



Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 13, 2025

12 p.m.

Vancouver City Hall

Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commissioners Present:

Richardson, Reid, Harris, Ford, Mendoza, Gaspar, and Percival

Commissioners Absent:

Rafferty, and Tan

Item 1: Call to Order

President Richardson called the November 13, 2025, meeting of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission to order at 12:05 p.m. The Commission met in Aspen Room at Vancouver City Hall and via Microsoft Teams.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

Motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, and approved unanimously to adopt the minutes from October 9, 2025.

Item 3: Action Items

None.

Members

Brad Richardson
President

Linda Reid
Vice President

Lee Rafferty
Michelle Tan
Rebekah Percival
Ricky Gaspar
Rosalinda Mendoza
Russell Ford, CCAC
Shon-Lueiss Harris

**Parks, Recreation and
Cultural Services
Department**

P.O. Box 1995
Vancouver, WA 98668
360-487-8311
TTY: 711
cityofvancouver.us

To request accommodation or other formats, please contact:
Alicia Nilo | 360-487-8311 | TTY: 711 | parkrecculture@cityofvancouver.us

Item 4: Workshop

a. Washington's America 250

Lorraine Ralston (America 250 Coordinator, Washington's State Historical Society) gave an overview of Washington State's America 250 celebration. On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to focus public attention on history.

Washington established its planning committee in 2022, with 20 members. The Washington State Historical Society is the leading organizing agency for commemorations in the state. Themes include:

- We the People – Inspiring more active and meaningful civic engagement
- Power of Place – Exploring how geography and place shape Washington communities and stories
- Sharing History – Sharing more inclusive histories to better understand the past and build a stronger future

The project is engaging in outreach to every county, many cities, and various organizations. Key dates:

- **June 14, 2026:** Day of Service on Flay Day, volunteering in your local community
- **July 4, 2026:** Independence Day
- **August 8, 2026:** Museum Day (reduced admission across Washington)
- **September 17, 2026:** Day of Civic Engagement, Constitution Day, emphasizing democracy

Next Steps for getting involved include becoming an official partner to ensure maximum participation. Benefits include organization listing on the America250 WA Partner page, access to America250 events, access to official toolkits to support activities, and monthly partner newsletter with ideas, tips and suggestions.

More information can be found at www.america250WA.org.

Ford asked about tribal Washington land in 1776; we are hopeful that the Tribes will want to participate to share about what culture and community was here at the founding of our country. Ford emphasized the importance of acknowledging that history as we practice inclusive storytelling from all voices.

Harris expressed the interesting balance in celebrating what was here and acknowledging colonialism as we aim for a communal narrative.

Richardson identified America250 as an opportunity for a moment of sovereignty for everyone in Washington. The Fort Vancouver 250 subcommittee was transitioned to the America250 subcommittee to develop programming. They are engaging with the county, community partners, and educational institutions as well as media outlets and communications organizations. Richardson shared that the Historic Museum will be hosting an exhibit for America250 in partnership with the Historic Preservation Program.

Participation in the planning committee will include several local groups, with a kickoff meeting on 12/10 at 1pm at the museum. Overlaid events and programming are already in planning.

The Washington Museum Association will be participating in Museum Day, encouraging everyone to visit museums with the goal of making entry free so there is no accessibility barrier. The hope is to create a yearly tradition to get more folks coming out to visit museums.

Donovan added that the PRCS team has been talking with the Historic Trust to host some potential activities on July 3rd ending with a movie in the parade grounds. Richardson will extend the meeting invitation to anyone who is interested. Ralston expressed interest in joining.

Ralston was thanked and encouraged the City to sign up as an official America250 partner. Richardson and the commission commended Ralston and her team for their work organizing these efforts.

b. VAMF Recap

Donovan shared an overview of the 2026 Vancouver Arts and Music Festival highlights. The event was a huge success, and participants were impressed and inspired by the world-class music, and thankful that it was free and accessible for all.

This was our 3rd year, and we had more than 50,000 folks in attendance, and hosting over 60 performances across multiple stages with hundreds of local and regional artists. The event generated an estimated \$1.6 million in business sales for the community.

It was noted that more marketing funding was dedicated this year to promote the event to a wider audience.

VAMF received two awards: The Southwest WA Event of the Year by the Washington Festivals and Events Association, and the Best PR/Marketing Campaign for Events over \$150k.

Video highlights were shown from CTran and VAMF

Festival Highlights:

- Thursday kickoff
- Kif Kif and Clown Garage
- VSO/Renee Fleming
- Clark County Poet Laureate / Olga Loktev Ballet performance
- Live painting during Friday VSO concert
- Juried Art Exhibit People's Choice Award
- The Acoustic Stage
- Festival After Hours

Lessons Learned:

- More art vendors in park, with more room for future events
- Continued focus on partnerships & collaborations
- More food Vendors
- More Info booths throughout park
- VSO seating with focus on lower chairs in the front and taller chairs in the back with room for ADA seating

2026 and Beyond:

- 2026 Dates (August 7 – 9, back to 3-day festival)
- Funding / Sponsorships; strong emphasis on sponsorship development and grants
- Partnerships
- Pre-Festival Events
- Afterhours Venues
- Community Support

There will be ongoing focus on accessibility and elevation of our creative community. The event will continue to be as inclusive as possible with local galleries and businesses. Commissioners asked to assist with promoting our sponsorship development as a focus on education and advocacy.

Reid asked how VSO is feeling now that the grant is gone; Donovan said they shared this event is now part of their budget. Reid asked if there is a way to incorporate America250 into this VAMF programming. Donovan confirmed that whether it's a Waterfront Concert series, we are looking into ways to create overlap. Reid shared that the VDA has a great video to promote the event. Ford commended that VAMF was selected as the best art festival in SW WA because the full community is represented; the event is home-grown instead of bringing folks from outside.

Mendoza shared that she was at the festival representing an artist booth and running activities. It was a positive experience to be there as a vendor. Reid also encouraged commissioners to volunteer. Richardson commended the team and congratulated everyone on another successful year.

Perlick addressed that losing Murdock funds will have an impact, as we will likely have a request for continued funding in the next supplemental budget, building towards a more sustainable model. Richardson suggested going to businesses for advocacy and testimony that demonstrate the event as an economic tool that is worth the investment.

c. Update on Cultural Access Program (Inspire Vancouver)

Reid shared that they met on Monday, discussing the school piece of the program. It was approved that we would dedicate funding towards school transportation to bus students to events. Our representatives from the district are making great progress.

The City is moving forward with posting jobs related to Inspire Vancouver grant support. Melody and Harris have pulled together a marketing group to start working on marketing and branding, website; the first meeting will take place on 11/17.

Donovan expressed that while there is a lot of work ahead of us, we are seeing some headway. It is exciting to have discussions with schools and talking to HR about positions. Perlick added that the goal is mid-year opening of grants. We will be engaging this commission on finalizing these details.

Richardson added that we anticipate a lot of advocacies, outreach, and granting. He underscored the increased commitment to commissioners and the need for constant vigilance and community trust as stewards of this funding. As we shift into January, roles will need to be intentionally present and active, with the understanding that we have 7 years to prove the viability of this program.

The hope is that we will seasonally stagger grant cycle based on what makes sense for the grant categories and activities. The first year we will learn a lot, and it will be flexible to adjust as needed to best support our work.

d. Adoption of the Official City Flag

Mendoza shared that the flag selection committee had their final meeting on 10/25 discussed results from the community feedback. They unanimously chose city flag for City Council adoption and presented this Monday. The new flag was officially adopted.

Richardson thanked Mendoza and Ford for being part of the process and their commitment to working with the flag selection committee.

Item 5: Community Forum

None presented.

Item 6: Commission and Staff Reports

a. Cultural Services Manager

Donovan gave the following updates:

- Arts Hub: We have approved funding to do the repair of the chiller on the building, starting this month and should be complete by the end of the year. Roof replacements will start around April of next year, with the aim of closing out by June. We don't expect major impacts to the activities happening in the building.
- RFP has closed for our consultant to design with 3 applicants. We will review those applications for the consultant for the final design of the building. This proposal will build upon the existing findings from previous work.
- The mayor will recognize the Bell Tower completion and ring the bells for the first time. We will do a re-dedication in the spring where the Propstra family can attend.
- December 11th at 5pm we are inviting CAHC and PRAC to enjoy an evening of holiday social hour

Richardson asked when we can explore additional grants for funding opportunities for the Arts Hub building. Perlick shared that approximately mid-year there is a grant opportunity we might pursue in the next year or two. One consideration is that we need to work with a nonprofit partner, so we need a sense of phasing to optimize the ask. Richardson added that since the building is currently activated, he encourages pursuing state funding.

Ford asked when building capacity will be increased; Perlick, provided that we will continue to live under current occupancy limits until we phase into those (costs, including fire sprinklers, asbestos removal, access investment etc.) We will ask those questions during the design. Richardson noted that if someone from Facilities/Operations wants to come in and speak more to the decision makers, we can get more talking points to advocate to make this happen. For now, the occupancy policy will remain status quo as being able to have people in the building safely.

b. Commission President

Richardson shared that as we approach the close of the year, in January CAHC will be looking at leadership positions: President, Vice President, and Secretary. Linda and Lee will be departing from our commission. Richardson shared that he intends on stepping down from president in January, hopes to help with onboarding the next president to build in structures and time as a resource through 2026.

A discussion was proposed regarding reevaluating what time for the commission to meet. Considerations include optimizing full attendance for quorum, grant review, and accessibility to the public. In December, please be prepared to bring up ideas and thoughts for what works for you.

c. Clark County Arts Commission (CCAC)

Ford gave the following updates:

- CCAC held a brainstorming session regarding the Lifetime Achievement Award (Karen Madsen), hosted at the Museum. It was proposed to host an annual acknowledgement of varying artists and mediums to highlight work that has not been recognized.

- Clark County Open Studios – the event was successful and continues to grow every year. Artstra has discussed launching an outreach program, asking CCOS artists to participate in a presentation next spring at VSAA.

Reid recommended Inspire Arts as an organization that does work with the school districts and education (Inspire Arts). She suggested CCAC connecting for getting arts programming into the school districts.

Item 7: Open Discussion and New Business

Harris shared that he sat in on an art group that meets at a local café for a sip n’ sketch. After hearing about how it drives business, he queried that when Arts Hub is fully functional, how do we program without competing with local businesses that already participate in these grassroots events. It was proposed that commissioners go out and meet with galleries, studios, and businesses, to introduce the commission, talk about Inspire Vancouver, and get a gage for how we can add value without replicating efforts.

Mendoza thanked Harris for bringing this up in a more formal process and commented that this outreach will be good timing with Inspire Vancouver. Donovan and Burton will brainstorm talking points with data that is helpful for developing pipelines of the creative community for interpersonal data gathering. We can also work with the consultants at Arts Hub regarding community engagement.

Reid requested considering a day of service at the Arts Hub as an alignment with America250. Donovan confirmed that we can work with our Grounds crew to coordinate.

Reid shared that Rafferty is officially rolling off the commission at the end of the year. We are working with Law to determine if we can use the recommended pool of applicants selected by the committee to recruit a replacement. An open discussion was held regarding recruitment procedures. Richardson added that everyone on the commission is investing their time and talent and collaboratively weighs in on recommendations that help them better complete their duties. Donovan will return with more clarity on the recruitment process.

Reid recommended bringing back the public art committee next year in light of the new Inspire Vancouver funding. Donovan shared that we will be revisiting the public art process in the coming months, and Reid volunteered to volunteer if the committee is reinstated.

Item 8: Next Meeting – December 11, 2025

Richardson gave a brief summary of agenda items planned for the December meeting.

Item 9: Between Now & Then

PUBLIC NOTICE: Commissioners from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission and the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission are invited to attend an optional holiday social gathering to acknowledge offboarding members on December 11th. In accordance with Section 42.30.070 of the Open Public Meetings Act, no action as defined in the Act will be taken during this social event

Adjourned

This meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.