

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 13, 2026

4:30pm

City Hall, Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA 98660

Commissioners Present:

Lewis, Harris, Ford, Bennett, Gaspar, and Tan

Commissioners Percival and Richardson have submitted their resignations from the commission due to other commitments.

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Mendoza was absent.

Item 1: Call to Order

President Lewis called the August 13, 2026, meeting of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission to order at 4:32p.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 Bennett, and approved unanimously to adopt the CAHC minutes from July 2026.

Item 3: Workshop

a. Inspire Vancouver Foundational Program Overview / Website Review

Hull (Grants Coordinator) and Ketcham (Communications Specialist) shared in-depth updates for the CAHC regarding the 2026 Application Workshop. 2026 Inspire Vancouver Grants invest in cultural programming for our community in several ways:

- Helps local nonprofit arts, culture, heritage, and science groups bring programs to more neighborhoods and audiences in Vancouver

Members

Ruby Lewis
President

Vacant
Vice President

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

**Parks, Recreation and
Cultural Services
Department**

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

- This year, we are offering grants in three categories, ranging from \$5k - \$150k
- Grants can be used to create and support public programming and/or support operating costs for an organization
- Grant funds are paid at award
- Applications will close September 10, and awards will be announced mid-October

Grant Categories:

Innovation Grants – Supporting bold ideas and creative risk-taking

- Award: \$25k or less
- 8-month grant window
- Unrestricted funds to try new things
- Examples:
 - Pilot a new program
 - Collaborating with a new partner
 - Reach a new audience
 - Explore an untested approach

Impact Grants – Strengthening and scaling what's already making a difference

- Award: \$75k or less
- 8-month grant window
- Unrestricted funds to support your work
- Examples:
 - Offer more programs
 - Expand your work to a new area
 - Host an event or festival
 - Cover the cost of program materials

Comprehensive Grants – Building stronger organizations and a thriving cultural community

- Award: \$150k or less
- 8-month grant window
- Unrestricted funds to sustain and build capacity
- Examples:
 - Support operating costs
 - Upgrade technology
 - Invest in research
 - Maintain and expand free and low-cost programs

Basic eligibility requirements for Inspire Vancouver Grants include public programs or experiences for Vancouver residents, primary purpose to advance or preserve arts, culture, heritage, or science, located within Vancouver city limits or provide at least 55% of your programs within City limits, and nonprofit groups, or group/individuals with a nonprofit fiscal sponsor.

Understanding eligibility exceptions: Eligibility is determined by organization/applicant, not project. Location exception: at least 55% of programming held within Vancouver city limits. Groups and individuals must demonstrate that their project has public benefit and is not commercial in nature.

Hull summarized frequently asked questions about grant categories, including how to select the right category for the project, whether one organization can apply in multiple categories, and whether one can apply in the same category as a group that is being sponsored.

Ketcham shared a tour of the resources available on the Inspire Vancouver website, including the Cultural Access Tax information, Meet the Commission, Equity and Access Index, Eligibility Checker, Fiscal Sponsorship, Definitions, and FAQs. The Events page will display application and grantee events to feature all projects that are being funded. The website also features a tab with information about all of the grant categories.

An overview on fiscal sponsors was given; the organizations hold primary responsibility for grant administration, receive grant funds to issue, oversee and manage records, may retain a fee of up to 10%, and can access their grantee's application and reports in the grant portal.

Organizations that can be a fiscal sponsor must have a mission aligned with the projects they sponsor, be a 501c (3) incorporated in Washington and recognized by the IRS and must have a primary purpose to advance or preserve arts, culture, heritage, or science. Eligibility is determined by the organization/applicant, not the project. The sponsored organization/applicant must meet ALL other eligibility requirements.

Betancourt shared feedback and scenarios from the community received during workshops and grant meetings. Concerns include inclusivity, accessibility, organization capacity and infrastructure.

Eligibility interpretation (guidance needed) – policy states “Fiscal Sponsor must have a mission aligned with advancing or preserving arts, culture, heritage, or science”

- Should this 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 – discussion on who would benefit, and who would be left out

- 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 gaps in administration capacity at eligible fiscal sponsor organizations
- Orgs that already offer fiscal sponsorship could have an advantage
- Orgs that already offer fiscal sponsorship could be stretched too thin

The floor was open for discussion on fiscal sponsorship and feedback from community members asking for recommendations for fiscal sponsorship to ensure success of the program and capacity building. Commissioners discussed reconsidering the broader interpretation to minimize restrictions upon tapping into existing relationships with potential fiscal sponsors. Betancourt highlighted that the tight timeframe is also a strong factor for this cycle's development and reiterated that organizations that do NOT do cultural activities would remain ineligible.

Bennett pondered what we can do to help local organizations become eligible fiscal sponsors with the tools to succeed. Betancourt shared that we would facilitate workshops to continue to provide support and build infrastructure for our local organizations.

Gaspar asked if there are limitations that can be placed on fiscal sponsors who would have the advantage of sponsoring multiple projects. Perlick shared that a 10% fee is a standard practice, and any changes to that would require adoption of amended policy. Lewis suggested postponing this vote into the next cycle, since the current cycle is now open for applications; she added that legal representation for CAHC will be available in October.

Betancourt shared that 32 accounts have been made in the application portal so far.

b. Fund Distribution Overview

Stokke (Senior Management Analyst) shared an overview of Inspire Vancouver Funding.

Cultural Access Tax – Local Sales Tax Fund

- Tax adopted by City Council in Dec. 2024
- Fund established in Jan. 2025
- Tax collection began in April 2025
- Two-month delay between tax collection and City receiving revenue
- First revenue received in June 2025
- This fund can only be used for Inspire Vancouver grants and administration

Current projections: Estimated Revenue Collections (Year One program allocation) are currently allocated at \$7,000,000, with actual/awarded amount currently at \$7,221,446.

- Impact (\$700,000)
- Innovation (\$350,000)
- Comprehensive (\$700,000)
- School Transportation (\$700,000)
- Administration (\$700,000)
- Flexible (\$700,000)

Total: \$3,850,000

Projected Carryforward to Year Two: \$3,150,000

Next Steps – staff will continue tracking actual revenue vs. projections, work through the City's budget process, and develop an annual report (July-June) for Commission.

Donovan reiterated that Capital grants and School opportunity grants will be opened in the next grant cycle. Perlick shared that while the 7-year grant window covers the collection of the tax, the grant expenditures are anticipated to spend-down beyond that period (impacts and programs will not have a harsh cut-off date exactly 7 years from now).

Rollout for the first cycle was discussed. Perlick reiterated that the year one cycle recommendations were approved by CAHC at the July 9, 2026, meeting, and moved to City Council on July 20. Gaspar inquired about increasing allocated grant categories, Perlick highlighted that this would require City Council approval of an amendment before the award period in October. Harris acknowledged that feedback received called for smaller grant sizes in the pilot cycle of the program.

It was determined that a motion to change fiscal sponsorship to a broader interpretation can be revisited at a later time, if necessary.

c. Review and Approve GRC Recommendations

Commissioner Harris shared that considerations for the top 5 applicants for the GRC included grant writing, fundraising expertise, and program participation.

Based on the criteria determined by the selection committee, candidates Carol Mabbott and Aliess Kingsley were highlighted for their backgrounds in fundraising, connection to the arts and culture sector, and knowledge about the Inspire Vancouver program and policy. In addition, they bring program evaluation, community connection, and commitment to racial equity and youth mentorship.

Action: Bennett made a motion to approve the recommended candidates for primary and secondary positions in the GRC. The motion was seconded by Ford and unanimously approved.

Item 4: Community Forum

None presented.

Item 5: Commission and Staff Reports

a. Cultural Services Manager

Donovan had no updates at this time.

b. Commission President

President Lewis had no updates at this time.

c. Clark County Arts Commission

Ford had no updates at this time.

Item 6: Open Discussion and New Business

Update

Item 7: Next Meeting – September 10, 2026

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

This meeting adjourned at 6:31pm.