

**ARTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 28, 2026
City Hall, Conference Room #6**

Attendees: Chairman Mary Lee Ryba. Vice Chair Abby Light. Commissioner Charlotte Doutriaux. Commissioner Chuck Ethridge. Commissioner Sally Shortridge. Commissioner Tracey Benson. Commissioner Lindsey Sichelstiel. Commissioner Cynthia Newkirk. Commissioner Nora Crabtree. Commissioner Alysyn Amaya. Commissioner Denise Yost. Commissioner Kate Walker. Councilmember Amy Evans. Interim Parks & Recreation Director Adam Rouse. Parks & Rec Administrative Assistant Melissa Brandt.

Guests: Mayor Dan Gookin. Blair Williams. Community Planning Director Hilary Patterson. Lynn Fleming, Planning and Zoning Commissioner. Bill Pfinsgraff, Idaho Community Foundation. Jennifer Passaro, CDA Poet Laureate. Barbara Pleason Mueller, Co-Founder of Gizmo-cda. Ali Shute and Callie Cabe of Ali & Callie Artcast.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Ryba called the meeting to order.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mayor Dan Gookin stated that he is joined by Community Planning Director Hilary Patterson, Bill Pfinsgraff of the Idaho Community Foundation (ICF), and Blair Williams who can provide more information regarding the Arts Foundation in Boise and Spokane. He explained that the proposed Arts and History Foundation is intended to support both disciplines, which often overlap, while creating new opportunities to raise funding beyond what can be given directly to the City. Establishing a foundation would help improve the quality and funding of public art while reducing staff workload. Mayor Gookin added that the oversight of the Arts Commission will be transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department, recognizing the natural connection between arts and parks. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to the Arts Commission for the good work.

ARTS AND HUMANITIES FOUNDATION: Chair Ryba provided handouts that outlines arts funding options, comparing the significant time, cost, and administrative burden of forming and operating a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit with establishing an arts and history endowment through a community foundation. Creating a standalone nonprofit would require extensive legal, governance, financial, fundraising, and compliance infrastructure, demanding substantial staff time and resources. As an alternative, an endowed fund managed by a community foundation such as through the Idaho Community Foundation or its local affiliate, the Greater Coeur d'Alene Community Foundation, would reduce administrative complexity while still supporting arts and history initiatives. A third option discussed is partnering with an existing 501(c)(3), which could avoid forming a new entity but may present challenges around governance and oversight.

Bill Pfinsgraff of the Idaho Community Foundation (ICF) explained that using the Idaho Community Foundation offers a streamlined and cost-effective alternative to creating a new

nonprofit organization, avoiding the significant financial and administrative burden of forming a 501(c)(3), hiring an executive director, and managing ongoing IRS and regulatory compliance. By establishing an arts and history endowment, or multiple funds, within the Foundation, partners can benefit from professional fund administration, competitive fee structures, and strong investment performance without building new infrastructure. The Foundation's endowment investments follow an 80/20 stock-to-bond allocation and have demonstrated solid long-term returns, with a 15.6% one-year return as of December 31, 2025, and consistent performance over longer time horizons. Fees are generally around 1%, with higher fees only in more complex situations involving payments to private entities. An endowed fund has a \$25,000 minimum, which can be met over time through a combination of pledges, investment earnings, and contributions from the City or private donors. Lastly, Mr. Pfinsgraff provided an overview of the process of starting a fund at the Idaho Community Foundation.

Chair Ryba asked if the Commission can sit on the selection committee for grants and scholarships. Mr. Pfinsgraff replied that it would be the ideal setup. He emphasized that the Idaho Community Foundation has extensive experience administering scholarship funds and explained that its role would include conducting due diligence, following up with students and schools, and managing the transfer of funds directly to schools on the students' behalf. As the fund holder responsible for disbursement, the Foundation must ensure all legal and fiduciary requirements are met.

Commissioner Ethridge requested clarification if the fund would be owned by the City and the Arts Commission would be the oversight. Mr. Pfinsgraff stated that the ideal structure would include establishing an advisory panel made up of designated position holders rather than individuals, ensuring continuity and clear decision-making authority if membership changes or someone leaves the Commission.

Chair Ryba proposed the creation of a Subcommittee and asked the Commissioners who are interested in joining. Commissioner Ethridge, Commissioner Shortridge, and Commissioner Newkirk signified interest. Chair Ryba stated that she will serve on the Subcommittee. She noted that the subcommittee may invite Mr. Pfinsgraff to participate at a later time if questions arise.

Ms. Blair Williams shared insights from a recent Idaho Humanities Council meeting, highlighting a recent ICF-supported survey about "new Idahoan philanthropy." The report stated that newcomers and longtime Idaho residents give and volunteer at fairly similar rates, and that newcomers who donate are somewhat more likely to give larger amounts. The Foundation has launched a new outreach campaign in partnership with realtors and title companies to better connect with new residents and encourage local philanthropy. As part of this effort, there is interest in developing a welcome toolkit that can be shared with new neighbors, helping them feel rooted in the community and encouraging them to support local causes and organizations.

BUS SHELTER DESIGN COMPETITION PROPOSAL: Planning and Zoning Commissioner Lynn Fleming expressed concern about Coeur d'Alene's rapid growth, limited road capacity, parking constraints, and increasing car dependence amid new housing density allowances. She advocated for expanding and improving public transit as a solution, noting that current bus routes, schedules, signage, and shelters are inadequate, difficult to find, and uncomfortable especially in bad weather and for youth, seniors, and people with disabilities. Drawing on successful transit

systems she has experienced abroad, she proposed using arts and design to make bus stops more visible, safe, durable, and inviting, potentially through a community design competition involving local artists, architects, and students. Her vision includes standardized, weather-protective, graffiti-resistant shelters that integrate public art throughout the city rather than concentrating it downtown, helping reduce traffic, improve accessibility, and build a stronger sense of community.

Chair Ryba asked about the funding and Ms. Fleming replied that formal funding sources have not yet been identified, as the idea is still in its early stages and being introduced for the first time. She emphasized a vision rooted in using art as a community-wide connector rather than limiting it to the downtown or tourist core, with the goal of expanding cultural investment north of I-90 and throughout the broader community.

Chair Ryba proposed to create a Subcommittee and asked the Commissioners who are interested in joining. Vice Chair Light, Commissioner Walker, Commissioner Shorridge, and Commissioner Amaya signified interest.

POET LAUREATE 2026 CALENDAR: CDA Poet Laureate Jennifer Passaro highlighted several current projects, focusing primarily on “Idaho Stories: A Community Writing Project”, a community writing and art initiative hosted at the Coeur d’Alene Public Library. She invited community members to create written or visual works inspired by materials from the Idaho Collection. A reading event will take place in the Nelson Room on Wednesday, June 24 at 5:30 p.m. The project replaces the library’s annual writing competition and is intended to celebrate Idaho history in recognition of the nation’s 250th anniversary. Ms. Passaro requested the Arts Commission’s assistance with promotion and support for the event. Additionally, she noted that Idaho’s new Writer in Residence, Mitch Wieland, has expressed interest in visiting Coeur d’Alene to host a meeting and workshop, potentially in the spring, and suggested the Commission consider inviting him as part of future programming.

INTRODUCTION TO GIZMO’S K-18 CREATIVE ARTS CLASSES: Barbara Pleason Mueller, Co-Founder of Gizmo-cda, shared a personal and long-standing connection to Gizmo, reflecting on her background in the Arts Commission and emphasizing that creative inspiration alone is not enough without the infrastructure, such as tools, support, people, and confidence-building, that enables ideas to be realized. She described Gizmo as a transformative makerspace that has intentionally built this infrastructure over time, now housing roughly \$500,000 in equipment and providing equitable access regardless of financial means, with many programs and scholarships supporting underserved youth. She illustrated how hands-on creative access fosters learning, empathy, cultural awareness, and self-confidence. She stressed that Gizmo serves as a critical gateway for young people to discover possibilities they might otherwise never encounter, combining traditional art, modern technology, mentorship, and resilience through trial and failure. She concluded by inviting continued engagement, including a possible tour, to better understand Gizmo’s impact and future direction.

Chair Ryba noted that upcoming programs such as Spotlight CDA for Visual Arts could be an opportunity for Gizmo to apply for support. She asked what types of support would be most helpful to Gizmo. Ms. Mueller shared an example illustrating how Gizmo sometimes needs material support rather than scholarships, describing a project where middle school students designed and

built a custom ride-on car for a young boy with cerebral palsy. Commissioner Ethridge stated that there are a lot of opportunities for creative collaboration. He shared a successful past partnership where scenic artists from CDA Summer Theater used Gizmo's machines to create intricate set pieces.

ALI & CALLIE ARTCAST: Ali Shute and Callie Cabe, of Ali & Callie Artcast podcast, requested support from the Arts Commission for securing their 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. Artcast was launched in 2021 to educate and connect the community around art, creativity, and the people behind it, and it has grown steadily into a meaningful cultural platform. Now in its sixth season, the podcast has released over 200 episodes, reached more than 10,000 total downloads, and continues to build a growing, engaged listener base. Through intimate conversations and creative storytelling, Artcast highlights artists and cultural voices whose work might otherwise go unseen, fostering connection and inspiration beyond the microphone. Becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit would allow Artcast to sustain and expand this impact by securing grant funding, supporting artists, and preserving these creative stories as a lasting community resource. The cost to apply for 501(c)(3) status is \$600 due to incorporation requirements, as they did not qualify for the reduced short-form application.

Chair Ryba thanked Ali and Callie for their presentation and expressed interest in their initiative, noting that guidance is needed from the Interim City Administrator to determine whether funding could be supported. She stated that she would follow up with them once information is available.

Vice Chair Light described Artcast as a unique and creative presence in the community that fills a gap. She noted how widely the podcast has reached by engaging a diverse range of voices, and shared that she listened to the episodes to better understand the local arts community while preparing for her role with the Arts and Culture Alliance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Crabtree, to approve the February 24, 2026 meeting minutes. **Motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT: Chair Ryba provided a brief overview of the February and March 2026 financial reports. She noted that for the month of February 2026, Fund 076 (Public Art Fund – ignite) continue to earn interest income and there are no expenditures. Fund 074 (Public Art Fund – 1%) earned interest income and expenditures include \$330.00 for the Emerge youth scholarship for the month of January 2026 for pottery class and \$1,000 stipend for the display extension of the “Sentinel Watcher” sculpture as part of the ArtCurrents 2025-2026 program. Fund 077 (Maintenance) earned interest income, and the noted expenditure was \$36.35 for the electricity for the feather artwork at NW Boulevard. For the month of March 2026, Fund 076 earns interest income with no expenses. Fund 074 earned interest income and then \$862.50 expenditure for the Emerge youth scholarship for the month of February 2026 for pottery class. Fund 077 earned interest income and expenditure is the \$31.39 electricity for the feather artwork at NW Boulevard.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Ethridge, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to approve the February and March 2026 Financial Reports. **Motion carried.**

COMMISSIONER/ STAFF COMMENTS: Chair Ryba announced that the Arts Commission will be under the Parks and Recreation Department. Adam Rouse, Parks and Recreation Interim Director, confirmed that the Arts Commission was under Parks and Recreation approximately 15 years ago and that the plan is to return it to the department.

Chair Ryba shared that Anne Solomon of the Annual Art on the Green event, has offered the City the opportunity to come and purchase the first artwork from that event at a favorable price. She emphasized the need to identify appropriate City locations for displaying public art. She proposed forming a subcommittee to explore improving and building an art collection at the Jewett House. Mr. Rouse stated that forming a subcommittee may not be necessary, as decisions about artwork selection are more appropriately handled at the staff level to ensure alignment with the site's mission and plans. He noted that the approach depends on the type of art and the intended direction, explaining that there are already plans to upgrade artwork at the Jewett House to better reflect its history. Chair Ryba explained that the intention is to have a section at the Jewett House to display some visual arts. Mr. Rouse noted that because the Jewett House functions as a senior recreation center with scheduled activities throughout the week, it is not generally open for casual walk-in visits. Access to view the space typically happens by appointment unless someone is participating in one of the organized programs.

Chair Ryba also shared that she met with Jake Garringer, Strategic Engagement Director at University of Idaho. Mr. Garringer explained that the University of Idaho Coeur d'Alene campus is exploring the development of a gallery space within the Harbor Center, using a currently unused half-wall area on the first floor. Given its prominent location near the trail and waterfront, the space is envisioned as an opportunity to showcase student and faculty art and research, as well as work by community members. He expressed interest in presenting at the next meeting to give a full presentation to the Commission and provide additional details.

Lastly, Chair Ryba mentioned that she met with Historic Preservation Commission Chair Walter Burns and discussed potential collaboration regarding the upcoming event on July 3 at the Coeur d'Alene courthouse for the America 250 celebration. Community Planning Director Hilary Patterson explained that the event is in coordination with the County Historic Preservation Commission and welcomed involvement from the Arts Commission members in the children's activity during the event. The activity is planned for July 3, from approximately 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., outdoors on the east lawn of the courthouse. Chair Ryba said that she is going to help. Commissioner Newkirk and Vice Chair Light also indicated to volunteer for the event.

RECOMMENDATION OF APPOINTMENT OF ADAM KROEGER TO THE ARTS COMMISSION: Chair Ryba noted that the Selection Committee composed of Councilmember Evans, Vice Chair Light and herself interviewed Mr. Kroeger on March 2, 2026. Mr. Kroeger serves as the Director of Theater at North Idaho College (NIC) and expressed strong interest in joining the Commission to help strengthen collaboration with NIC. He also brings significant experience in film, which would be a valuable asset to support the Film Subcommittee.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Benson, seconded by Commissioner Ethridge, to recommend to Council the appointment of Adam Kroeger to the Arts Commission. **Motion carried.**

SPOTLIGHT CDA: VISUAL ARTS: Chair Ryba explained that the proposed Spotlight CDA: Visual Arts program is modeled closely after the existing Art Spotlight CDA for Performing Arts program, including a similar grant structure, application process, funding approach, and timeline. The intent is to create two parallel and easy-to-remember programs, one for visual arts and one for performing arts. She stated that she would prefer the proposal to be presented to City Council in May for approval rather than June, as outlined in the proposed timeline.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Crabtree, seconded by Commissioner Ethridge, to recommend to Council the approval of Spotlight CDA: Visual Arts program. **Motion carried.**

ELECTION OF ARTS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN: Chair Ryba noted that from past experience, the roles of Chairman and Vice-Chairman carry significant responsibility. She recommended that anyone interested in serving as Chair should ideally have prior experience as a subcommittee chair.

For the position of Vice Chair, Commissioner Newkirk nominated Abby Light to continue serving in the role, citing her strong performance and, as Commissioner Ethridge had noted, the importance of continuity given the number of ongoing commission projects. The Commissioners then voted, and Abby Light was elected as Vice Chair.

For the position of Chair, Commissioner Ethridge nominated Mary Lee Ryba to continue serving as Arts Commission Chair. He noted that, given the complexity of the role and the number of ongoing projects still gaining momentum, he felt it was important to maintain continuity in leadership at this time. Following the nomination, the Commissioners voted, and Mary Lee Ryba was elected as Chair.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:

Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards: Chair Ryba shared that the subcommittee will have a meeting in May.

Arts Commission Applicant Review: Chair Ryba stated that with the possible appointment of Mr. Adam Kroeger, all positions are filed.

Visual Arts/ Arts & Cultural Alliance: Vice Chair Light noted that Idaho Gives will be participating in the Art Walk on May 8 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., with approximately 10 to 12 nonprofit organizations set up at participating businesses along the route. This event marks the final opportunity for the public to donate to these organizations during the Idaho Gives campaign. Attendees are encouraged to participate, and a map of locations is available at the artsandculturecda.org website.

Performing & Music Arts: Commissioner Benson shared that a new, emerging collaboration among several local theater groups is forming as an informal collective aimed at sharing resources, audiences, and marketing efforts. While the group is still in early discussions and its long-term structure has not yet been defined, members are exploring ways to coordinate outreach, venues, and promotional strategies to strengthen the local theater community. Conversations have already

taken place with the Arts and Culture Alliance about potential marketing support and awareness-building, and the collective has expressed interest in receiving guidance or support from the Arts Commission as it develops.

Commissioner Bension noted that a Selection Committee meeting for Art Spotlight CDA for Performing Arts is scheduled for May 7. The Committee will review the three organizations that received funding last year and determine whether they are eligible for a second year of funding.

Emerge Art Scholarships: Chair Ryba inquired about the remaining balance for the partnership with Emerge, and Ms. Mateski reported that the current balance is \$2,877.50.

New Member Training/ Policies: Chair Ryba stated that once appointed, Mr. Kroeger will be provided training as new Arts Commission member.

Guidelines Development: Chair Ryba asked the Commissioners whether there is interest in participating on the 4th of July parade. While there was general enthusiasm for the idea and agreement that it could be a strong, creative opportunity, concerns were raised about the amount of coordination and execution required, especially given existing commitments around the July 3 event. Given the constraints, the group agreed that deferring participation until next year, possibly with a dedicated subcommittee to plan and execute the effort, may be the most practical approach. Chair Ryba stated that the creation of a subcommittee will be added to the agenda of next month's meeting.

CDA October Arts & Humanities Month: Chair Ryba stated that the subcommittee will start meeting next month.

Northern Journeys Publication: Commissioner Newkirk shared that the publication hit the newsstand in April and has been well received. The next issue will be coming out in October.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Crabtree, seconded by Commissioner Amaya to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carried.**

The meeting ended at 5:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jo Anne Mateski
Executive Assistant