

CITY OF OAKLAND

**Cultural Affairs Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda
Monday, July 22, 2024
5:30 – 8:30 PM**

Please note that all meetings of the Cultural Affairs Commission will be conducted in person at:

**Oakland City Hall
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Hearing Room 2 (First Floor),
Oakland, CA 94612**

How to Make a Comment:

There are two opportunities for the public to address the Cultural Affairs Commission and City staff. The first opportunity is during the "Public Comment" period. The second opportunity is during the "Open Forum" period. Dialogue during the meeting with Commissioners, City staff, or its guest speakers is not permitted outside of the two comment periods. **Zoom participation is for viewing only. Comments will no longer be accepted via Zoom or telephone.**

RE: ZOOM PARTICIPATION + COMMENT PERIODS

All Cultural Affairs Commission meetings will be conducted in person. The Cultural Affairs Commission is no longer accepting public comments via Zoom or telephone. Therefore, live comments must be made in-person. You can choose to submit a written comment by 5:00 PM BEFORE the meeting starts to rbedoya@oaklandca.gov. Any comments received via email during the duration or after the meeting may not be entered into public record but will be shared with the Commission and City staff later.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88040656016?pwd=eEr0aWCQOlbzXzKi4CnvbbsOFouOoW.1>

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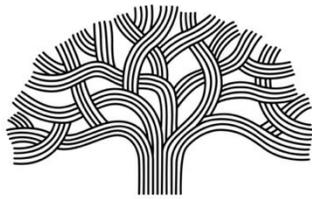
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CITY OF OAKLAND

**Cultural Affairs Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda
Monday, July 22, 2024
5:30 – 8:30 PM**

AGENDA

Call to Order/Roll Call

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Land Acknowledgement + Official City of Oakland Love Acknowledgement**
- 3. Action Item: Approval of the Minutes for January 22, 2024, April 15, 2024, and June 13, 2024**
- 4. Action Item: Postpone Vice Chair election until Oct. 28, 2024 (5:55-6:00)**
- 5. Cultural Affairs Division Manager's Update**
- 6. Public Comment**
- 7. Cultural Affairs Commission Chair's Update**
- 8. Commission Ad Hoc Teams**
- 9. Open Forum**
- 10. Announcements & Acknowledgements**
- 11. Adjournment**

**Next regular meeting: Monday October 28, 2024 at 5:30 – 8:30 PM
at Oakland City Hall
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Hearing Room 2 (First Floor),
Oakland, CA 94612**

Oakland Cultural Affairs Division of the Economic & Workforce Development Department
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, 9th fl. Oakland, CA 94612
<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/arts-and-culture-in-oakland>

é This meeting location is wheelchair accessible. To request disability-related accommodations or to request American Sign Language (ASL), Cantonese, Mandarin, or Spanish language interpreter, please email RBedoya@oaklandca.gov or call (510) 238-2136 Or 711 (for Relay Service) at least five (5) business days before the meeting. Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting as a courtesy to attendees with chemical sensitivities.

Esta reunión es accesible para sillas de ruedas. Si desea solicitar adaptaciones relacionadas con discapacidades, o para pedir un intérprete de en español, Cantones, mandarín o de lenguaje de señas (ASL) por favor envíe un correo electrónico a NBalram@oaklandca.gov o llame al (510) 238-4949 o al 711 para servicio de retransmisión (Relay service) por lo menos cinco días hábiles antes de la reunión. Se le pide de favor que no use perfumes a esta reunión como cortesía para los que tienen sensibilidad a los productos químicos. Gracias.

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Địa điểm tổ chức cuộc họp có đường dành riêng cho xe lăn. Để yêu cầu các phương tiện hỗ trợ phục vụ người khuyết tật hoặc yêu cầu thông dịch viên ASL, tiếng Quảng Đông, tiếng Quan Thoại hoặc tiếng Tây Ban Nha, vui lòng gửi email đến địa chỉ NBalram@oaklandca.gov hoặc gọi đến số (510) 238-4949 hoặc 711 (với Dịch vụ Tiếp âm) ít nhất năm (5) ngày làm việc trước khi cuộc họp diễn ra. Vui lòng không sử dụng các sản phẩm có mùi thơm khi tham gia cuộc họp này như một phép lịch sự đối với những người tham dự nhạy cảm đối với các chất hóa học.

Cultural Affairs Division - Economic & Workforce Development Department
Cultural Affairs Commission Contact – Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager
Phone: (510) 238-2136
Recorded Agenda: (510) 238-2386
Telecommunications Relay Service: 711

LOVE LIFE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge "Love Life" as our motto as we denounce violence in all forms and the conditions that create violence. We commit to working against these conditions to create a safe space for all to operate in Love and Peace on our streets.

We acknowledge that when we demonstrate love we also manifest qualities of respect, kindness, grace, truth, understanding, humbleness, and forgiveness towards each other. We commit to acts of love as an intentional force to generate tangible solutions, in regards to all policies, declarations, recommendations, resolutions, appointments, and actions.

We recognize as leaders, we must set an example and precedent for those who have entrusted us with these duties. We accept the responsibility to make our city and community a better place by bringing inspiration instead of insults, contributions instead of complaints, constructive feedback instead of criticism, and even in our passion for all issues no matter how difficult, we lead with the guiding principle of love.

We ask that you share with us in this commitment and practice of exhibiting love, good faith, positive energy, and respect in how you comment, present information, report out, or inform. We appreciate all contributions to this space and even when expressing hurt, harm, disappointment, dispute, or disagreement, we request that we lead with love in your heart.

We acknowledge Love in practice even when there are differences in opinions, strategies, procedures, and process, and we will seek to find common ground, and tangible solutions that demonstrate love for our city, its residents, our community, and all constituents.

We acknowledge and recognize that when we model this practice of love, it will establish a norm that will resonate and be exemplified throughout our city and create the change we all wish to see in our communities.

We acknowledge that when we lead with love we are able to uplift a thriving city rooted in equity, equality, justice, inclusion, and opportunity for all regardless of race, gender, age, class, socio economic status, nationality, religion, sexual preference, housing status, or political affiliation.

We acknowledge that when we uplift love, we uplift those impacted by violence of all and any kind. We acknowledge that when we uplift love we uplift traditions of our ancestors, our arts, our culture, our businesses, our educators, our unhoused, our civic servants, and all who contribute to the fabric and well being of our community.

We commit to the action of "Love Life" as our motto and mantra.

LOVE LIFE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (abridged version)

We acknowledge that in service to our beloved city of Oakland, and all its citizens, adhering to the city of Oakland's official motto, "Oakland Love Life" we enter into this space committed to embody love as our guiding principle.

We acknowledge Love Life as our motto as we denounce violence in all forms and the conditions that create it.

We acknowledge that when we demonstrate love, we also exhibit respect and kindness towards each other.

We commit to acts of love as an intentional force to generate tangible solutions, in regards to all of our actions.

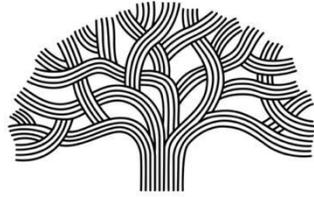
We recognize as leaders, we must set an example and precedent for those in community who have entrusted us with these duties.

We welcome and appreciate all contributions to this space, and even when expressing disagreement, we request that we lead with love in your heart.

We seek to find common ground, and tangible solutions that demonstrate love for our city, its residents, and all constituents.

We acknowledge that when we lead with love we are able to uplift a thriving city rooted in equity, equality, justice, inclusion, and opportunity for all.

We commit to the action of "Love Life" as our motto and mantra.



CITY OF OAKLAND

**Cultural Affairs Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 22, 2024
5:30 – 8:30 PM**

Members in Attendance: Vanessa Whang (Chair), Ilana Lipsett, Jim Santi Owen, Jennifer Easton

Members Absent: Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Michelle Mush Lee

Staff in Attendance: Roberto Bedoya, Raquel Iglesias, Kristen Zaremba

Guest Speakers: Marisa Raya, Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas, Chief of Staff Cinthya Muñoz Ramos and Cultural Strategist-in-Government, Tanisha Cannon

Roll Call/Call to Order

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chair Whang.

2. Land Acknowledgement + Official City of Oakland Love Life Acknowledgement

Chair Whang thanked Neha Balram for her service to the Commission and thanked the Cultural Affairs Division staff for their support in her absence.

Chair Whang read the Land Acknowledgement and an excerpt from Nicolás Guillén's poem, "Puedes?"

Commissioner Owen read the City's [Love Life Acknowledgement](#).

3. Cultural Affairs Division Update (with special guest speaker Marisa Raya)

Chair Whang invited Cultural Affairs Manager Roberto Bedoya to present.

Bedoya shared an update on staffing including an offer to an individual for a role on the Public Art team, a vacancy on the grantmaking team, a vacancy of a support position to the Division and the Commission, and a vacant part-time position. He noted that job postings for the vacant positions are slated to be made by the end of the month. Bedoya shared that given the fact that it is typically taking a year to fill positions, he was looking for a temporary hire to fill Neha's Balram's role.

Bedoya explained to the Commission that elected officials have expressed interest in the support of cultural districts including the Black Art Movements Business District. Two additional cultural districts include the Latino Cultural District in Fruitvale and the LGBTQ+

District in Lakeshore. He explained that these cultural districts are designated by Council but are unfunded, so the Division is exploring sources like the California Arts Council. He explained that Oakland has more cultural hubs than districts.

He discussed the ongoing space challenges arts organizations are facing. He brought up the complexity of the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center project and the associated community benefit agreements. He noted that the Malonga Center had secured resources from the San Francisco Foundation and that Vital Arts had been doing advocacy and developed a land trust model to acquire properties for artists.

He shared that elected officials had expressed support for establishing a Film Commission, but that there was no existing funding to support this.

Bedoya invited Raquel Iglesias to provide a grantmaking update. Iglesias shared that Council had approved 60 grants in December, 27 of which were Organization Assistance general operating grants. That program welcomed two new grantees, Art Together and YR Media. 33 festival grants were also approved, including two new festivals – the Disability Justice Club’s StaceyFest and King Pan Festival produced by the Lao Lu Mien Culture Association. Iglesias noted that \$1,327,000 was awarded through these program, with \$947,000 coming from the General Fund, which was supplemented by carry-forward funds from TOT. \$150,000 in additional TOT funds are being used to support the Networks of Care grant program, which will support teaching artists employed by Oakland nonprofit organizations. The grants are \$10,000 each and are designed to supplement teaching artist salaries as well as support professional development opportunities. The panel will take place in March.

Kristen Zarembo provided updates on the Public Art Program. She reiterated that the program had made an offer for the vacant staff position, and that the individual would be in place in time for the next Commission meeting. With the additional staff, the program would begin artist recruitment for its pre-qualified pool. She shared that the program had worked with a consultant to evaluate different databases for managing artist recruitment and would be in the contracting phase soon. Zarembo shared that 75 artists had completed the training program developed with Cultural Strategist Raino-Tsui and that those artists would be automatically enrolled in the pre-qualified pool. She provided examples of artists that had gone through the program who had already accessed other public art opportunities. She shared that a range of community-driven projects were coming from the Recreation & Parks Department that would be reviewed by the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC).

Chair Whang opened the discussion for questions. Commissioner Owen thanked staff for covering the meeting and gratitude for the Networks of Care grants for teaching artists. He asked if public schools were eligible to apply for that program. Chair Whang offered that funds for public schools were available through Proposition 28.

Chair Whang shared that a goal of the Cultural Strategist Sorell Raino-Tsui and Public Art Program’s partnership was to diversify the pool of pre-qualified artists. She expressed enthusiasm about the range of local artists of color and women who came through the program.

Chair Whang welcomed Marisa Raya and Bedoya to discuss their research project on operationalizing belonging in Oakland. She introduced Raya who was previously a member of the Economic and Workforce Development team working on strategy research, and policy

development. Raya noted that the scope of the research project, completed in partnership with Saneta de Vuono Powell, was to research how to operationalize belonging, which included interviewing 10 artists who were advancing this in their own work and getting their feedback on measures. The objectives of the project were to: 1) define “belonging” and evaluate the conditions that create it; 2) increase legibility and institutional recognition of Oakland’s cultural assets and counter bias; and 3) map connections or places to show where belonging exists and where it is lacking in Oakland.

Raya discussed brief highlights from the report. The study identified two types of belonging: 1) place-belonging: an emotional connection in a place associated with a sense of ownership, and 2) political belonging: the knowledge of the social rules of engagement and the perceived right to develop those rules, which can create social change.

She shared findings from the interviews, which included: 1) that there is an opportunity to promote artists and grant recipients; 2) that disbelonging was highest in East Oakland in part due to the lack of cultural venues where people can consistently gather; and 3) that there was an opportunity for the city to leverage its cultural resources to increase community cohesion and influence its other investments in areas such as violence prevention and housing. Interviewees warned against trying to track relationships as dynamic and ever-changing, which dissuaded Raya from her original plan to create a social network map of artist networks in Oakland. Instead, researchers recommended the creation of a Cultural Affairs data dashboard which would include a discoverable map as well as data the Division already collects in a more accessible format. The dashboard data could be combined with narrative highlights featuring the work of the Cultural Strategists. The final component would be a crowdsourced map of where Oakland residents experience belonging. Raya then shared a prototype of this map. Finally, Raya noted that the report outlined how the Division could work with other City departments on operationalizing belonging.

Bedoya thanked Raya for her work.

Chair Whang opened the discussion for questions. Commissioner Lipsett asked how the dashboard would address and prioritize groups and areas experiencing disbelonging. Raya responded that the dashboard could be useful as an accountability measure to reflect where Cultural Affairs investments are going and where there are gaps. Chair Whang recognized that the map was tracking existing data, such as Cultural Affairs grantees, but that the cultural plan defines cultural activity very broadly beyond nonprofit infrastructure. She thanked Raya for her work.

Bedoya noted that this could be a tool to demonstrate the value of the Division’s work.

Chair Whang noted that there is a new round of Cultural Strategists working with City partners and a series of upcoming webinars featuring previous strategists. Bedoya clarified that the program has been supported from outside sources like the San Francisco Foundation, Mellon Foundation and California Arts Council.

4. Public Comment

Chair Whang invited individuals to speak.

Osagie Edebury with the organization Does Great Stuff indicated that it was their first time coming to the Commission. They shared while they are an artist they had very little

awareness of the Commission and that other artists would participate if they were aware of the funding opportunities and the work of the Commission.

Ebhodaghe Esoimeme shared background on his application to serve as a commissioner and expressed frustration about the process and confusion over the Conflict of Interest policy. He shared why he felt he was qualified to serve. Bedoya expressed his regret over the lack of communication but clarified that these processes take time and that the commissioners are Mayor appointed. Chair Whang suggested continuing the conversation after the meeting.

Amal Aziz echoed the sentiment that the work of the Commission is not well understood in the broader arts community and the opportunity to advance belonging through the Commission.

Chair Whang thanked the public for their comments and shared that the recommendation process for new commissioners was moving forward.

5. Informational Presentations: Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas, Chief of Staff Cinthya Muñoz Ramos and Cultural Strategist-in-Government Tanisha Cannon

Chair Whang welcomed Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas, her Chief of Staff Cinthya Muñoz Ramos and Cultural Strategist-in-Government Dr. Tanisha Cannon.

Dr. Cannon shared that the Cultural Strategist partnership with District 2 was created to address vending at Lake Merritt. Dr. Cannon worked with Councilmember Bas to reduce barriers to vendors obtaining proper permits and to develop inclusive programming. She noted that the unique position of the Cultural Strategist enabled her to work within government but not be bound by its bureaucracy. She explained how she applied the theoretical Critical Whiteness Studies lens to her work, which examines structures and privileges associated with whiteness and disrupts power dynamics that perpetuate systemic oppression and inequities.

She explained that concerns grew from overuse of public spaces, particularly during the pandemic, which led to concerns over safety and health. However, these public spaces were critical to BIPOC entrepreneurs and residents across the city as a vital hub. She examined the real and perceived barriers impacting BIPOC constituents from participation in regulated outdoor events, what the city could do to alleviate those barriers, and what methods could be used to obtain that data. Dr. Cannon sought to uplift qualitative data she identified as “intimate inquiry” which included interviews, surveys, and process analysis. She shared details on her approach which focused on understanding existing permitting processes and resources, community engagement, outreach, producing a marketplace, and developing a case study.

Dr. Cannon highlighted findings from her study which surfaced a lack of vendor policy input, an overrepresentation of constituents opposed to vending, a sense of isolation experienced by vendors, lack of infrastructure to support vending, and inadequate security measures. She shared testimonials from vendors on their experience and goals as well as a stakeholder powermap, which surfaced a disconnect between decision makers and those constituents directly impacted. Dr. Cannon shared perspectives from those opposed to vending activity and surfaced the anti-Black nature driving this opposition.

Dr. Cannon discussed successful outcomes of her work as a Cultural Strategist which included: 1) the development of an equity scale tool to ensure the support and inclusion of diverse vendors; 2) the establishment of the Lake Merritt Marketplace; 3) the development of a Governing Board concept, which would stipend vendors to participate in decision making; and 4) simplifying the permitting process. She summarized her recommendations which included the continuation of the successes as well as: a reimagining of civic engagement, providing vendor support and trust building, city sponsorship of health permits due to the onerous cost, as well as cultivating a sense of belonging.

Councilmember Bas thanked Dr. Cannon for her work and Bedoya for the opportunity for the City Council to partner with Cultural Strategists. She shared that District 2 and 3 were collaborating on how to move Dr. Cannon's recommendations forward, including institutionalizing some form of an Outdoor Vending Coalition and Vendor Governing Board to ensure vendors' input in the decision making process. Councilmember Bas explained that with the revenue generated from the new parking meters, there was a budget to develop what City-sponsored markets could look like and identified several locations with potential to serve as markets.

Chair Whang thanked Councilmember Bas and Dr. Cannon for their presentation. She explained that the Cultural Strategist program came out of the cultural plan as a strategy to advance belonging and transparency by embedding Oakland cultural workers within government. Chair Whang explained that the program has been funded by outside sources and the desire to secure City funding to ensure the program and its impact continue.

Commissioner Easton thanked Dr. Cannon and Councilmember Bas for their inspiring work and lifting up models for self-governance in public spaces and examining both regulations alongside naturally occurring culture.

Commissioner Lipsett thanked Dr. Cannon and Councilmember Bas. She expressed interest in utilizing Dr. Cannon's equity frame not just within the context of vending but across the City. She echoed Dr. Cannon's point on the importance of compensating individuals for civic engagement to counter power imbalances.

Chair Whang brought up challenges artists and event producers face with the permitting process and asked Dr. Cannon if she had recommendations. Dr. Cannon responded that part of the permitting process had already been simplified by having it live in the City Administrator's office rather than the Oakland Police Department. She stated the need to create bonds with other City departments like Public Health and Fire as well as a need to create one centralized, physical location for individuals to go through the entire permitting process. around permitting that artists and event producers face and efforts to streamline the permitting process. She asked Dr. Cannon if she had recommendations for simplifying the process.

6. Cultural Affairs Commission Chair's Update

Chair Whang discussed the challenge associated with Commissioner vacancies. She reported that the Commission had put a list forward to the Mayor's Office, which would be brought to City Council for a vote in early February. She noted that the next Commission meeting would be on Monday, April 15, 2024.

Chair Whang stated that the next report to the Life Enrichment Committee (LEC) would be due in late April in preparation for budget discussions. She expressed her concern over the

timing of the mid-cycle budget and the city deficit and asked Councilmember Bas for recommendations on how to best advocate for the importance of the Division's work. Councilmember Bas encouraged the Commission to share budget information with the Council as soon as possible. Commissioner Easton asked if the purpose of presenting to the LEC was to make the case for the upcoming budget cycle or part of a longer-term practice of sharing the Division's work. Chair Whang agreed that there is a need to do educational work with elected officials and to activate the community earlier.

7. Commission Ad Hoc Teams

Chair Whang opened the discussion for updates on the Ad Hoc teams.

Commissioner Easton shared that the City was in the process of updating its General Plan. There wasn't originally an arts and culture component to the general plan, so commissioners worked with two groups supporting the Planning Department with the plan to incorporate arts and culture pieces into the various elements. She highlighted opportunities for community members to participate in meetings to ensure arts and culture is informing long-term city policy.

Commissioner Lipsett shared that the commission was looking for ways to more consistently engage community members that had come together around budget advocacy. She shared that they were working on developing a communications effort and strategy that would be a two-way dialog to increase transparency about what's happening at the city level, with the commission, advocacy efforts, and to highlight the work of artists. She thanked Division staff for their input. Commissioner Owen echoed the need to continue communication with community members continually as well as around the upcoming, anticipated budget cuts. Chair Whang shared that having a petition signed by ~1,200 community members as well as hundreds of printed constituent comments to share with Councilmembers had an impact on the previous budget cycle. She also shared that communications could also include other information relevant to the arts and culture community like funding opportunities, Requests For Proposals, etc. Commissioner Lipsett requested help with generating content and growing the mailing list.

Commissioner Whang asked if there were other issues commissioners wanted to address this year.

Commissioner Easton asked Bedoya if there were plans around the Poet Laureate program. Bedoya noted a renewal of Ayodele Nzinga in the position. Chair Whang responded that once the commission had more capacity they could support this program.

Commissioner Easton noted that the commission should wait until the new commissioners came on board before new ad hoc teams were created.

8. Open Forum

Chair Whang opened the discussion for the open forum. She invited David Hunt, of the Prescott Circus Theatre, to share updates from a recent meeting regarding changes to the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center and Calvin Simmons Theater community benefit agreements.

David Hunt shared that he serves on the community engagement committee with the Voices of Henry J. Kaiser Civic Auditorium, which is a group facilitated through Black Arts Movement Business District Community Development Corporation (BAMBDCCDC). He

shared that the development project has changed significantly since its inception but that the community benefit agreements had not. Hunt noted that the group was seeking to educate the community on what the agreements are and to hold the city and Orton, the developer, accountable and see what's possible for this partnership between the community and development project. BAMDBCDC brought in the Othering & Belonging Institute (OBI) to do an equity analysis and to gather community input. He shared that there were about 40 attendees at the meeting which ranged from Oakland-based organizations to individual artists. The meeting was facilitated by OBI and explored the potential to change the community benefit agreements given the significant changes to the project. Hunt noted that the economic equity targets of the agreements were very low given the budget restrictions on who qualifies as a small to mid-sized organization.

Ebhodaghe Esoimeme thanked the Commission for their time.

Chair Whang asked Hunt to share what the changes to the development were. Hunt responded that because of COVID and the lack of demand for office space, the arena would remain an arena for events and the office space would be relegated to the basement.

9. Announcements & Acknowledgements

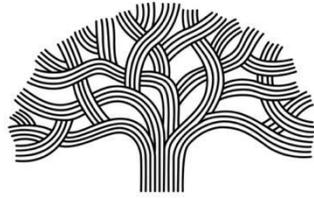
Commissioner Easton shared that BART was holding its first ever teen poetry contest and partnering with Youth Speaks and 826 Valencia to review submissions. 30 poems would be selected to go into their short story and poetry dispensers.

Chair Whang shared information on upcoming webinars featuring Cultural Strategists.

10. Adjournment

A motion to end the meeting was made by Chair Whang, seconded by Commissioner Easton.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.



CITY OF OAKLAND

Cultural Affairs Commission Regular Meeting Minutes Monday, April 15, 2024 5:31 – 8:36 PM

Members in Attendance: Vanessa Whang (Chair), Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Olaywa K. Austin, Ebhodaghe Esoimeme, Michelle “Mush” Lee, Ilana Lipsett, Mandolyn “Mystic” Ludlum, Candi Martinez, Jim Santi Owen

Members Absent: Jennifer Easton (excused)

Staff in Attendance: Roberto Bedoya, Raquel Iglesias, Kristen Zaremba, Josie de Mira

Guest Speakers: Sabereh Kashi (2022-2023 Cultural Strategist-in-Government), Alisa Burton (Head Start Program Supervisor, Human Services Department,)

Roll Call/Call to Order

1. **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Whang at 5:31 PM.

2. **Welcome to new Commissioners**

Chair Whang invited new commissioners to introduce themselves.

Commissioners Ludlum, Austin, Martinez, and Esoimeme shared their enthusiasm for joining the commission, their connections to the Oakland arts and culture community, and reasons for serving.

3. **Land Acknowledgement + Official City of Oakland Love Acknowledgement – 5:38pm**

Chair Whang shared remarks about the purpose of the Land Acknowledgement.

Vice Chair Choice read the City’s [Love Acknowledgement](#).

Commissioner Choice welcomed the new commissioners and shared how the Love Acknowledgment was developed through the Cultural Strategists-in-Government program.

4. **Action Item 1: Approval of Minutes from September 25, 2023**

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 25, 2023 made by Vice Chair Choice; seconded by Commissioner Santi Owen.

Choice	AYE
Easton	Absent
Lee	AYE
Lipsett	AYE
Santi Owen	AYE
Whang	AYE
Austin	Abstain

Esoimeme Abstain
Ludlum Abstain
Martinez Abstain

The motion passed.

5. **Artist Spotlight**

Chair Whang welcomed Commissioner Lee, the artist spotlighted for the meeting who performed her poem *Stay*. Commissioner Michelle “Mush” Lee is the Executive Director of Youth Speaks and is a poet, narrative strategist, and pioneer of spoken word pedagogy. A Harvard University Project Zero Fellow, Lee is frequently a featured speaker on the intersection of emergent cultures, racial justice, and solidarity movements, and women of color in leadership. Her talks and writings have been featured on Vogue, HBO, PBS, AfroPop, Summit Series, Social Venture Network, National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE), and the Berkeley Communications Conference. Lee has shared the stage with powerhouses like Natalie Baszile, Jeff Chang, David Banner, Hope Solo and Harrison Ford. Her writings have been commissioned by the University of California, Berkeley’s Othering and Belonging Institute, Stop AAPI Hate, and See Us Unite campaigns. Lee has also been published in *All the Women in My Family Sing*, an anthology of essays by women of color at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Vice Chair Choice shared that if artists are interested in being featured in the Artist Spotlight to reach out to him.

6. **Cultural Affairs Division Manager’s Update**

Chair Whang welcomed Cultural Affairs Manager Roberto Bedoya to share the manager’s update.

Bedoya thanked the current and new commissioners for being visible and foregrounding the work of the Division as well as the Cultural Affairs staff.

Budget

Bedoya shared that the City is facing an estimated \$160M shortfall by June 30th and has been asked to plan for a 20% cut to the Division budget. He explained to the new commissioners that most of the funding for the Division comes from the General Purpose Fund and the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Fund. Bedoya shared that after the last budget shortfall, the Division’s budget lost approximately \$1M and had a little over \$1M remaining to disburse. As a result, the Division had to eliminate two grant program categories. Currently, there are two active programs – Organizational Assistance and Festival Culture. He shared that given the current budget shortfalls the Division will need to consider how to sustain these two programs.

Staffing

Bedoya shared that the Division has two staff vacancies – one focused on supporting the Division, Commission, and partnerships; and one supporting the grants programs. He shared that hiring for those positions has been frozen at least through June 30. The Division will not have an update on the status of those positions until the Mayor’s budget is presented in May. Bedoya shared that he was able to contract Adriana Griñó through a Professional Services Agreement to provide support.

Life Enrichment Committee

Bedoya noted that the Division is scheduled to present recommendations for Networks of Care grants for teaching artists and the annual report on Division activities to the Life Enrichment Committee on May 14. He welcomed Commissioners to attend.

Field Convenings

Bedoya shared that he was invited to attend the White House and National Endowment for the Arts convening, "Healing, Bridging & Thriving" in Washington D.C., which focused on the role of arts and culture in our communities. United States Artists had also convened funders to discuss supports for individual artists.

Bedoya shared that he would be speaking at the Othering and Belonging conference and would be hosting the Kresge Foundation for a site visit in Oakland.

Discussion

Bedoya opened the floor for questions.

Vice Chair Choice thanked Bedoya for his presence nationally and asked to clarify where the Division was in terms of staffing. Bedoya responded that the Division is down by two full time staff and a .5 part-time position but that the part-time position was being eliminated because of budget constraints. He shared that there will be no action on the two full time staff positions until June 30 but that the Division was in the interview process with one and would reopen the process after July 1 if the adopted budget made that possible.

Vice Chair Choice confirmed that the City budget shortfall was \$160M and asked what the impact on the Division would be. Bedoya shared that he had two budget scenarios considering a 10% and 20% cut.

Vice Chair Choice asked about grant programs serving individual artists and project support. Bedoya clarified that those programs had to be put on hold last year and was not sure when those could be brought back. Bedoya shared that support for historically identified festivals comes from TOT funds and are Council directed.

Commissioner Esoimeme asked if there was an opportunity to advocate for the importance of the arts to the Mayor. Chair Whang responded that advocacy is part of the Commission's responsibilities and that staff can't participate. Chair Whang shared that there would be an opportunity to advocate to the City Council Budget Committee once the Mayor releases the budget. Commissioner Lee shared that past advocacy efforts were successful for the Division and emphasized the importance of ensuring councilmembers had arts and culture included in their budget priorities. She encouraged the community to organize as well.

Commissioner Lee asked if there was the potential to expand support for more festivals than the current 11 or provide larger grants to fewer festivals. Bedoya clarified that the 11 festivals receive permit waivers that are council directed. He shared that he would bring different funding scenarios to the commission.

Commissioner Santi Owen asked what the process was for councilmembers to approve the final budget. Chair Whang responded that the Council President has a budget subcommittee, but will have public meetings in which all councilmembers will weigh in. Commissioner Santi Owen shared that public meetings and town halls are good opportunities for advocacy.

Program Update: Cultural Funding Grants Program Update

Cultural Funding Coordinator Raquel Iglesias clarified that the Cultural Funding Program (CFP) has a festival grants program, which gave 30 grants totaling approximately \$450,000. She clarified that the festival permit program discussed earlier is a separate support stream.

Iglesias shared that approximately \$700,000 - \$800,000 in general operating support was given through Organizational Assistance. She clarified that because of budget cuts, the Organizational Project and

Individual Artist grant programs were suspended. Iglesias shared that the Division no longer has the insurance policy that covered the Individual Artist grant program, which also led to the suspension of the program. Iglesias noted that the 30 Organizational Assistance grants are two-year grants which means that organizations don't need to reapply in year two. The amounts are not confirmed but will likely be between \$15,000 and \$35,000. The 30 festival grants given through the Neighborhood Voices program range from \$6,000 to \$20,000.

Iglesias shared that the Division is processing 60 grant contracts and that it was taking up to three months to get funds out. As a result, to provide enough time for grants to be processed going forward, the program will not fund many festivals taking place between July and December 2024.

Iglesias noted that the Division was able to award \$150,000 from rollover TOT funds that had not been spent in 2022-2023. Funds were used to support teaching artists through the Networks of Care program. Grants of \$10,000 were awarded to organizations serving Oakland youth to support teaching artists salaries and/or professional development. She noted that some applicants, most probably because of organizational capacity, were not in good standing with the State Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts and therefore were ineligible; however, 15 organizations were being recommended for funding.

Iglesias noted that the Program Analyst II position had received over 100 applications and that 34 candidates met the criteria. Those candidates were being reviewed by external reviewers and the highest scoring applications would move onto the interview stage.

Chair Whang opened the discussion for questions. Commissioner Esoimeme asked if applicants that had been ineligible for the Networks of Care grants had been notified that they weren't in good standing and Iglesias confirmed that they had.

Commissioner Lipsett asked if there was an opportunity to share information on how to get into good standing with the AG registry or how to get insurance. Iglesias responded that the Division can do that but doesn't have funds to support those projects regardless.

Commissioner Esoimeme asked how much insurance costs and Iglesias confirmed that it is a steep cost to meet City requirements.

Commissioner Santi Owen thanked staff for finding resources for teaching artists given that CAD had to cut funds for the program. He also encouraged others to participate in grant panels.

Commissioner Whang pointed out that Iglesias had been covering the responsibilities of two roles for the past three years.

Program Update: Public Art Program Update

Public Art Coordinator Kristen Zaremba introduced herself and new Assistant Public Art Coordinator staff member, Josie de Mira.

Zaremba shared that the Public Art Program (PAP) is funded through the 1.5% for Art ordinance tied to capital improvement projects. The PA Program also facilitates requirements for private development projects that come through the Planning Department, as well as privately funded projects proposed for public property, which are under the purview of the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC). Zaremba shared that the PAAC is a nine-member committee that reviews those projects and supports projects on City property.

Zaremba shared that the PAP will refresh recruitment for its pre-qualified artist pool this summer and will share details with the Commission. She noted that the PAP was also working on a salon with the affordable housing community on how to incorporate public art into developments.

Zaremba shared that there are vacancies on the PAAC.

Chair Whang asked Zaremba how many artists had been added to the pre-qualified pool through the Cultural Strategists-in-Government (CSIG) for Public Art Program. Zaremba shared that 76 artists who completed the series of public art workshops devised through the CSIG program would be added to the pre-qualified artist pool.

Vice Chair Choice asked how council members fund public art projects. Zaremba shared that it is often on a case-by-case basis when they set aside money for special projects as part of the adopted budget, and that council members currently have funds earmarked for murals in their districts. She shared that as the PAP now has one additional staff person they can facilitate.

Zaremba shared that the PAAC regularly meets on the first Monday of each month.

Partnerships Update

Bedoya shared that a CAD funding partnership had received \$2.8M from the Surdna Foundation over a year ago through a partnership with the East Bay Community Foundation and Akonadi Foundation for the Just City Cultural Fund. He shared that three Oakland organizations were receiving multi-year grants for their narrative change work.

Bedoya shared that the Cultural Strategists-in-Government (CSIG) Program had been supported by a \$500,000 grant from the California Arts Council administered by The San Francisco Foundation. He thanked Chair Whang for her assistance on the report focused on the second round of the program which would be shared soon. Bedoya shared information on the latest cohort of Cultural Strategists and their city partners.

Chair Whang opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Lee asked if this was the end of the second year and where funding came from for the cohorts. Bedoya clarified that the first CSIG cohort was supported by City general funds, the second year was supported by a \$900,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation, and the third year was supported by the \$500,000 grant from the California Arts Council.

Commissioner Lee noted that the CSIG program pairs artists with city agencies and that the Division is a national leader for this program. Chair Whang shared that Commissioner Lee was in the inaugural cohort.

7. Public Comment

No comment was made by the public

8. Informational Presentations

CSIG Sabereh Kashi & Alisa Burton, Head Start

Chair Whang invited artist Sabereh Kashi and her city partner Alisa Burton of Head Start to share their experience participating in the Cultural Strategists-in-Government Program. The program pairs Oakland creatives with city agencies to make government programs more transparent and accessible to communities.

Burton shared background on Head Start, which is a comprehensive child development program. Kashi shared how she used her background as a filmmaker to raise awareness of the program via social media. Kashi shared some of the images and videos she had produced. Both Burton and Kashi expressed their enthusiasm for the CSIG program, their collaboration, and hopes to sustain the work.

Chair Whang thanked both presenters and opened the floor for questions and comments. Commissioners Esoimeme, Ludlum, and Austin thanked the presenters for their work. Vice Chair Choice shared his experience as a Cultural Strategist and noted that the CSIG program could support transitions or hand-offs between Cultural Strategist cohorts to ensure continuity.

Bedoya spoke to the future of the CSIG program and shared that funds are secured for the current year and that the Division is looking for additional resources for future cohorts. He shared that he is meeting with other city departments who could use community engagement funds to engage Cultural Strategists.

Henry J. Kaiser Community Advisory Board

Chair Whang invited Vice Chair Choice to report on his participation on the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center Community Advisory Board. Vice Chair Choice explained that the goal of the advisory board is to enforce community benefit agreements Orton (the developer) agreed to when given the contract. He shared there was uncertainty with the use of the space but noted that the space was hosting different events and that organizations could rent the venue. He shared that the advisory board was hoping to be part of the search committee for the new Executive Director. He shared that the City and Division should be more involved and that the Commission should stay informed by attending events and encouraging more community engagement. He noted that the advisory board had been contracted for four meetings and that only two remained.

Bedoya thanked Vice Chair Choice for his engagement with the advisory board. He stated that the Division would be open to participate in future conversations and could connect with Councilmember Bas.

9. Cultural Affairs Commission Chair's Update

Chair Whang noted that there is a vacant seat on the Commission and that there needs to be commissioner crossover with the PAAC.

Chair Whang proposed three ad hoc committees: community advocacy and communications, funding oversight, and policy. She shared that with the dissolution of the Funding Advisory Committee that those grant funding oversight duties need to be transferred to the Commission through a subcommittee. She also shared that there should be a policy subcommittee which is focused on areas like the Henry J. Kaiser development, the film office, and the general plan.

9. Ad Hoc Team Updates

Advocacy & Communications

Commissioner Lipsett gave an update on advocacy-related communications. She provided an overview of work that had been done three years ago to restore the Division's budget and educate elected officials on the importance of the arts. As part of those efforts, over 1,100 signatures were collected through an online petition. Commissioner Lipsett noted that this list could be leveraged to share more information on the Division, cultural events, the Commission and to provide insight on government processes.

Policy

Chair Whang shared that a group had formed to lobby the Mayor about promoting film work in Oakland. She informed the Commission that the City previously had a Film Office but it was now run out of the Permits office. Vice Chair Choice shared that artists like Rafael Casal, Boots Riley, Favianna Rodriguez, and W. Kamau Bell had come together to bring more film industry opportunities to Oakland. He also discussed the potential for an ad hoc committee or group to focus on addressing the lack of live music opportunities for musicians.

Bedoya clarified that a film collective was working on how to incentivize the film industry to work in Oakland and was looking for funding. Commissioner Lee clarified that a group of individual artists had come together to advocate under the leadership of the Center for Cultural Power.

10. Open Forum

The following members of the public made a comment: Polly v Kotombi (Omni Commons), Sam Bempong (film collective), Drusilla Cowan (Kaiser Center), and Osagie the Great.

Chair Whang thanked the public for their comments.

11. Announcements & Acknowledgements

Commissioners Santi Owen, Martinez and Vice Chair Choice acknowledged the passing of Jess Curtis, Ndubuisi Madu, and Calvin Keys, respectively.

Vice Chair Choice shared that he would be attending Civic Design Studio's Creative Expo. Commissioner Lee shared the release of Leila Mottley's second book. Chair Whang shared that April is Arts, Culture and Creativity month and is a good opportunity to advocate for the support of the arts with legislators. Commissioner Ludlum shared Californians for the Arts as a resource for advocacy. Chair Whang shared Americans for the Arts as another resource for arts advocacy week. Vice Chair Choice shared that he would be attending Californians Arts Council workshops and emphasized the need to advocate for resources at the state level.

Commissioner Santi Owen made a motion to call for a special meeting for June; Vice Chair Choice seconded the motion.

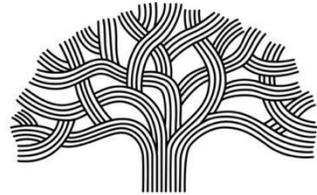
Austin	AYE
Choice	AYE
Easton	Absent
Esoimeme	AYE
Lee	AYE
Lipsett	AYE
Ludlum	AYE
Martinez	AYE
Santi Owen	AYE
Whang	AYE

The motion passed.

12. Closing

A motion to end the meeting was made by Commissioner Ludlum, seconded by Commissioner Lee.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM.



CITY OF OAKLAND

Cultural Affairs Commission Special Meeting Minutes Thursday, June 13, 2024 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Members in Attendance: Vanessa Whang (Chair), Olaywa K. Austin, Jennifer Easton, Ebhodaghe Esoimeme, Ilana Lipsett, Jim Santi Owen

Members Absent: Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Mandolyn “Mystic” Ludlum, Michelle Mush Lee, Candi Martinez

Staff in Attendance: Roberto Bedoya, Raquel Iglesias, Kristen Zaremba, Josie de Mira

Guest Speakers: Greg Minor (Deputy Director, Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Oakland), Sam Bempong (East Bay Film Collective), Kailen Sallander (Bay Area Video Coalition)

Roll Call/Call to Order

1. **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Vanessa Whang at 6:05 PM.

2. **Land Acknowledgement + Official City of Oakland Love Life Acknowledgement**

Chair Whang shared an excerpt of a poem by former US Poet Laureate, musician, and member of the Muscogee Nation, Joy Harjo, as the land acknowledgement.

Commissioner Lipsett read the City’s [Love Acknowledgement](#) and acknowledged that it was Pride Month. Chair Whang expressed gratitude to Vice Chair Choice for creating the Love Life Acknowledgement as a Cultural Strategist-in-Government participant.

3. **Cultural Affairs Division Manager’s Update**

Cultural Affairs Manager, Roberto Bedoya thanked everyone for their attendance and thanked the Cultural Affairs Division staff for their work through the budget cycle period. He thanked Chair Whang for attending the recent City Council meeting and Commissioner Lipsett for sending the Commission newsletter.

Bedoya shared that the Division made a presentation to the Life Enrichment Committee on May 14 and that it was well received. The presentation is an annual report out on Cultural Affairs activities.

He shared that the “Cultural Strategists-in-Oakland City Government” report, which focused on the second round of the program, had been published.

Bedoya noted the challenges with the 2024–2025 budget. He invited Raquel Iglesias and Kristen Zaremba to lead the discussion on budget scenarios and implications for the grantmaking and public art program budgets.

Zaremba shared that the Public Art team was working on a Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) and dialoguing with other departments, City Council members and leadership about potential changes to current legislation. Zaremba reminded the commission that the Public Art program was established and is informed by the 1.5% for Public Art in Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Ordinance, adopted in 1989 and amended in 2019. The second ordinance that also informs the program’s work is the Public Art (.5–1%) in Private Development Ordinance. For example, Zaremba shared an update on a recently completed private development project by artist June Grant called “Chrysanthemum,” located at an affordable housing development in East Oakland at 95th & International. She noted that approximately 30 projects have been supported through this program in the current fiscal year, with projects initiated since 2015 totaling \$8M. Zaremba explained that developers can also make contributions to the city for capital improvements at city-owned cultural facilities or they can contribute to the city’s public art project account.

She reported that at the last Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) meeting members had a focused conversation about bringing a public art plan to City Council, focused on recommendations informed by the Oakland Cultural Plan adopted in 2018. She reflected that the program has made progress towards the goals identified in the cultural plan such as adding new staff, refreshing the PAAC and diversifying the pool of prequalified artists through work with Cultural Strategist Sorell Raino-Tsui. This work resulted in direct engagement with 150 artists, with 76 artists moving onto the public art roster, most of whom are emerging artists of color from across Oakland. The Public Art team also organized a workshop for public art in nonprofit housing to open pathways for nonprofit developers not as familiar with public art projects. She shared that the Public Art team will be initiating projects for various Capital Improvement Projects.

Zaremba shared that the program would be going to the City Council in September with recommendations on how to utilize the approximately \$2M fund balance across program needs. Funds would support areas like staffing, administration, collections management, a full conservation assessment as well as equity focused commissions for projects in areas of Oakland that have received the least amount of investment.

Zaremba closed by sharing that the program will be issuing a new pre-qualified artist roster RFQ. She noted that Assistant Coordinator Josie de Mira has implemented the new SlideRoom application portal to make the process more user friendly. Staff will share the call and information on upcoming workshops with commissioners. Bedoya remarked that de Mira has been effective in adding capacity to the team and moving the public art plan forward.

Chair Whang invited questions.

Commissioner Easton noted that there are few public art departments that manage both commissions and maintenance and thanked Zaremba and de Mira for focusing on maintenance, and applauded the staff for prioritizing the collection’s maintenance needs. Commissioner Esoimememe

offered to share information with his community who may not be aware of the program. Chair Whang reiterated the importance of taking care of public art assets, and the challenge of doing so while understaffed as well as the difficulty of staff doing multiple jobs for many years.

Zaremba offered to share worksheets and recordings from workshops that resulted from their partnership with Cultural Strategist Sorell Raino-Tsui.

Commissioner Austin asked if maintenance has been staff and volunteer run. Zaremba clarified that program staff handle some maintenance personally, rather than volunteers, and that there are restrictions on using bond funds for maintenance of capital improvement projects, which is a challenge for many cities.

Commissioner Lipsett asked if there are restrictions on funds from private development or if they can be used for a range of cultural programming activities. Zaremba clarified that the ordinance outlines allowable uses. She shared that the funds are intended predominantly for physical public art, but there is some flexibility to use funds towards maintenance, care of the collection, or programming that might fall under the social practice public art umbrella.

Bedoya shared that the Division was allocated the same amount from the general fund in the 2024 - 2025 budget, but that there has been a significant decline in funds derived from the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and that carry-forward funds had been expended. He then invited Iglesias to share more about the 2024-2025 grantmaking budget.

Iglesias shared that the 15 Networks of Care \$10k grants for teaching artists working with youth had been approved and were in the contract phase. She shared that in April, staff observed that contracts were not getting signed off by Finance. In May, the Division shared the impact of the delay on grantees with the City Administrator and received a message that grantees should stop their work due to the budget deficit, which the Division then shared with community members. This, along with the cancellation of the Art + Soul Festival, garnered significant media attention. The City Administration then announced that all grants would be honored. This issue was also discussed at the May Life Enrichment Committee meeting where Council was informed that 42 of 60 approved grants had not been paid. Since then, Iglesias noted that 21 grants had been honored and 20 grants were awaiting a final signature from Finance, which was taking one month or more. The Division has requested urgent action to ensure the grants be paid before the end of the fiscal year, but action is still pending. She informed the Commission that Oaklandside had submitted a public information request, including email communications, regarding this issue.

Iglesias provided a summary of the 2023-2024 grantmaking budget which totaled of \$1,484,858.87. The program was strategic in rolling funds over from the previous year in anticipation of budget cuts. This allowed the Division to execute three grantmaking programs: Cultural Organizational Assistance, Neighborhood Voices for Festivals, and Networks of Care. The Division made \$1,477,000 in grants with the remainder of funds used to compensate grant panelists. With this budget, the program was able to honor the full amounts for general operating grants and provide 33 festival grants, the highest number they've been able to fund, as well as support teaching artists.

Iglesias shared that for the 2024–2025 grantmaking budget, the program was expecting to receive the same amount from the general fund (\$884,096) and approximately \$246,744 from TOT, however the TOT amount would not be known until September or October. She noted that rollovers were

getting absorbed into the city deficit so there would not be any rollover funds for the 2024–2025 budget. As a result, the 2024–2025 grantmaking budget, estimated at \$1,130,840, would be significantly lower than the current year.

She then provided the Commission with a grantmaking budget scenario which included \$320,000 for festivals, which would allow for up to 21 grants of \$15,000. She shared that the program plans are to keep the Organizational Assistance program whole and provide the second year of general operating grants to current grantees of the program who would not need to reapply. However, she did note that amounts could fluctuate depending on funds available. She expressed the importance of maintaining these grant amounts in the face of California Arts Council budget cuts and fewer private funders supporting the arts. She stated that across programs, the Division anticipates making about 48 grants.

Bedoya thanked Iglesias for her work and expressed how much the arts community trusts her. He noted that Risk Management was refusing to sign off on festivals happening in the fall due to insurance requirements and the need to get grant contracts processed. He shared the Division was doing research on how to support festivals while managing the City's insurance requirements. Iglesias spoke with representatives in Dallas and Denver and learned that they support festivals through sponsorships. Bedoya shared that the Division would consider how to proceed once the budget was known.

Chair Whang opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Esoimememe spoke to the importance of commissioners being vocal in expressing the value of the arts and bringing attention to the issue of grants not being paid out. He thanked Iglesias for promoting grantee events and requested applicant data and information on panelists to ensure diverse representation. Iglesias agreed and noted that 33 of 37 festival applicants were awarded grants. She clarified that grantees are selected through a community panel process, but was open to feedback on the program.

Chair Whang reiterated the challenge of Iglesias managing the program by herself when at a minimum the program should have 2 FTE positions. She asked if there was anything the Commission could do to advocate that the remaining 21 grants were paid before the end of the fiscal year. Iglesias shared that the Division had tried and was not sure what other options there were. Commissioner Esoimeme offered to make a public comment at the next City Council meeting. Commissioner Easton expressed concern over how this delay could impact nonprofits' finances.

Commissioner Easton asked for clarification regarding the zeroing out of festival payments for city charges. Bedoya clarified that there are two funds, one being TOT which supports the festival funding program and a second fund that covers costs like police. The second fund is what is being reduced in the current budget. This fund was designated by the City Council to cover costs like fire and police for a dozen significant neighborhood festivals.

Bedoya also shared that the Division has 2.5 vacancies. He explained that one vacancy would hopefully be filled in the next fiscal year and that the .5 part-time role had been folded into another position. He shared that the priority for next year would be to move forward with hiring for the Program Analyst II position.

4. Cultural Affairs Commission Chair's Update

Chair Whang welcomed representatives from the East Bay Film Collective. She reiterated the serious nature of the City's budget deficit and the need to work with the City Administrator's Office to get grants paid and support the fragile arts ecosystem. She noted that in the Mayor's budget the Cultural Affairs Division is sustaining the largest staff cut in Economic and Workforce Development at 23%.

5. Informational Presentation: Developing Oakland's Film Industry - Greg Minor, Special Activity, Permits Division, Economic & Workforce Development Department

Greg Minor, Deputy Director of Economic and Workforce Development, noted that the City's investment of \$600,000 to support the film initiative speaks to its importance in supporting local businesses and creating employment opportunities, attracting additional sources of TOT funds, and providing opportunities for community expression.

He clarified that the City has a film office but the extent of the City's involvement is solely processing permits. He noted that there are currently no financial incentives or resources for marketing to attract film productions to work in Oakland. He introduced a plan for a rebate pilot program which would require production companies to hire Oakland residents, provide training, and spend funds at local businesses. The City would offer a 10% rebate on expenses incurred in Oakland, such as goods purchased from an Oakland business or wages paid to an Oakland resident. An additional 2.5% rebate would be given on expenses incurred from hiring Oakland residents or businesses located in zip codes with the highest unemployment rate. They have secured \$500,000 to support the rebate program and staffing as well as \$100,000 for Visit Oakland to create a database with information on locations, vendors, and talent to make it easier for productions to work in Oakland. Minor then introduced Samantha Bempong from the East Bay Film Collective and Kailen Sallander from Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC).

Bempong shared that while there are local filmmakers who want to work in Oakland, the lack of infrastructure and high costs have forced productions to work elsewhere. Bempong highlighted that one of the goals of this initiative is to stop the flow of money out of Oakland, to bring employment opportunities to the city, and increase available TOT funds.

Chair Whang opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Lipsett thanked the presenters for their work and asked if the group could speak to the infrastructure and workforce pieces of the strategy and how private developers might engage with this work. Bempong responded that infrastructure would include creating a database studios and production companies could use to search for locations and that developers and property owners could register their sites. Bempong explained that the long-term goal for workforce development is to develop a program. In the immediate term, she shared that the group would focus on surfacing gaps and needs, identifying training programs and employment pathways, as well as collaborating with unions to provide more training opportunities.

Commissioner Esoimeme asked if the City was aware that permitting was such a huge problem and barrier for film productions. Bempong responded that they are working with the city to improve and speed those processes up.

Commissioner Owen thanked the group for the report but expressed concerns around ensuring that TOT funds would go towards supporting CAD programs. He asked how programs know if increased tourism is tied to film production. Bempong responded that there are industry formulas on how those funds are tracked. Minor clarified that to increase the percentage of TOT funds going towards the Division would require an amendment to Measure C and would need to go to voters.

Commissioner Austin echoed concerns around tracking funds and asked for clarification on Visit Oakland's involvement. Bempong clarified that up until now the collective's work has been volunteer run. She explained that Visit Oakland would be investing resources in running the pilot program including building the database, marketing Oakland to film producers, hiring local photographers to shoot locations, etc. She shared that it would be a challenge to track the economic impact of productions that don't participate in the rebate program.

Sallander from BAVC introduced herself and thanked the Division for the Network of Care grant that supported BAVC teaching artists. She offered to answer any questions about the report.

Commissioner Easton asked the group to clarify what the impact of their work would be on the Division and if they had any asks of the Commission. Minor responded that the next step would be to present the report and ordinance to the Council's Community Economic Development Committee on June 25th and then hopefully it would move to the full Council. Chair Whang asked how they plan to keep the community updated on this quickly moving initiative. Minor responded that the meeting on the 25th was open to the public and that the report would be made available and was open to suggestions from the Commission on how to get the word out.

Bempong expressed a desire to collaborate with the Commission. She reiterated the goals of the rebate program to benefit Oakland and how they were partnering with groups like the Bay Area Workers Coop, Business Improvement Districts, and Cinemama.

Leigh Hanson, the Mayor's Chief of Staff, introduced herself and stated that the City was investing in this initiative as a strategy to replace business travel as one of the core TOT generators, which was not predicted to return to pre-COVID levels. She shared that part of the Mayor's agenda is to center culture in the City's economic generation and development. She suggested that the Division could explore sponsorship models for its festivals program and a fiscal sponsorship model for its grant programs as a way to work around delays with the City's contract approval processes.

Zaremba asked the film initiative representatives to be sure to acknowledge and articulate lessons learned from the film program that once was housed within the Cultural (Arts) division, and to be sure to credit and compensate visual and performing artists whose work is impacted by new and for-profit film program initiatives.

Bedoya shared that the Division had done research on these models but that they don't allow for the valuable relationship-building core to the Division's work and expressed frustration around the lack of support for the Division.

Commissioner Esoimeme expressed the need to honor what we have while bringing in new opportunities.

6. Public Comment

Chair Whang opened the discussion for public comment.

Walter Wallace of the Black Film Guild and a former Cultural Strategist-in-Government shared that he was working on engaging Oakland photographers, editors, cinematographers, actors, etc. to build a location scouting catalog. He shared that they were looking for funding partners for that program and expressed his support of the commission.

7. FY24-25 Budget Discussion

Chair Whang asked what commissioners what they wanted to focus their advocacy efforts on for the next fiscal year. Whang shared that there is a bond measure to fund cultural facilities like the Oakland Museum of California, the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, and Peralta Hacienda for deferred maintenance.

Commissioner Easton expressed that staff is part of what makes the Division effective. Hanson clarified that her earlier comments were focused on the limits of the City's Finance Department, risk management, and auditing requirements.

Commissioner Owen asked about the bond measure for cultural facilities and asked to clarify if those organizations would be receiving those funds in addition to their existing allocation from the TOT. He expressed concern over funds not being distributed to smaller organizations. Hanson clarified that if the bond measure was approved by Council it would go to voters. She suggested that there could be an opportunity to organize around a bond initiative for increased funding to the Division or an amendment to the TOT allocation.

8. Approval of the April 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from April 15, 2024 made by Commissioner Owen; seconded by Commissioner Esoimeme.

Choice	Absent
Easton	Abstain
Lee	Absent
Lipsett	AYE
Santi Owen	AYE
Whang	AYE
Austin	AYE
Esoimeme	AYE
Ludlum	Absent
Martinez	Absent

The motion passed.

9. Open Forum

Bedyoya shared a three-minute video of the Cultural Strategists-in-Government program with the Commission.

10. Announcements & Acknowledgements

Chair Whang noted that the next Commission meeting would be on July 22, 2024.

11. Adjournment

A motion to end the meeting was made by Commissioner Easton, seconded by Commissioner Santi Owen.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.