

**CITY OF NORWALK  
ARTS AND CULTURAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - MARCH 3, 2026  
VIA VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

**ATTENDEES:** Brian Kaspr, Steven Rust, Nori Grudin, Melissa Matuska, Janay Sylvester.

**STAFF:** Sabrina Godeski.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Kaspr called the regular meeting of the Arts and Cultural Commission to order at 6 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kaspr conducted roll call. All members were present, establishing a quorum.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting: January 6, 2026

Mr. Kaspr asked if any members had additions or corrections to the minutes of the January 6, 2026, regular meeting. No additions or corrections were offered.

**\*\*MR. RUST MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 6, 2026, REGULAR MEETING.**

**\*\*MS. GRUDIN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Godeski indicated that one member of the public wished to speak.

Ms. Diane Lauricella addressed the Commission. She expressed hope for improvements in administrative processes and planning. She emphasized the importance of including provisions in the Arts and Cultural Plan for accepting straight monetary donations for projects such as murals and holiday parties without granting donors control or favoritism over events. She referenced past challenges with partnerships and excessive requirements for donors.

Regarding the Connecticut Avenue/Route 1 underpass mural project listed under new business, Ms. Lauricella urged the Commission to avoid repeating issues experienced with the West Avenue and Ely Avenue mural projects. She recommended conducting a public listening session at the outset to gather input on themes and preferences before issuing an RFP, rather than seeking feedback after designs are developed. She stressed learning from past mistakes, incorporating public desires related to history and neighborhoods, ensuring greater fairness,

transparency, and better planning in mural competitions and processes, and applying these lessons for 2026 projects.

Ms. Godeski confirmed no additional speakers were present.

Mr. Kaspr thanked Ms. Diane Lauricella for her comments.

Ms. Grudin noted that the Commission makes recommendations but the final decision on the West Avenue mural rested with the Common Council, and that it is unfair to place all responsibility on the Commission.

Ms. Matuska stated that the Commission performs an initial screening using its expertise, gives priority to local artists, and ensures proposals fit guidelines and restrictions. She disagreed with having the public conduct the first screening, though she supported public input in subsequent stages.

Mr. Rust agreed with Ms. Melissa Matuska's comments and asked if anyone had a recap of the specific problems referenced by Ms. Diane Lauricella. Mr. Kaspr noted that the information is part of the public record and could be reviewed as needed, particularly as subcommittees move forward.

Ms. Grudin observed that the Commission frequently requests public participation but receives limited engagement until after decisions are made, at which point criticism arises. She expressed appreciation for Ms. Diane Lauricella's passion and wished for broader community involvement earlier in processes.

Mr. Kaspr acknowledged the valid points raised and suggested using upcoming community events to proactively encourage attendance at Commission meetings and gather input on desired projects, noting that community engagement is also addressed in the developing Arts and Cultural Plan.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### A. Events update and review

Mr. Kaspr turned to Ms. Janay Sylvester for an update on the April event. Ms. Janay Sylvester clarified that the April 30 event is a collaborative group effort rather than one she is solely managing. She reported that she, Mr. Mark (not further identified), Ms. Sabrina Godeski, and Ms. Anna (not further identified) had recently discussed Make Music Day planning. For the April event, she requested that another meeting be scheduled soon to refine logistics, as the date and location are known but details require alignment.

Mr. Rust agreed to help organize a follow-up call with interested parties. He recalled that Mr. Bob (not further identified) and Mr. Mark had secured the venue at St. Phillips, with the event intended as a mix-and-mingle in conjunction with a concurrent show. He noted ongoing

discussions about possible performances including music and dance, and he planned to check in with Mr. Mark on progress.

Ms. Godeski reported that approximately \$14,000 remains in the event account, available through June 30. Mr. Kaspr encouraged using these funds for an additional event in May or June, such as a dance or music performance.

#### B. Art and Culture Plan approval update

Mr. Kaspr introduced the item, confirming with Ms. Godeski that it pertained to the consultancy work on the plan.

Ms. Godeski provided the update as follows: The Arts and Cultural Plan has already received approval from the Arts and Cultural Commission and from the Common Council, completing the two major approval steps. The plan is therefore technically approved at this time.

A public hearing is scheduled for the following night at 6:00 p.m. during the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. The purpose of this hearing is to consider an amendment to the city's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to formally incorporate the Arts and Cultural Plan into the larger citywide plan. This step is necessary to enable the city to request funding for implementation and execution of the plan's recommendations.

Ms. Godeski noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission holds two meetings per month. Following the public hearing, the second meeting—scheduled for March 18, 2026—will include the full vote on approving the amendment to the POCD.

Mr. Kaspr thanked Ms. Godeski for the update and clarified for the record that the comments made earlier by Ms. Diane Lauricella during public participation addressed the Commission's internal operating procedures and processes. He distinguished this from the current update, which concerns the broader, citywide adoption and integration of the Arts and Cultural Plan into the POCD for development and funding purposes.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

#### A. Connecticut Avenue/Route 1 Underpass mural discussion

Ms. Godeski provided context on the proposed mural project at the Connecticut Avenue/Route 1 underpass, noting considerations such as content focus, potential inclusion of budget information in the RFQ/RFP, and provisions for donations. She highlighted additional costs not originally anticipated (such as on-site storage and lift rental) based on prior underpass experience, and the need to adjust the budget accordingly.

Mr. Rust asked about power washing and confirmed volunteer involvement in that task. Mr. Kaspr clarified that the location across from Matthews and Stepping Stones was the original concept, with the intention to expand outward from the existing center, though other locations remain possible.

Discussion followed regarding the mural process. Mr. Rust suggested the possibility of directly commissioning Five Fingers on a commission basis. Ms. Grudin proposed splitting funds to commission both Five Fingers and Oksana.

Ms. Godeski explained that arts procurement is exempt from standard processes, allowing flexibility, but the Commission established its own RFQ/RFP process for fairness and openness to artists and the public. She noted that the process can be modified.

Mr. Kaspr emphasized the importance of addressing AI-generated art in the upcoming process. He suggested incorporating parameters such as industry-standard file submissions, process documentation, source imagery, discovery sketches, and a clear through-line of development to verify authenticity and address copyright concerns. He recommended rigorous review at the proposal stage for shortlisted artists and noted that indirect language (e.g., requesting explanation if AI was used) has been used successfully elsewhere.

Ms. Matuska inquired about existing AI detection tools for art; Mr. Kaspr explained limitations of current detectors and the value of requiring process evidence such as time-lapse recordings or layered file histories.

## **VII. DISCUSSION**

No additional topics were raised under open discussion beyond those already addressed.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*MS. JANAY SYLVESTER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*MR. RUST SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary