

**ARTS COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 25, 2025  
City Hall, Conference Room #6**

**Attendees:** Chairman Mary Lee Ryba, Commissioner Summer Ward, Commissioner Chuck Ethridge, Commissioner Lindsey Sichelstiel, Commissioner Tracey Benson, Commissioner Adeline Smith, Commissioner Nora Crabtree, Commissioner Alesa Momerak, Commissioner Cynthia Newkirk, Commissioner Charlotte Doutriaux (attended online), Commissioner Kate Walker (attended online), and Troy Tymesen,

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Ryba called the meeting to order. She welcomed two students who are attending to observe.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION:** None.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sichelstiel, to approve the January 28, 2025 meeting minutes. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT:** Chair Ryba noted that several corrections were made to last month's financial statements, particularly regarding the Mayor's Art Awards under Fund 074, which have been addressed by Director Katie Ebner. The Public Art Fund balance has significantly improved since last month, now standing at \$71,474.46. Mr. Tymesen explained that Fund 076 details the Public Art Fund. In January, interest income was earned for both the Lake and River Districts, bringing the total to \$431,637.13 as of January 2025. Expenditures included payment for the Green Energy Dragon artwork. He also mentioned that the Lake District has been closed for a month, but interest income continues to be earned. For Fund 074, there was a \$32.50 expense under Professional Services for the Poet Laureate's calling card and a \$60.00 Community Art Partnership grant with Emerge CDA for January. Chair Ryba added that the 074 - Art Fund, with \$43,000, covers the ArtCurrents program and Poet Laureate program while the Otocast Audio app is charged under 074 - Professional Services. Regarding the 077 Art Maintenance Fund, Mr. Tymesen explained that it is earning interest, with the only expense being \$440.33 for the repair of the "Reins" bronze statue and the power for the feather artwork. He noted that there were no labor costs for the horse statue repair, as it was done by the Streets Department.

**MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Momerak, seconded by Commissioner Ethridge, to approve the January 2025 Financial Report. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

**COMMISSIONER/ STAFF COMMENTS:** Chair Ryba announced that Commissioner Light is collaborating with Darya Pilram, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Creative Economy, Inland NW, on a grant application for the "Springboard for the Arts: The Art of Environmental Stewardship Initiative." This initiative aims to merge the arts with environmental stewardship, focusing on the quality of the lake and other environmental concerns. Commissioner Light, in her

role as Executive Director of the Coeur d'Alene Arts and Culture Alliance, will be submitting the grant. She also mentioned that many community members are supporting this application.

Chair Ryba announced that the Idaho Nonprofit Center has merged with the Idaho Community Foundation. They will be hosting a panel next Tuesday, and she has been invited to participate. This panel represents a partnership between nonprofits and local government. She also mentioned that the Northern Lights Art Summit, organized by Blair Williams, took place yesterday and was attended by Commissioner Newkirk. Ms. Williams aims to foster online art initiatives. Commissioner Newkirk shared that the summit included an hour-long webinar attended by members of the arts community. The goal is to develop an in-person conference featuring networking opportunities, breakout sessions, and an expo where various organizations can showcase their work to the community. Another idea is to start with a networking meeting at the Art Spirit Gallery and eventually expand it into a larger conference within a year.

Chair Ryba introduced Cynthia Newkirk as the new Arts Commissioner, following her appointment by the City Council on February 18, 2025. Commissioner Newkirk shared that her family relocated from Southern California about 2.5 years ago, and she has served as the Executive Director of the Music Conservatory of CdA for the past two years. Before that, she worked at the Ocean Institute and has experience in nonprofit organizations, including the Association for Women in Technology. Mr. Tymesen expressed gratitude to Commissioner Newkirk for meeting with Mayor Woody McEvers. Chair Ryba also noted that Commissioner Tracey Benson had met with Mayor McEvers, who wishes to interview candidates for all boards and commissions.

**CREATION OF MUSIC SUBCOMMITTEE AND MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL SUBCOMMITTEE:** Chair Ryba explained that the Visual and Performing Arts are divided into separate subcommittees, and she proposed adding a new subcommittee for Music. Commissioner Ward questioned how the Music subcommittee would differ from the Performing Arts subcommittee. Commissioner Newkirk responded that music could also be considered part of the performing arts. Commissioner Benson asked about the scope of the performing arts and whether there was a need to expand, given the current activities. Commissioner Ethridge stated that the Commission had not extensively focused on performing arts and that City Councilmembers had recently requested more attention to performing arts. He suggested combining music and performing arts under one subcommittee for now to see how it evolves. Chair Ryba mentioned that during the Mayor's Art Awards, now known as the Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards, efforts were made to showcase performing arts to the community. She highlighted the involvement of the Symphony, Aspire Theater, Summer Theater, and dancers, although as far as Commission's funding projects for performing arts, not much has been done. She agreed to keep music under the performing arts subcommittee.

Chair Ryba noted that October is National Arts and Humanities Month and mentioned that Spokane has been celebrating October as Arts Month. She proposed that Coeur d'Alene do the same, highlighting the many performing and visual arts activities that take place in October. This initiative would primarily involve marketing existing events to showcase the community's art scene. She then asked for volunteers to join the Subcommittee for the Music and Arts Festival. Commissioners Smith, Crabtree, and Benson expressed their interest, and Chair Ryba confirmed that she would also be part of this subcommittee.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:**

Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards: Chair Ryba announced that the Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards event is set for October 22nd and mentioned that she would be seeking sponsorships. She noted that last year's event exceeded the budget, so she plans to adhere more closely to the budget this year.

ArtCurrents: Commissioner Sichelstiel announced that their subcommittee meeting will be held in March. The call to artists will be issued by early April and will close in June, with the selection meeting scheduled for July. The new art pieces will be installed in October. Chair Ryba suggested including in their agenda the option to purchase the Gaia art piece by artist Dale Young, which is still open for purchase for \$20,000 from its original amount of \$45,000. Alternatively, it can be renewed and kept in the ArtCurrents program for another year. She noted that the Otocast report from the previous month indicated that Gaia is very well viewed by the community.

Arts Commission Applicant Review: Chair Ryba mentioned that there is still one vacancy in the Commission and asked the Commissioners to reach out to anyone who would be interested to apply.

Visual Arts: Chair Ryba stated that Art on the Green has a Poster Contest and the deadline for entries is on March 17.

Performing Arts: Commissioner Ward announced that the Music Conservatory will host an event titled "The History of the Violin" on February 28. Commissioner Newkirk noted that this event, called Lunch and Learn, is free for the community. Commissioner Ward also mentioned the Matt's Place Foundation Rock the Shamrock! event on March 14 at the CdA Eagles Auxiliary. She added that there will be numerous pub crawls and indoor karaoke events throughout March. Chair Ryba stated that Commissioner Benson and Commissioner Newkirk will be added to the Performing Arts Subcommittee.

Commissioner Ethridge shared information about upcoming theater events, including the play "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," which has a Holocaust theme. He mentioned that the Coeur d'Alene Summer Theater is collaborating with the North Idaho College (NIC) Theatre Department for the production of "Clue: The Musical," with performances scheduled from April 18-26. Chair Ryba commended Commissioner Ethridge for his collaboration efforts with NIC. Commissioner Ethridge expressed his enjoyment of the process and noted that NIC President Swayne has been a strong supporter of such collaborations. He added that about half of the cast are students, who are also assisting with technology and stage management, gaining valuable experience alongside professional stage managers. Chair Ryba inquired about any collaboration with the Symphony, to which Commissioner Ethridge responded that the Symphony concert in November will feature Coeur d'Alene Summer Theater singers, and he is working with them on the programming.

Commissioner Newkirk mentioned that, in addition to the previously discussed Lunch and Learn, the CDA Conservatory is planning more daytime activities due to the busy after-school schedule when kids come in for lessons and classes. They will also host a monthly tea event focusing on history. Chair Ryba noted that a Music, Tea, and History event was held on February 14. Commissioner Newkirk added that the next event will have an Irish theme and will include music

performances. She also mentioned that the Conservatory is organizing a concert at the beginning of April. Additionally, there will be a piano performance at the Kroc Center on the 5th and a voice performance on Sunday, featuring two newly hired faculty members who are opera-quality singers. On March 25, they will host the Air Force Band with a clarinet quartet at the First Presbyterian.

Chair Ryba asked the Visual Arts and Performing Arts Subcommittees to make a calendar of events to share with the Commissioners so they can track the events.

Marketing & Technology: Commissioner Sichelstiel mentioned that she is preparing some social media posts for the Poet Laureate events. Chair Ryba announced that there will be upcoming activities and added that a representative from the Otocast Audio Tour Guide app will be visiting Coeur d'Alene on March 28. She also noted that new artworks will be added to the app and reminded everyone to download the app.

Emerge Art Scholarships: Chair Ryba stated that the scholarship program, which started in April 2024, has a funding of \$25,000.00 for one year. To date, the total invoice from Emerge paid by the City is \$11,145.00, leaving a remaining balance of \$13,855.00. She inquired if it would be possible to pause the scholarship in April until the guidelines are developed. Mr. Tymesen mentioned that the contract with Emerge is only for one year. Commissioner Ethridge added that it is not automatic and needs to be renewed. Chair Ryba shared that Jeni Hegsted contacted her to inquire about the status. She noted that since the contract needs to be renewed, it would provide time for the Commission to reflect and plan for the year. She emphasized the need to ensure that many students benefit from the funds and to consider expanding the program to various areas given the limited budget. Mr. Tymesen suggested inviting Ms. Hegsted to the next meeting to discuss the program's success and explore ways to increase participation without additional costs or through collaboration. Chair Ryba noted that the Emerge summer camp program was highly effective, reaching many students, and suggested that it would be good if half was for theater arts or music.

Mural Projects: Chair Ryba mentioned Commissioner Momerak's idea to involve students in mural projects. Commissioner Momerak noted that Sandpoint is already doing alley murals, similar to Boise. She highlighted factors to consider, such as who will decide what is acceptable and whether the project should be open to high school, college, and elementary students. She also mentioned that Mr. Tymesen pointed out in the last meeting that these are private buildings, which could pose a challenge in getting them on board. Additionally, she raised the issue of safety with increased foot traffic in the alleys and suggested consulting the police. Commissioner Ethridge expressed concerns that neighbors might not want increased foot traffic behind their houses. Commissioner Momerak clarified that the identified area is behind Sherman and Lakeside, which doesn't seem to have residential buildings, though some businesses might object. Chair Ryba suggested that the Subcommittee should decide whether the Commission should pursue this idea. Commissioner Momerak agreed to discuss it with Sandpoint. Chair Ryba recommended starting small and mentioned a successful art exhibition in the past involving 160 students through district art teachers. Commissioner Momerak said she would reach out to an instructor at NIC to gauge interest. Chair Ryba stated that the Subcommittee will research this project and asked who else would like to be part of the subcommittee. Commissioners Smith and Crabtree expressed their interest. Mr. Tymesen noted that the Downtown Association, which meets monthly, has strong

connections with downtown businesses and could help identify those interested in a mural project. He suggested that Commissioner Momerak share the idea with them, as it could attract more people downtown. Commissioner Momerak added that the mural could also be created offsite. Commissioner Sichelstiel mentioned that Revelstoke, BC, has a lot of public art, including framed pieces mounted outdoors, and suggested the Subcommittee look for inspiration online. Chair Ryba proposed that the Subcommittee meet to assess the feasibility of this project.

Wastewater Treatment Facility Art Project: Chair Ryba mentioned that the Green Energy Dragon sculpture will be dedicated on April 24 at 7:30 PM. The subcommittee is currently finalizing the details.

Poet Laureate: Chair Ryba announced that on March 14, during the Art Walk, there will be a “Pop-Up Poetry” event at Emerge, where Jennifer Passaro will write poems for visitors. Collaborative efforts with the Music Conservatory were planned for March, but Jennifer has postponed these until May due to moving into a new house. She will also read a poem at the dragon sculpture dedication on April 24. Additionally, Jennifer has planned activities for National Poetry Month with NIC. On Friday, April 11, Poet Li-Young Lee will speak and read poetry at the library. The NIC Writing Center will host an event with Lena Crow on March 10, followed by a poetry reading and discussion with a book signing on April 10.

Guidelines Development: Chair Ryba explained that the Commission is developing Public Art Program Guidelines for 2025-26, serving as a strategic plan to outline goals, objectives, and funding priorities. This framework will help guide decision-making and ensure resources are allocated effectively to key areas identified by the commission. She requested everyone to review the draft guidelines for further discussion at the next meeting. She asked the Performing Arts Subcommittee to explore ways to highlight performing arts. She emphasized the goal of focusing on the Commission's objectives, including reaching students and balancing visual and performing arts. Additionally, she mentioned meeting with owners of new construction projects in the city to discuss the possibility of installing art on their properties.

**ADJOURNMENT: MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Momerak, seconded by Commissioner Sichelstiel to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

The meeting ended at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jo Anne Mateski  
Executive Assistant