

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 9, 2026

4:30pm

City Hall, Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street
Vancouver, WA 98660

Commissioners Present:

Lewis, Harris, Gaspar, Mendoza, Ford, Percival, Bennett, and Richardson

Commissioner Jeanne Bennett welcomed the team and gave a brief introduction, sharing her background working with nonprofits, government, primary education and economic development.

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Tan was absent.

Item 1: Call to Order

President Lewis called the July 9, 2026, meeting of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission to order at 4:40p.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 Ford, seconded by Harris, and approved unanimously to adopt the CAHC minutes from June 2026.

Item 3: Workshop

a. Commission Legal Counsel Update

Perlick shared an overview of the latest legal counsel. The City has determined that the CAH commission, as a Public Development Authority, it functions as a separate legal entity.

Staff from City Law Department have been researching similar law support and processes for selection.

Members

Ruby Lewis
President

Brad Richardson
Vice President

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

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While this will not be an extensive process, this will be a scored quote process. Staff recommended seeking two commissioner volunteers to review legal firms and participate in remote interviews.

Commissioners Gaspar and Richardson volunteered for legal counsel review.

b. Year One Grant Cycle Provision Recommendations to City Council

Betancourt, Inspire Vancouver Program Supervisor, shared an overview of the Year One Grant Cycle temporary policy exceptions. Applicants would be allowed to request less than the minimum award amounts, with 8-month project window. Flexible allotment of 10% for funding over the allotted grant category limits.

- Innovation Grants
 - Current policy: 5% allocation, \$5,000-\$25,000; 1-year
 - Year One Exception: Allow requests below \$5,000; 8-month projects
- Impact Grants
 - 10% allocation; 10% allocation; \$10,000-\$75,000; 1-year
 - Year One Exception: Allow requests below \$10,000; 8-month projects
- Comprehensive Grants
 - 10% allocation; \$100,000-\$300,000; multiyear
 - Allow requests below \$100,000

Commissioner Gaspar asked if there will be overlap between the 2026 and 2027 grant cycles, and if that would impact eligibility of organizations who would like to reapply. Betancourt and Perlick clarified that the Year One grant timeline ends June 30, 2027, with the new cycle beginning on July 1, 2027.

Action: Ford made a motion to approve the Temporary Policy Exceptions recommended for the Year One Grant Cycle. The motion was seconded by Harris and unanimously approved.

c. Fund Distribution Timeline

Hull shared a timeline of the Year One grant cycle for Inspire Vancouver 2026

August 2026

- Applications open
- Workshops held
- Commission appoints Committee

September 2026

- Application refinement
- Applications close
- Commission receives update
- Committee meets three times

October 2026

- Commission awards grants
- Award/denial letters sent
- Agreements drafted
- Paperwork processed

November 2026

- Checks go out
- Commission gives feedback on process

Applications are scheduled to open the first week of August, with awards announced in mid-October. An open discussion was held regarding the user process in the portal and the minimization of workload for applicants once funds are awarded upfront.

Richardson noted that it would be helpful for commissioners to see the full dollar amount with a fiscal report and breakdown of amounts allocated to each grant category. The budget and financial report snapshot would also help promote transparency.

d. Grant Review Committee Process

Betancourt shared an overview on the Grant Review Committee process will be a mix of open call and direct recruitment.

- Mix of open call and direct recruitment
- Short application form
- CAHC subcommittee will review and select panelists for CAHC to appoint

Who we are looking for:

- Mix of nonprofit peers and community members who will benefit from programming
- Live within Vancouver city limits or have a member of their household enrolled in Vancouver or Evergreen Public Schools.

Subcommittee:

- Select subcommittee members to review Grant Review Committee (GRC) applications
- Timeline:
 - GRC applications close August 3
 - Subcommittee recommends panelists at CAHC meeting on August 13
 - GRC begins meeting in September

An open discussion was held regarding the expected role of the GRC, which would be renewed each cycle.

Volunteers: Commissioners Lewis, Harris, Ford, and Mendoza volunteered to sit on the GRC.

Action: Harris made a motion to approve the subcommittee of recommend panelists. The motion was seconded by Ford and unanimously approved.

Betancourt will send commissioners a flyer with detailed information on the GRC.

e. Fiscal Sponsorships

Hull provided an overview of fiscal sponsorship organizations:

- Holds primary responsibility for grant administration
- Receives the grant funds as their own income then issues the funds to the sponsored group/individual
- Oversees and manages records including the grant agreement and reporting requirements

- May retain a fee of up to 10% for their fiscal and administrative services

Fiscal sponsor organization eligibility:

- From IRS – Organizations must have a mission aligned with the projects they sponsor.
- From RCW Chapter 36.160 (Cultural Access Program) – Must be a 501(c)(3) incorporated in WA and recognized by IRS.
- From Vancouver Cultural Access Program Policy
 - Must have a mission aligned with advancing or preserving arts, culture, heritage, or science.
 - Must provide a letter of commitment for the grantee's application.

Eligibility interpretation and guidance needed: The policy states “Fiscal Sponsor must have a **mission aligned** with advancing or preserving arts, culture, heritage or science.”

An open discussion was held regarding whether this should be interpreted:

- **Narrowly** – fiscal sponsors must have culture, arts, heritage or science as their primary purpose, OR
- **More broadly** – fiscal sponsors must do culture, arts, heritage or science activities, but they can have a different primary purpose.
 - Organizations that do NOT do cultural activities remain ineligible

Potential impacts of interpretation could determine who would benefit and who would be left out. Considerations include:

- Asking groups who already have a mission-aligned fiscal sponsor to find a new sponsor could limit program accessibility
- New, large sources of funding could expose caps in administration capacity at eligible fiscal sponsor organizations
- Orgs that already offer fiscal sponsorships could have an advantage
- Orgs that already offer fiscal sponsorship could be stretched too thin
- Potential for orgs to use fiscal sponsorship fees as a revenue source

Commissioners discussed considerations, including the fluid mission and scope of the organizations. Staff had heard feedback that organizations have had difficulty finding current fiscal sponsors, as well as express concern regarding the capacity of who is eligible. Defining existing activities and a track record would also have influence on the interpretation of the policy.

Action: The commission voted to hold the first year of grant cycles to the original standard of narrow interpretation of fiscal sponsor policies, with the option to reevaluate for future cycles if necessary.

f. Program Updates

Betancourt shared an overview of schools in Vancouver. No recommendations or proposals at this time, but there will be ongoing conversations regarding charter schools not being part of the public school district. The legal team is exploring limitations to funding that charter schools inside City limits are eligible to receive for grants.

Ketcham (Communications Specialist, Inspire Vancouver) provided an overview on upcoming info sessions, stats review, and online tools learning opportunities. We have completed our last info session before the grant cycle opens, totaling to 12 sessions across different locations in Vancouver.

Ketcham shared an invitation for the Inspire Vancouver Open House on Wednesday, July 22, at the Vancouver Arts Hub from 5:30pm – 7:30pm. The purpose of the informal open house is to meet the team, learn important updates about the grant cycle, and connect with others who are interested in expanding arts, culture, heritage and science opportunities in Vancouver. If the occupancy may be above 200 attendees, we are exploring alternative locations.

Item 4: Community Forum

None presented.

Item 5: Commission and Staff Reports

a. Cultural Services Manager

Donovan gave the following updates:

- The call for volunteers for VAMF is still open and will close 2 days before the festival
- Summer Concerts are starting tonight at the Waterfront, and the Sunday Sounds Concerts starting this week.
- We are in the final process for interviewing our final Grant Coordinator

b. Commission President

President Lewis had no updates at this time.

c. Clark County Arts Commission

Ford gave the following updates on CCAC:

- The Atkins gallery at the County building now has an additional gallery on the 2nd floor.

Item 6: Open Discussion and New Business

Commissioner Gaspar requested to revisit possible alternative meeting times on occasion in the future.

Item 7: Next Meeting – August 13, 2026

Donovan 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:

- Lewis shared that there is a poetry event happening on July 11 at 6:30pm about Malcom-X at the Arts Hub.
- Percival shared that she was appointed as the new Executive Director as ArtsWA
- Ford will be facilitating mask making workshops at VAMF and welcomes more groups to join
- Harris shared that there is a youth art show represented from VSD and ESD at the Art Hub until the end of the month.
- The last Friday of July will have an open house show.

This meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.