



Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 8, 2026

12 p.m.

Vancouver City Hall

Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commissioners Present:

Richardson, Tan, Lewis, Ford, Mendoza, Gaspar

Commissioners Absent:

Harris, Percival

Item 1: Call to Order

President Richardson called the January 8, 2026, meeting of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission to order at 12:00 p.m. The Commission met in Aspen Room at Vancouver City Hall and via Microsoft Teams.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

Motion by Ford, seconded by Tan, and approved unanimously to adopt the minutes from December 11, 2025.

Item 3: Action Items

Officer Elections: The floor was opened for nominations. Tan requested a job scope and description for a better understanding of the roles. Donovan shared the descriptions for President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer on CAHC. Richardson provided additional details about his approach to the President role, including facilitator, timekeeper, and commitment to projects that require additional meetings. It was confirmed that the PRCS administrative staff currently fulfill the majority of the Secretary duties.

It was confirmed that all active sitting commissioners are eligible to fulfill any open position.

Members

Ruby Lewis
President

Michelle Tan
Vice President

Brad Richardson
Rebekah Percival
Ricky Gaspar
Rosalinda Mendoza
Russell Ford, CCAC
Shon-Lueiss Harris

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Donovan clarified that, while the City is required to offer the hybrid option for CAHC meetings, we prefer in-person presence from commissioners in the interest of productivity, quorum, and action for critical projects.

Commissioners Lewis and Tan both expressed interest in nominating themselves for the running for President and provided background in their leadership knowledge.

Lewis has served in the Vancouver NAACP executive board for 8 years. In addition to writing books, she runs a nonprofit which provides after-school programming for students. She is an artist and has been active in the arts and culture field for over 20 years, serving as a connector for our community's creative organizations. As President, she would execute this work on a higher level.

Tan is the Operations Manager at Fourth Plain Community Commons and has served international institutions, councils, and arts organizations for over 20 years. She has launched a performing arts center as well as two museums internationally and is interested in bringing her expertise to Vancouver as the commission is poised to grow the current arts ecosystem. She is also passionate about creating more opportunities for youth leadership in the arts and culture sector.

Richardson thanked both candidates for their enthusiasm and opened the floor for Q&A. An open discussion was held regarding arts-related goals for the greater community, inclusive practices for grant opportunities, and grassroots networking to spread awareness and create synergy. Both candidates spoke to their approach to supporting the commission, staff and advisory committee in implementing the Inspire Vancouver program. Both candidates also spoke about their passion for youth leadership and access to programming.

Candidate. Term limit is 3 years; position can be held for 2 consecutive terms.

a. President

VOTE: Lewis and Tan self-nominated for the position of President. Ruby Lewis was voted in as the new CAHC President.

b. Vice President

VOTE: Gaspar and Ford nominated Tan for the position of Vice President. Tan accepted the position and was unanimously approved.

c. Secretary

VOTE: Ford was nominated to serve in Secretary position and was unanimously approved.

Item 4: Workshop

a. Inspire Vancouver Update

Donovan gave an overview of the Inspire Vancouver Cultural Access Program.

What is Cultural Access?

- A statewide publicly funded program created in 2015 that expands community access to cultural programs in science, heritage, and the arts.
- 0.1% increased sales tax adopted Dec. 2, 2024, with ordinance M-4481.
- The City collects the tax and administers the program to distribute funds.
- Eligible: cultural non-profits and individuals with an eligible fiscal sponsor.

- Ineligible: state agencies, city governments, private foundations, radio or television broadcasting network or stations, cable communications systems, internet-based communications venture or services, newspapers, magazines

Cultural Access Outcomes

- Widespread access to arts, culture, heritage and science
- Programs for schools and underserved communities
- Local and cultural identity and pride
- Regional leadership in arts and culture

Public Benefits include:

- Expanding Access & Engagement
 - School-based programs for K-12
 - Free/low-cost admissions
 - Transportation to cultural events
- Strengthening the Cultural Ecosystem
 - Operating support for cultural nonprofits
 - Capital investments in accessible cultural spaces
 - Long-term sustainability and outreach programs
- Driving Economic and Community Vitality
 - Job creation in creative sectors
 - Cultural tourism and business growth
 - Community events foster civic pride
- Fostering Innovation and Creativity
 - Lifelong learning and creating exploration for all ages
 - Cross-sector partnerships between schools, nonprofits and the City
 - Platforms for diverse voices and community storytelling

Eligibility: Must have a primary mission focused on arts, culture, heritage or science, be a 501(c3) nonprofit organization incorporated in Washington or apply with a qualified fiscal sponsor, be located within Vancouver city limits or deliver at least 55% of programming within city limits and provide cultural programming directly to people who live within Vancouver city limits.

Funding Categories and Allocation:

- Innovation Grants: \$5k - \$25k (min 5% of available funding)
- Impact Grants: \$10k - \$75k (min 10% of available funding)
- Comprehensive Grants: \$100k - \$300k (min 10% of available funding)
- Capital Grants: \$300k+ (min 15% of available funding)
- School Grants (min 10% of available funding)
- Program Administration (10% of available funding)

Annual Allocation: 60% designated to identified grant categories, with 40% flexible to be directed toward opportunities for greatest public benefit. Program goals and direction will be reviewed annually by the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission.

Program timeline:

- Q3 2025

- Adopt ordinance amendment
- Policy adoption by resolution
- Q4 2025
 - Program branding and identity
 - Application design
 - Establish available funding pool
- Q1 2026
 - Hire program staff
 - Community outreach and education
 - Recruit and train grant review committee
- Q2 2026
 - Host workshops and training
 - Year one grants open

b. Roundtable Discussion

Donovan emphasized the large projects and programs that CAHC will be advising on, and the commissioner participation that will be required outside of the commitment to attending monthly meetings. She thanked commissioners for their ongoing support and for considering this responsibility as we enter into 2026.

She reiterated that it is preferred that commissioners attend meetings in person because of the critical work we have, especially the review of grant applications. However we will continue to provide the online opportunity to attend.

Donovan informed the commission that we will be asking to amend the charter to change quorum from 6 members to majority as we move forward.

Commissioners were reminded to check their City emails weekly to stay up to date and ensure timely responses.

An open discussion was held regarding adjusting the monthly meeting to an alternate time to improve attendance. Nilo will reach out to commissioners to survey what works, and for now we will resume the current schedule. It was requested that commissioners RSVP by at least the Friday prior to CAHC meetings so staff can gauge attendance.

c. Presentation Opportunities

Donovan and Nilo are planning out the agenda for rest of the year. Staff will email commissioners a request to share any groups in their networks who would like to give an educational presentation to CAHC in support of the work. Our commitment is to provide commissioners with the tools and resources to assist with outreach.

An open discussion was held regarding sharing the commissioners' city emails on the Boards & Commissions CAHC page for individuals and organizations to reach out to commissioners.

Item 5: Community Forum

None presented.

Item 6: Commission and Staff Reports

a. Cultural Services Manager

Donovan gave the following updates:

- VAMF applications are open for performers, artists, and vendors and exhibitions in the Hilton. Applications will be open through February. If you know anyone interested, please direct them to the VAMF webpage. More updates and opportunities soon!
- Arts Hub: We are in the process of selecting consultants for final design and operating models. We have started community engagement working with Christine Richardson on interim activation.
- Tricia Juettemeyer informed the commission that it was determined by the City that attorneys will no longer represent commissions. An open discussion was held regarding clarification on areas where staff or commissioners will need advisement.

b. Commission President

Richardson gave the following updates:

- We are excited with all the communications from the advisory committee task force for Inspire Vancouver. Richardson thanked staff for today's presentation on the structure of the program.
- Richardson thanked the commission for the opportunity and honor to lead CAHC and expressed his excitement for new leadership and looks forward to contributing more to his final year.

c. Clark County Arts Commission (CCAC)

Ford gave the following updates:

- Shared overview of his role between CCAC and CAHC and connecting information on the county.
- CCAC elected a new president, and they are in between focus currently with their major role of determining lifetime achievement awards in the county. They have also elected the new poet laureate for the year.
- CCAC members are asking how we did Inspire Vancouver and are excited for more information from the City.
- Outreach to schools: Artstra is organizing CCOS (Clark County Open Studios) participants to come into VITA to present and lead projects with students.
- Shumway is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and students are creating art to commemorate.

Item 7: Open Discussion and New Business

Mendoza noted that she hopes we can find a meeting time that works well for commissioners and allows the community to participate further.

Gaspar inquired about any influence that we could have on parking options. Donovan recommended attending the Parking Commission meetings as an option, as well as receiving and sharing written communications from constituents that could be impacting cultural events.

Item 8: Next Meeting – February 12, 2026

Donovan gave a brief summary of agenda items planned for the February meeting.

Item 9: Between Now & Then

Commissioners and Staff shared any known events:

- Tree planting on MLK day at LeRoy Haagen Park, 10-12
- iMusic Summit at Clark College 2/7 from 9am – 3pm
- Latino Leadership NW hosting annual fundraiser in Portland 1/24
- Jazz festival Clark College 1/28

Adjourned

This meeting adjourned at 1:57pm.