

**CITY OF NORWALK  
ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, 6:00 PM  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**ATTENDEES:** Brian Kaspr (Chair), Danny Loftus George, Marc Alan, Melissa Matuska, Nori Grudin, Kevin Huffman, Steven Rust, Janay Sylvester (6:04pm).

**STAFF:** Sabrina Godeski.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Mr. Kaspr.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kaspr called roll.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Meeting: August 5, 2025**

**\*\*MR. LOFTUS GEORGE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 5, 2025, REGULAR MEETING.**

**\*\*MR. ALAN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS – MR. ALAN, MR. RUST.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**V. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Budget Review**

Ms. Godeski reported recent activity, including a \$550 expense for a networking mixer event. She noted there were advertising funds available for window clings and signage now that a logo exists for the Arts and Cultural District.

There was also discussion of a \$9,000 balance remaining for the MLK Corridor, which must be used within that area. The \$6,700 surplus in the Arts and Public Places program was attributed to donated materials for the West Avenue project.

Ms. Godeski clarified that such funds must be spent on public art in the public realm, classified as capital expenses, whereas special events have a separate \$20,000 budget line.

Ms. Grudin inquired if the funds could be used to redo traffic graphic boxes by the Maritime Center, which Ms. Godeski confirmed was the original plan.

Mr. Loftus George asked about a prior concept of temporary sculptures and whether that would qualify as a capital expense. Ms. Godeski confirmed, but added that single piece costs were prohibitively high. Mr. Alan remarked that capital could cover sculpture as well as traditional Works.

Ms. Godeski reported movement on the Donovan's mural restoration with landlord and condo association approval. Breck Morgan, the artist, would provide technical specifications and there may be a future proposal for partial funding from the commission's maintenance budget.

Mr. Kaspr asked for clarification on funding sources for the Ely Avenue fencing (which is grant-funded, not out of the \$100,000 program).

### **B. Update on Ely Avenue Fencing Mural**

Ms. Godeski provided an update that the voting for the mural winner would close around September 26, and the selection would be brought to the October 7 meeting, followed by the October 14 Common Council meeting for approval.

Ms. Godeski reported as of right now there were 492 public responses to the survey, with Option 1 (Oksana) receiving 61.4% and Option 2 receiving 38.6%.

There was then discussion about reconsidering the Five Fingas proposal after concerns were raised on social media, but both Mr. Kaspr and Ms. Matuska clarified that the process was already formally advanced and couldn't be reversed at this stage. The Commission acknowledged a need for future learning regarding artist disqualification and public response, and discussed community tensions.

Mr. Alan suggested another Art Speaks event to foster dialogue and healing within the arts community, a suggestion that received broad support.

### **C. Fall Networking Mixer Partnership with Thrown Stone Theater**

Ms. Sylvester introduced a documented proposal for a networking event at Thrown Stone Theater aimed at increasing venue awareness and featuring a mix of poetry, musical performance, and play excerpts. The event was proposed for November 6, with support requested for food, beverage, and promotional assistance from the Commission, and an anticipated attendance of approximately 200 people.

There was substantial discussion over whether commission funds should support a ticketed event. Mr. Alan and several commissioners voiced concerns that providing food and beverage for a paid event raised fairness and equity issues, especially as other established organizations are not similarly supported. Members suggested making the event free with a suggested donation to enhance equity and inclusion, noting the commission's past practice of supporting only free public events.

Ms. Godeski noted that funding requested would be typical of past events (\$800-\$1,200) and suggested that the commission begin experimenting with charging nominal amounts for some events to build future revenue streams, while Mr. Loftus George and others advocated for a clear and inclusive policy or application process for such partnerships.

There was agreement that for the current mixer proposal, staff would seek more information and encourage the event to be free, with future events potentially requiring an application process and explicit public benefit for support.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Discussion on Available Space in Wall Street Place Development**

Mr. Loftus George and Ms. Godeski led a discussion on a newly available, city-controlled arts and culture space at Wall Street Place, designated for a five-year term. The commission debated whether it would be feasible to self-manage the space or lease to an external organization.

Concerns were expressed about commission capacity and conflict of interest, especially as multiple commissioners or their organizations might be applicants for use of the space.

Ms. Godeski recommended developing an RFP/RFQ process focusing on strong public benefit components, prioritizing Norwalk-based organizations, and maintaining the ability for public programs. She explained the city would take the lead on infrastructure details, while the commission would contribute input on programming and public benefit requirements.

Possible program models suggested included using the space for galleries, split-use arrangements, combinations of fee and revenue share, and community-based activities. There was general agreement that an open, equitable RFP process with clear public benefit criteria would be developed before an occupant is selected.

## **VII. UPDATES AND DISCUSSION**

Ms. Sylvester opened discussion about hosting an additional event in the fourth quarter of the year, potentially a visual arts-focused event, recognizing that bandwidth is a concern for staff and commission members. Multiple commissioners suggested possible programming including outreach to youth, public school partnerships, and a holiday or Christmas craft fair with artist and maker booths.

Ms. Godeski said November would potentially be workable for city staff schedules, and the commission discussed leveraging existing contacts to invite artists or organizations. Potential venues included the Norwalk Public Library, the Sono Collection shopping center, and the Wall Street neighborhood.

Further suggestions included holding a silent auction in support of arts and youth programs, and collaborating with the Norwalk Symphony's December 7 concert for a joint event. All such ideas were noted as contingent on volunteers' ability to help plan and organize.

There was general consensus to form a working group to explore these options further and report back with a proposal at the next meeting.

Mr. Alan raised the prospect of reviving the Art Speaks panel discussion series as a way to bring together and unite the local arts community, an idea widely supported by the commission.

### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*MR. ALAN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*MS. MATUSKA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.**

The Arts and Culture Commission meeting adjourned at approximately 7:24 PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
City of Norwalk Recording Secretary