

## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 11, 2026

4:30pm

City Hall, Aspen Room

415 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street

Vancouver, WA 98660

### Commissioners Present:

Lewis, Harris, Gaspar, Mendoza, Ford, Percival, Richardson, Tan

### Commissioners Absent:

None

### Item 1: Call to Order

President Lewis called the June 11, 2026, meeting of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission to order at 4:30p.m. The Commission met in the main hall at the City Hall Aspen Room and via Microsoft Teams.

### Item 2: Approval of Minutes

**Motion** by Richardson, seconded by Harris, and approved unanimously to adopt the minutes from May 14, 2026.

### Staff Updates

Perlick introduced the staff from the Inspire Vancouver team: Diana Betancourt (Program Supervisor), Abby Ketcham (Communications Specialist), and Kirsten Hull (Grants Coordinator). Betancourt will reach out to commissioners individually to connect about the program.

### Item 3: Workshop

#### a. Inspire Vancouver: Grant Process Workgroup Update & Approval

The Grant Process Work Group met on May 15 to determine a process for application review and scoring. To determine a process, the work group looked at:

## Members

**Ruby Lewis**  
President

**Brad Richardson**  
Vice President

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

**Parks, Recreation and  
Cultural Services  
Department**

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- The scoring and award process for other Cultural Access Programs in the state.
- The scoring and award process for other City of Vancouver Grants and equity evaluation of the previous Culture, Arts & Heritage grant process.
- Values and concerns expressed by the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission so far.

The work group has drafted a process that prioritizes equity and addresses the commission's desire to limit opportunities for perceived conflict of interest between commission members and potential grantees.

To meet these priorities, the scoring process includes several new features:

- bias training for all review committee members
- shared facilitation duties among committee members
- a score calibration meeting midway through the scoring process
- anonymous grant awards by the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission.

An anonymous award process creates an ethical separation between the funder and the grantees so that the funder can prioritize its vision and intention for the program throughout the award process. Anonymous awards also reduce opportunities for perceived conflict of interest between a commissioner's role as a funder and other roles they may serve in the community as advocates and advisors. (A separate policy will address financial conflicts of interest). The Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission maintains direct influence over grant awards by:

- Deciding the grant pool amounts allocated to each grant category for each cycle
- Appointing the review committee members
- Establishing the score card used by the review committee
- Awarding Inspire Vancouver grants based on application score and programming need
- Advising staff on areas for continuous improvement

Next steps - July: set funding amounts for three grant categories and approve pilot cycle schedule.

The commission reviewed the revised score card and grant guideline drafts. Guideline components include three primary sections:

- About the funding
  - Program goals
  - Use of funds
  - Funding restrictions
  - Definitions
- Process
  - Application
  - Review
  - Contracting
  - Reporting
- Special Circumstances
  - Eligibility clarifications
  - Fiscal sponsor process
  - Contract amendments

An open discussion was held regarding transparency and equity considerations in the proposed anonymous approach, including tracking a fair distribution of the grants for accountability purposes. It was agreed that there should be a factor to indicate if an applicant has already applied for or has been awarded multiple grants.

It was agreed that there would be an annual revision process after the first batch of grants.

#### **b. Public School Cultural Access Program Update**

Perlick updated the commission on the progress of the Inspire Vancouver School Grant program.

PSCAP Overview:

- Policy: a total of 10% of revenue will be distributed evenly to the Vancouver and Evergreen school districts.
- Funds reimburse costs of field trip transportation, admission, and substitute teachers
- Policy recommendation:
  - Elementary level has menu of curriculum-specific trips per grade level
  - Secondary level has an application process for trips, competitions, and festivals
  - Local field trip options are prioritized, but not mandatory

Feedback from Commission:

- Desire for strong focus on city limits
- Concern that funding will disproportionately benefit large and established regional organizations over local ones
- Desire for more review of local organizations who could receive field trips

Next Steps:

- Short term: working with VPS/EPS staff to update field trip list and implement greater priority on local trips
- Long term: seek to build organization capacity to meet field trip needs locally

An open discussion was held regarding concerns for mandatory spending on at least a percentage of the funds being spent within school city limits. We have a baseline 55% for grant expenditure for the overall grant program, and it is intended for schools to comply, and we will be reviewing and reporting to ensure that the mission and values of the program will be upheld.

Commissioners expressed interest in seeing which opportunities come up in the first year.

#### **c. Ambassador Training**

Perlick reminded commissioners that we have additional open house events set up for education for the Inspire Vancouver program. Commissioners were encouraged to participate in ambassador training to share background information with the community. Commissioners can contact Burton to sign up for a training session. Lewis shared that she has hosted information sessions, with support from Inspire Vancouver staff to answer questions.

Betancourt shared that the team is in the process of partnering with key organizations to host more info sessions.

#### **d. Arts Hub Update**

Staff shared an update with Council on Monday night to get them updated on initial highlights, where project is, and next steps. The project has been emphasizing community engagement and key stakeholder feedback to assess how it is going now, and what an investment in greater capacity might look like for the building. We had a session last week at First Friday and at the Farmers Market. High level themes:

1. Affordability
2. Accessible and equitable; representative of our community
3. Flexibility
4. Ensuring no competition, but complimentary
5. Sustainability

Having an open building during initial activation has led to helpful feedback and has demonstrated goal alignment in our direction. We will continue with community outreach, and in August we will have further information from a recent Council presentation with an updated conceptual design and operating model. It was shared that once the concept and operating model are developed, we could begin the phase of deciding the naming process – there is not a timeline on this yet, but this will be acknowledged in the recommendations in August.

Gaspar expressed concern regarding organizations and artists growing organically with the right amount of support without becoming overlooked or gentrified.

#### **e. Vancouver Art & Music Festival Update**

Erik Miletich shared the following details for 2026 VAMF:

- August 7-9, 2026, at Esther Short Park and the surrounding area
- 2026 Preview
  - We are closing 6<sup>th</sup> street for the full weekend to increase safety for the event.
  - We will have over 50 artists and marketplace booths (out of 125 applications)
  - Juried art show will be featured in the Hilton
  - 4 stages (movement, community, music, and main stages)
    - Stage lineups are now posted online! Visit the website for the schedule
  - Entertainment is lined up throughout the event with different partnerships
  - Friday will be concluded with a movie in the park (Fantasia)
  - 13 local food vendors
  - We had over 200 dance and music applications this year; we are accommodating 16 on each stage to maximize capacity.
- Volunteer opportunities – shifts are up and ready!
  - Please consider volunteering – staff will share volunteer opportunity links with commissioners.

It was suggested that the festival explores different themes in future years. An open discussion was held regarding criteria for scoring and selection for performing groups. For the after-hours programming, it was suggested that we open it up to the community to host events in tandem to provide more flexible opportunities, both for the event organizers and for business owners for nightlife festival activities. An open discussion was held regarding training for volunteers and high-level talking points for understanding rights.

#### **f. America250 Update**

Richardson shared some background on the America250 event, and Washington250 efforts. State and local level had no robust funds or resources; however, the planning committee has aligned to connect events with the commemoration. We have chosen a local coordination committee with a combination of organizations

having agency around how they approach the event programming. This calendar has been created through Visit Vancouver to help coordinate our regional partnerships. The coordination committee is wrapped up and ready to launch. More information can be found on the Museum's website about joining the committee or submit events.

**Item 4: Community Forum**

None presented.

**Item 5: Commission and Staff Reports**

**a. Cultural Services Manager**

Perlick gave the following updates:

- We have many volunteer opportunities this summer, including our movies, festivals, and special events.

**b. Commission President**

President Lewis had no updates at this time. Commissioners were encouraged to check their city emails and commit to a small amount of time to participate in the Vancouver Arts & Music Festival.

**c. Clark County Arts Commission**

Ford gave the following updates on CCAC:

- There are several art festivals happening across the county.
- Artstra had Betancourt give a presentation on Inspire Vancouver, the board members had a robust conversation about coordinating legal representation.
- At VAMF, Ford is committed to hosting 4 different mask making workshops for free; he requested commissioners to join if they are interested and send him an email with group information.

**Item 6: Open Discussion and New Business**

Gaspar asked if we have a list of qualified 501c (3) organizations to serve as fiscal sponsors. Perlick confirmed that there is a lot of review as interest is expressed. Gaspar asked about the timeline, and Perlick has shared that while we do not have an exact distribution date, we are on track to distribute later this summer while we focus on our first set of grant categories. This first cycle will focus on relationship building and refining processes.

**Item 7: Next Meeting – July 9, 2026**

Perlick gave a brief summary of agenda items planned for the July meeting, including a recruitment update.

**Item 8: Between Now & Then**

Commissioners and Staff shared any known events:

- Juneteenth – Celebration at Esther Short Park on 6/20 from 10am – 3pm
- 2026 Northwest Book Fair and Media Fest – KXRW at Clark College on 6/27 from 10am – 4pm featuring over 100 authors
- Staff will be sending commissioners calendar invitations for future ambassador training opportunities.

This meeting adjourned at 6:32pm.