of the topic.
 - Commissioner Preskenis began by stressing the importance of land acknowledgements to indigenous people, and read an excerpt on land acknowledgements from Grandma Aggie's book "Wake Up Call." Her presentation covered a wide range of topics pertaining to equity and diversity,

CITY OF ASHLAND

white privilege, and the importance of showing equity in Public Art. Commissioner Preskenis stated that the Commission can commit to the goal of racial equity, and cited the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture as an example to emulate (see attachment #1).

- The Commission expressed its appreciation to Commissioner Preskenis for the depth and quality of her presentation. Chair Engelund commented that the Commission should consider updating its 2007 goals and positions regarding equity in art. He added that it would be a difficult task, but worthwhile.

- Discussion with Mayor Akins: "Public Art representing the soul of our community"
 - Mayor Akins clarified her remarks regarding vandalism, and that the Ashland Police Department was investigating the two acts of vandalism as being potentially connected. She added that the APD does not want to bring additional attention to the vandalism, as it could embolden those who committed the acts.
 - Mayor Akins remarked that there appears to be a level of fatigue around racial justice and equity, and believes this to be a result of shame felt by some in the community. She stated that those with privilege should use it to elevate equity, and that it is not up to people of color to fix racism.
 - Mayor Akins expressed support for the Commission's work in bringing art to the City. She cited Dublin's grand historical art and San Francisco's whimsical art as different ways in which public art can be presented. Mayor Akins remarked that the City Plaza conveys what the City is about, and that it was not an excessively planned project but is a good representation of art that simply exists. She expressed appreciation for the tilework of the plaza, but remarked that more could potentially be done to honor the original name, K'wakhakha, "Where the Crow Lights."
 - Mayor Akins stated that art can be used to express who the City is as a community, and that there should potentially be an open discussion between the Commission and the City residents about how art reflects the community. She stated that this is a community of caring people, and that the City is blessed to be in a region with such great biodiversity.
 - Mayor Akins encouraged the Commission to continue to define and appreciate a wide range of art forms, and that even more new forms of art should be promoted.
 - Commissioner Smith expressed appreciation to the Mayor, and agreed that public art is broad and encompasses many forms. He stated that the Commission's main barrier is budgetary, and that art events such as First Friday should be encouraged due to their limited cost. He added that many cities who prioritize public art usually have a benefactor to fund it, which Ashland currently lacks.
 - Commissioner Longshore stated that the Commission is in a good position to continue the momentum created by the Golden Connections project, and that each of the hubs could become impromptu and collaborative public art experiences resembling festivals.
 - Mayor Akins asked that the Commission show her how she can continue to support their public art projects and further bring the community together.
 - Chair Engelund thanked Mayor Akins for speaking with the Commission, and expressed the belief that the Commission is in a good position to evaluate its role in promoting public art and to further connect with the community.

VII. PAC WORKPLAN

- First Friday Art Talks
 - Commissioner Longshore stated that the recent event was very successful. She remarked that there is room for growth in planning the next Art Walk, but that she was very pleased with the public engagement.

CITY OF ASHLAND

- Golden Connections by Jennifer Corrio and David Frei
 - Plaque
 - a. Design – The Commission held a discussion regarding the final verbiage for the plaque. Commissioner Longshore stated that she would be abstaining from the vote because she found a quote within the passage to be awkwardly edited.
 - b. Funding – Mr. Anderson said that he had put in a request for funding for the plaque, and did not expect any cost changes to affect its approval. He stressed that the plaque should not be produced until the funding has been procured.
 - c. Cleaning of Vandalism Update – Ms. Tuthill informed the Commission that cleaning would be handled by the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department due to its location within a public park.

- Railroad District Medallions
 - Installation Status
 - a. Mr. Anderson informed the Commission that there are ongoing discussions about how best to complete the installation.
 - b. Chair Engelund commented that Commissioner Longshore had suggested that some form of public event be held for the installation of each Medallion.

- Marking Ashland Places (MAP) II
 - Chair Engelund asked who among the Commission would be willing to serve on the subcommittee for MAP II. Commissioner Smith stated that it is a time-consuming project that he cannot take on at present, but commented that the method for creating the Medallions without needing to go through the bidding process is effective. He added that he will be serving on the subcommittee.
 - Commissioner Longshore asked what the MAP II district would be. Chair Engelund responded that that will be one of the first items discussed. Mr. Anderson noted that the initial placement plans for the Medallion's had been changed by request of the City Council, and that similar directions might be made for MAP II.
 - Chair Engelund raised the question of funding, adding that it will likely come from the Commission's public arts account or from a benefactor. He also suggested that two different groups work on this project; one would handle MAP II, and the other could work on the Medallions.
 - Commissioner Preskenis voiced her unease over the verbiage for the plaque following Commissioner Longshore's observation. She added that the Commission has an opportunity to bring equity and inclusion into the project, and suggested that they consider including an acknowledgement to "Where the Crow Lights." Commissioner Preskenis reminded the Commission that she will be going before the Social Equity and Racial Justice Commission on June 2nd and presenting on how the Commission applies an equity lens to its work.
 - Chair Engelund mentioned that he had spoken with Commissioner Preskenis about providing the Commission with a second presentation on equity at a future meeting.
 - Commissioner Smith asked if a member of the Historic Commission would be serving on the subcommittee. Chair Engelund responded that Commissioner Beverly Hovenkamp would be on the subcommittee, and that Commissioner Dale Shostrom had continued interest in the Medallion project.
 - Commissioner Smith asked if the Commission was content to move on to MAP II (potentially focused on the Downtown District) and a hub sculpture acknowledging the original inhabitants of the land, or to finish MAP I in the Railroad District first. Chair Engelund responded that such a decision would need to be made in conjunction with the Historic Commission, but that he believed it would be possible to accomplish both concurrently. He noted that Historic Commissioner

CITY OF ASHLAND

Shostrom had stated that work should be completed in the Railroad District before moving forward. Commissioner Longshore supported beginning work on MAP II.

- Commissioner Frank requested clarification on whether the Commission was moving forwards with the current verbiage for the plaque. He suggested that any member of the Commission should change any verbiage they felt needed to be changed. Commissioner Bloom agreed that the plaque should only be approved once the Commission is satisfied with the description and volunteered to make changes.

Chair Engelund expressed appreciation on behalf of the Commission for Commissioner Longshore's work as Chair, to Mr. Anderson for his work as Staff Liaison, and formally welcomed Ms. Tuthill as the new Staff Liaison.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT - 10:08 AM

Next Meeting: June 17, 2022

IX. ATTACHMENTS

May 20, 2022 Minutes