

CITY OF ASHLAND

PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
August 19, 2022
DRAFT Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ken Engelund called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. via Zoom.

Commissioners Present:

Ken Engelund
Cassie Preskenis
Laura Bloom
Stanley Smith
Destiny Young

Staff Present:

Johanna Tuthill, Associate Planner

APRC Liaison:

Jim Lewis (absent)

Council Liaison:

Stefani Seffinger

Absent Members:

Joel Frank
Jennifer Longshore

Members of the Public:

Peter Finkle
John Pugh
Andrew Stallman
Gina DuQuenne

II. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

III. PUBLIC FORUM – No member of the public wished to speak. The Commission received one written public comment (see attachment #1).

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Public Arts Commission Regular Meeting, July 15, 2022

Commissioners Bloom/Preskenis m/s to approve the minutes with one correction. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 5-0.

V. LIAISON REPORTS

- Community Development Liaison – Associate Planner Johanna Tuthill informed the Commission that the Say Their Names art project was progressing, and was on the radar of both the City Council and the Community Development department.
- Council Liaison – Councilor Seffinger informed the Commission that the Council is currently working on the city budget, and will soon be working on a survey with SOU to garner community feedback regarding pressing issues facing the City. The Council will also determine whether to change the format for some city commissions.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

- Equity Lens Follow-Up, Land Acknowledgement
 - Commissioner Preskenis read the updated Land Acknowledgement and proposed that the statement include a line written by herself and Commissioner Smith.
 - Chair Engelund recommended that the government's role in the treatment of Native Americans also be acknowledged in the statement. Commissioner Smith agreed with this addition, and

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further recommended that the Council also adopt this change. Councilor's Seffinger and DuQuenne agreed that it should be added to the Council's statement.

Commissioners Smith/Preskenis m/s to approve the revised land acknowledgement. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 5-0.

Commissioners Preskenis/Smith m/s to recommend that the City Council adopt the revised land acknowledgement. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 5-0.

- Remarks by Councilor Gina DuQuenne
 - Councilor DuQuenne thanked the Commission for allowing her to come before them to speak. She expressed admiration and gratitude to Micah BlackLight for the Say Their Names art piece and the love and history that it evokes. She voiced disappointment in some online commentators who seek to silence the voices of African-Americans in the community. Councilor DuQuenne remarked that the art piece could be a great educational piece for the community, and that thi education can create common ground. She thanked the Commission for its work on the Say Their Names artwork, and hopes to see this go before the Council soon. She concluded by stating that she wished to live in an Ashland that is against racism and inclusive of all peoples, and that the Say Their Names artwork was a step towards bringing the community together.
 - Councilor Seffinger stated that the fastest avenue for approval would be for it to be brought before the Council, and that it should be brought forward as a gift instead of as a part of public art.
 - Commissioner Smith expressed support for Councilor DuQuenne's statements and agreed that the community needs to come together. He took exception to all negative comments about the artwork being race-related, and stated that he believed that the religious iconography may be inappropriate. However, he believed that personal aesthetics need not be factored into the decision making process.
 - Commissioner Preskenis remarked that she had personally heard comments about the artwork that were race-related, which made its installation all the more important. She stated that this piece had been created by, and represented, the African-American community. She acknowledged that not all comments regarding the artwork were race-related, but that many of the strongest negative reactions were.
 - Chair Engelund noted that the Commission would vote only on the issues of the artwork, and that any personal opinions would not be discussed.
 - Councilor DuQuenne stated that art is subjective and that not all will approve of the artwork, but that many will appreciate the piece and Mr. BlackLight's good intentions.
 - Councilor Seffinger pointed out that any overt religious references in art pieces have caused issues in the past.
 - Chair Engelund advised that the Commission recommend that Council Liaison Seffinger move to add the Say Their Names gift from Micah BlackLight to the Council Agenda. The Ashland Parks and Recreation department (APR) would then be tasked with preparing the site if approved by the Council.
- Review of Resolution to Council of Say Their Names Collective Gift: Micah Blacklight's work (2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
 - The Commission presented its proposed motion recommending that Council Liaison Seffinger add the Say Their Names Collective gift to the Council agenda (see attachment #2).
 - Councilor Seffinger remarked that viewing it as a gift rather than an item that went through the public art process would be a more fair way to present it to the Council. This would also be more consistent with the way in which this artwork was presented to the public. She pointed out that a select committee has often worked with artists on past projects to discuss changes, engineering, and public comments. Councilor Seffinger noted that she is speaking only as the Council Liaison, and that the final decision is up to the Commission.

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- Commissioner Smith inquired if the APR had the funds available in its budget for the installation, or if it would need to request funding from the Council. Councilor Seffinger responded that it will likely come out of the Public Work's budget. Chair Engelund noted that he had provided a timeline of events that began with the death of George Floyd until the present, which would be included in the minutes (see attachment #3).
- Commissioner Bloom inquired if the previous motion was now void. Chair Engelund responded that it was still largely relevant, and that the project would draw upon both the recommendations of both the Commission and the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission.
- There was general discussion regarding the process for the art project to move forward. Commissioner Preskenis noted that the BIPOC mural and Canoe projects had both been passed without a select committee, and commented that Mr. BlackLight's gift seemed to be held to a different standard. Councilor Seffinger said that discussions regarding safety, placement, and upkeep were held regarding the Canoe installation. She added that discussions regarding an artwork are easier when there is a physical model available versus those in the early conceptual phase. Chair Engelund suggested that the Commission work with the artist and provide regular updates to the Council.
- Commissioner Smith requested clarification regarding the impact of the Commission's endorsement or non-endorsement on this project. Chair Engelund responded that the project would be able to go forward without the Commission's endorsement, but that it would be in the record.
- Councilor DuQuenne encouraged the Commission to endorse Mr. BlackLight's gift to the City. She stressed that he had worked within City regulations and that this would be a good gift for the City to add its name to, and that the Commission's endorsement would add significant weight to the approval process. She added that the Commission's collective endorsement could help convince those opposed to the project.
- Councilor Seffinger expressed concern that the project did not follow the Commission's process and that a select committee had not been named, nor had the project been shown to the public as extensively as projects had been in the past.
- Commissioner Bloom pointed out that there had been an extensive presentation and evaluation by the Commission, and cited Ashland Municipal Code 2.29.110 to show that the proper process had been followed. She stated that the code is clear in its guidelines, and that the process was conducted correctly. Commissioner Preskenis agreed, and stated that she saw no problem with the Commission's motion. Councilor Seffinger conveyed that the Commission can continue with its original motion if it feels that the process has been completed.

Commissioner Young exited the meeting at 9:32 am.

Commissioners Preskenis/Bloom m/s to recommend that the Public Arts Commission endorse the sculpture design concept of Micah BlackLight's "Ancestor's Future: Crystalizing Our Call" as the Say Their Names Collectives gift to the City of Ashland, and that the art concept will have a final review for quality upon completion, and in solidarity to the message of social and racial justice that the Public Arts Commission recommends that the City Council allocates the funds or labor required for the site preparation and installation of the sculpture. Voice Vote: Commissioners Preskenis, Engelund, Bloom, AYE. Commissioner Smith abstained. Motion passed 3-0.

- Elks Club & John Pugh Mural Project Presentation
 - Mr. Pugh provided an update regarding his request to paint a mural on the Elks Lodge wall. He stated that the Elks Lodge had signed an agreement allowing him to move forward, and have also supplied with some funding to develop a model and sketch of the project. He then gave a presentation of his past artworks (see attachment #4)
 - Chair Engelund remarked that he had spoken with the Historic Commission about the mural becoming the hub for the Marking Ashland Places (MAP) project. Commissioner Preskenis asked for clarification over the official process if this became part of the MAP project. Commissioner

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Smith responded that the procedure would be extensive and would include a selection panel and a call for artists. Chair Engelund recommended that the MAP project be added to the Commission's agenda to formalize the process. Mr. Pugh inquired if it would be appropriate to begin seeking funding, to which Commissioner Smith agreed that it would be.

- Councilor Seffinger commented that another consideration for the Commission is whether it is seen as a gift and is endorsed by public arts, because then opening the project up to the public process would be less problematic.
- Haines & Friends Grant Application Proposal
 - Commissioner Bloom stated that the Commission would need to contact the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) before any moving forward. She added that Commissioner Preskenis, Peter Finkle, and herself had identified an utility box on the corner of Siskiyou Blvd. and Walker Ave. that could be an appropriate candidate for an art project. She and Commissioner Preskenis had also spoken with the Presbyterian Church which has expressed interest in collaborating with the Commission on a project.
 - Mr. Finkle spoke with ODOT which will require a signed agreement with the City, a process that can take up to several months, but will not inhibit the Commission's eligibility for the grant. An artist will also need to be chosen to work on a rough design. Mr. Finkle asked if it would be worthwhile to attempt to submit a grant application by the August 31, 2022 deadline, or to seek fundraising over the next few months instead. He added that an artist and design would need to be chosen before an application could be submitted. Commissioner Preskenis stated that it would be difficult to meet the deadline, and Commissioner Bloom agreed.
 - Chair Engelund suggested that the task group continue to work on the utility box with ODOT and the Church, and Commissioner Bloom said that this would allow the Commission to identify more candidates for future projects. Mr. Finkle suggested that the Commission make a motion to have Mike Morrison from Public Works follow up with ODOT and begin the agreement process.

Commissioners Engelund/Preskenis m/s to have the task group continue to work on the utility box with ODOT and the Presbyterian Church. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 4-0.

Commissioners Preskenis/Smith m/s for the Commission to contact Mike Morrison and request that he begin the process with ODOT for approval of the Public Arts Commission to seek out artists to paint their utility boxes. Voice Vote: ALL AYES. Motion passed 4-0.

VII. PAC WORKPLAN

- First Friday Report
 - Chair Engelund stated that Commissioners Bloom, Preskenis, and himself would be giving public art talks on First Friday in September.
- Golden Connections Update – Plaque clean-up
 - Ms. Tuthill said that she has not received any further updates regarding the cleaning, but that she would continue to reach out to the APR department for a status report.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT - 9:43 AM Next Meeting: September 16, 2022

IX. ATTACHMENTS July 15, 2022 Minutes