



CITY OF OAKLAND

**Cultural Affairs Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 26, 2021
4:01 – 7:12 PM**

Members in Attendance: Diane Sanchez (Chair), Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Roy Chan, Jennifer Easton, J. K. Fowler, Michelle Mush Lee, Vanessa Whang, Theo Aytchan Williams

Members Absent: Charmin Roundtree-Baaqee

Staff in Attendance: Roberto Bedoya, Neha Balram, Denise Pate, Kristen Zarembo

Guests: Daniel B. Summerhill

Roll Call/Call to Order

1. Welcome

Meeting called to order by Commissioner Sanchez at 4:01 PM. She provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Commissioner Sanchez led the Land Acknowledgement. She asked the Commissioners to reflect on the current statement and see if they ideas for how to better shine a spotlight on the Ohlone people and their stories.

On behalf of the Cultural Affairs Commission:

I want to take a moment to honor the traditions and territory we are a part of. Those of us on the land we now know as Oakland and lands all the way up to Albany are in Huichin, the unceded territory of the Chochenyo-speaking Confederated Villages of Lisjan Ohlone. We stand with the Lisjan people and their right to legal recognition and benefits from the US Government.

3. Artist Spotlight: Daniel B. Summerhill

Commissioner Fowler introduced local poet Daniel B. Summerhill who presented several published and unpublished works. Summerhill is Assistant Professor of Poetry/Social Action and Composition Studies at California State University Monterey Bay. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Rust + Moth*, *Button*

Poetry, Flypaper, Cogs, The Hellebore and others. His collection *Divine, Divine, Divine* is available now from Oakland based-Nomadic Press.

4. Action Item 1: Approval of Minutes from March 22, 2021

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 22, 2021 made by Commissioner Chan; seconded by Commissioner Choice.

Chan	AYE
Choice	AYE
Easton	AYE
Fowler	AYE
Lee	AYE
Whang	AYE
Williams	AYE
Sanchez	AYE

The motion passed.

5. Cultural Affairs Division Manager's Update

Roberto Bedoya provided an update on the Cultural Affairs Division's needs for the FY 2021-2023 Budget Cycle. He noted that Annalee Allen's position was frozen upon her retirement in early 2021 and is hoping that the City chooses to unfreeze the position and re-establish its duties to support Public Art and festival-related permitting. Bedoya reminded the Commissioners that there is a predicted revenue shortfall of \$229M due to a loss of TOT funds (Transient Occupancy Tax) because of the pandemic.

He noted that he and Denise Pate have determined the following priorities for the Cultural Funding Program if the Division's budget is severely impacted by cuts in this next cycle. Priorities included: 1) Support Organizational Assistance funding, and 2) Support Neighborhood Voices

Bedoya noted that he is pleased with the media and public response to the launch of the Poet Laureate Program and expressed his gratitude to Commissioner Fowler for his work on launching the program.

Commissioners Choice and Lee expressed an interest in advocating to support festival culture in the next budget cycle.

6. Public Comment

The following members of the public made a comment: Assata Olugbala, Hiroko Kurihara, Aydoele Nzinga, Dominique Enriquez, Lyz Luke, and Favianna Rodriguez.

7. Update on Oakland Poet Laureate

Commissioner Fowler provided an update on the Oakland Poet Laureate program. He noted that the nomination window is from April 19-May 19. The Oakland Poet

Laureate Oversight Committee (OPLOC) will convene in May and includes Roberto Bedoya (Cultural Affairs Manager), Greer Nakadegawa-Lee (Oakland Youth Poet Laureate), Tonya M. Foster (literary community member), Michelle Mush Lee (CAC member), J. K. Fowler (CAC member). The plan is to announce the next Poet Laureate by early June.

Commissioner Fowler noted that the OPLOC will consider the following criteria in the review process:

- Understanding of the multiplicity of the aesthetic speeches of the city and consideration of the ways literature, heritage practices, film, arts practices, etc. illuminate how Oaklanders express their poetic souls.
- Command of poetry as a craft
- Affirmation of a poetic voice that expresses Oakland's diversity, beauty, and distinctions.
- Community engagement experience and ability to communicate well across a diverse range of communities
- Understanding of civic narratives around equity, culture, and belonging

8. Guided Discussion

Budget + Case-making

Commissioners Easton and Whang led a presentation and discussion on the Cultural Affairs Division budget (slides copied at the end of the minutes). Commissioner Easton noted that to that the City projected a \$72M budget deficit by the end of FY 2020-21. The use of Rainy Day funds, a hiring freeze, and layoffs of 500+ part-time employees brought lowered the deficit to \$44M. The projected deficit for the FY 2021-23 budget cycle is \$274M.

Commissioner Whang highlighted the Cultural Affairs Division's response to Covid-19 and the funds it was able to get out to the community in the summer of 2020.

- Cultural Affairs was able to leverage **\$1.425M** in CARES Act funds getting an average of \$2.6K to 349 ind. artists and \$10K to 51 arts nonprofits. 70%+ went to POC artists & 18% to non-binary/trans artists.
- **\$193K** in additional CARES Act funds were accessed for 14 free technical assistance workshops in digital media tools and production provided by Youth Speaks, YR Media, and Zoo Labs.
- Cultural Affairs created a partnership that is bringing **\$900K** in new funding for BIPOC artists & communities to reimagine a just Oakland in 2020-2023.

Commissioner Whang went into further detail about the Cultural Funding Program award rate data. She noted that Oakland continues to lose artists and cultural workers and the declining investment in the Cultural Affairs Division contributes to the problem. Considering inflation, the Division's Cultural Funding Program is operating at a loss of approximately \$2M based off the 1980's grantmaking budget.

Constituent Outreach

Commissioner Choice talked about recent challenges community members have faced while trying to activate Lake Merritt for artistic expression, community gathering, and vending. He noted that public comment periods and town halls, such as the one the Commission co-hosted with the Alameda County Public Health Department, are useful ways to hear concerns from the public and share information. The Commissioners discussed budget priorities and advocacy strategies. Commissioner Choice noted that there is a need for an arts advocacy town hall.

Advocacy Strategy

Commissioner Lee summarized that the Commission should establish a collective narrative about the goal and talking points with a script before starting a conversation with City Council about the Cultural Affairs Division's and community's funding needs. She noted that the Commission needs to determine the strategy for engaging the artist community in their advocacy push for the next 8-9 weeks. The Commissioners agreed to establish a small informal group to begin the advocacy process.

9. Open Forum

The following members of the public made a comment: Indi McCCasey, Assata Olugbala, Tyese Wortham, Oscar Edwards, Favianna Rodriguez, Melanie Wofford.

10. Announcements & Oakland Artist Acknowledgements

Commissioner Williams led the group in a brief and thoughtful memorial of the following Oakland artists who recently passed away. Commissioner Choice asked for a moment of silence.

- Zeke Nealy, Haitian Master Drummer & Historian
- Raphael Matingou, Congolese Drummer & Storyteller
- Alassane Kone, Senegalese Master teacher & Artistic Director
- Shock G, Musician, rapper, and lead vocalist for the Digital Underground

11. Closing

Commissioner Choice thanked the Commissioners, City staff, and the public for joining the meeting.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to close the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Whang.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE FY 2021-23 BUDGET PROCESS

APRIL 26, 2021

THE BUDGET PROCESS TIMELINE

- March: City Council releases their budget priorities
- April: Mayor garners community input
- May 1: Mayor releases Proposed FY 2021-23 Budget
- May-June: City Council leads public budget forums
- June: City Council develops alternative proposals
- June 30: City Council adopts final FY 2021-23 spending plan

CHALLENGES FOR THE FY 2021-23 BUDGET

- In December 2020, there was a **\$72M** projected deficit for the end of FY 2020-21.
- To reduce the deficit, the Rainy Day reserve was used & cuts were made (e.g. to police/fire, 500+ PT employees laid off, hiring freezes, etc.)
- The remaining projected deficit for FY 2020-21 is **\$44M**.
- The projected deficit for the FY 2021-23 budget cycle is **\$274M**.

BUT: Oakland will receive ~\$192M from the federal ARP.

SUPPORT IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

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CFP GRANTMAKING HISTORY

Year	Grants Budget	Applications	Grants	Award Rate
FY 2017-18	\$1,004,605	152	70	46% (37%)
FY 2018-19	\$1,216,253	165	80	53% (46%)
FY 2019-20	\$1,221,044	171	91	53% (46%)
FY 2020-21	\$1,123,299	208	63	30% (21%)

The percentages in () discounts the two-year Org. Assistance grants and represent a truer award rate of the one-year competitive grantmaking.

OTHER FACTS & FIGURES

- TOT underwrites Cultural Affairs' fairs & festivals activity, and around 30% of grantmaking
- TOT dropped 25% in FY 2019-20 and in FY 2020-21 is projected to be \$8.24M, a 82% drop compared to FY 2018-19 revenues.
- Cultural Affairs lost over \$400K in programmatic funds and a half-time position due to the FY 2020-21 cutbacks.
- The highest grantmaking budget since the 1980s was \$1,600,000 in FY 1992-93. In today's dollars that would be over \$3M.