

**ARTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 27, 2025
City Hall, Conference Room #6**

Attendees: Chairman Mary Lee Ryba (attended online), Vice Chair Abby Light, Commissioner Chuck Ethridge, Commissioner Tracey Benson, Commissioner Nora Crabtree, Commissioner Kate Walker, Commissioner Lindsey Sichelstiel, Commissioner Sally Shortridge, and Troy Tymesen

Guests: Zoe Ann Thruman, Terry Lee, Kristin Herby, and Duncan Menzies.

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Zoe Ann Thruman, Executive Director of WayMaker Arts, noted that their group, founded in January 2025, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit faith-based organization made up of experienced writers, professional and amateur actors, directors, singers, dancers, and choreographers. Their Founder and Artistic Director Logan Foster envisioned a theater space that aligns with Christian values, offering family-friendly content. The group emphasizes education through workshops and acting classes and supports original works that reflect their mission. Ms. Thruman stated that they host community events like Regency Ladies Tea and Formal Ball on May 31st, and their upcoming musical, *Pride V Prejudice*, a musical adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, will be held at Coeur d'Alene Bible Church. Their ongoing fundraisers include partnership with Regal Cinema and Hayden Cinema for their summer movies.

Kristin Cooper-Herby, author of the *Stewy Baby* children's book series, shared that she launched her first book in 2015 alongside a reading incentive program for second graders, which has since reached approximately 15,000 children. To commemorate Stewy's positive impact on local youth, a bronze statue is being proposed, with renowned artist Terry Lee generously donating his time to create it. Stewy remains a beloved figure in the community, often recognized by children during hikes and always ready to offer affection. A dogumentary about Stewy, created during the COVID-19 pandemic, won several awards. In the past two years, Ms. Herby also introduced a creative writing initiative where children contribute short stories about Stewy's adventures. Sponsored by Eve Knudtsen, the statue will be donated to the City of Coeur d'Alene, with proposed installation sites including the entrance to the playground at McEuen Park, the 12th Street entrance to Tubbs Hill, or downtown in front of Hudson's Hamburgers. City Administrator Troy Tymesen encouraged continued collaboration as the project moves forward, suggesting coordination with Parks and Recreation Director Bill Greenwood to finalize details such as placement and height of the proposed statue. Ms. Herby expressed openness to various placement options, with a preference for the top three suggested locations but ultimately deferring to the City's decision. Mr. Terry Lee requested that the City provides a steel stand approximately four feet high to securely bolt the statue in place. He noted that the statue is expected to be completed within five to six

months. Ms. Herby also requested the installation of a sign near the statue, written from Stewy's perspective, to explain who she is and the impact of the program—similar in style to the signage at the local dog park. Mr. Tymesen supported placing the statue at the entrance to the McEuen Park playground, emphasizing its significance due to the high volume of children in the area. Chair Ryba added that the statue and its story will also be featured in the Otocast audio app.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Sichelstiel, to accept the Stewy Baby sculpture donation from Kristin Cooper-Herby. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Ethridge, seconded by Commissioner Sichelstiel, to approve the April 22, 2025 meeting minutes. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT: Mr. Tymesen provided a brief overview of the April 2025 financial report, noting that Fund 076, the Urban Renewal Fund, showed only incoming revenue for April, primarily from interest earnings, with no expenses recorded. Under Fund 074, the \$1,520 expense incurred is for Community Arts Partnership with Emerge CDA for youth art scholarships. Fund 077 includes a charge for lighting the feather sculptures along Northwest Boulevard, with \$26.17 spent to keep them illuminated.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Sichelstiel seconded by Commissioner Light, to approve the April 2025 Financial Report. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

COMMISSIONER/ STAFF COMMENTS: Chair Ryba expressed her gratitude to the Green Energy Dragon Subcommittee for organizing a successful dedication event held on April 24 at the Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (AWTF), which drew over 100 community members. She specifically acknowledged the leadership of Subcommittee Chair Alesa Momerak, Vice Chair Abby Light, and Capital Project Manager Mike Becker. Additional thanks were extended to Councilmember Amy Evans for serving as emcee, as well as to Mayor Woody McEvers, Wastewater Director Mike Anderson, artist Melissa Cole, and Poet Laureate Jennifer Passaro. Chair Ryba praised the event and celebrated the Green Energy Dragon as a vibrant and meaningful addition to the city's public art collection.

DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF ART SPOTLIGHT CDA: Commissioner Benson noted that details about the Art Spotlight CDA program are included in the meeting packet and invited questions for clarification. Mr. Tymesen suggested incorporating an objective scoring system for evaluating grant applications to streamline the process and minimize debate. Commissioner Ethridge supported the idea, describing it as a criteria-based approach for judging submissions. Chair Ryba explained that while the Art Spotlight CDA program is modeled after the ArtCurrents selection process, it differs by offering funding specifically for performing arts organizations. She confirmed that a clear set of selection criteria will be established.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Ethridge seconded by Commissioner Shortridge, to approve the Art Spotlight CDA program. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:

Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards: Chair Ryba noted that the subcommittee met on May 6 and decided to maintain the original four award categories. This year, the press release will be issued in June to ensure it reaches schools before they close for summer break. The press release will serve as a call for nominations until August 29. The award recipients will be selected during a special Arts Commission meeting scheduled for September 9, which occurs earlier than the regular monthly meeting. Additionally, this year's event will feature a silent auction of maquettes and ticket to all the theater and musical performances. A soft ask for donations will also be included as part of the event this year.

ArtCurrents: Commissioner Sichelstiel reported that the subcommittee has met several times and is currently awaiting artist submissions. The Selection Committee meeting is scheduled for July 11.

Arts Commission Applicant Review: Chair Ryba announced that there are currently three vacancies on the Arts Commission and noted that Commissioner Summer Ward officially resigned as of May 5. She encouraged fellow commissioners to keep an eye out for individuals who may be interested in volunteering to serve on the commission.

Visual Arts: Vice Chair Light announced that the upcoming Art Walk has been rescheduled to June 20 due to the Car d'Alene event taking place on the second Friday of the month. The library will be hosting a summer kickoff featuring fun, family-friendly art activities. In addition, 15 other locations will be participating in the Art Walk, including a new venue, the J. Rome Gallery located at 2nd and Sherman.

Performing & Music Arts: Commissioner Ethridge shared about the collaboration between North Idaho College (NIC) and Coeur d'Alene Summer Theatre on a co-producing the musical, *Clue*. The production featured a mix of NIC students and community members both on stage and backstage, several of whom will now be working professionally with the theater this summer. The collaboration significantly increased audience turnout, quintupling the average attendance for NIC production. Additionally, he encouraged everyone to check out upcoming summer productions from local theater groups, including Aspire, Lake City Playhouse, and Christian Youth Theater, as well as Coeur d'Alene Summer Theatre's own shows: *Hello, Dolly!*, *Anastasia*, and *She Loves Me*. Finally, he noted that Shakespeare and Company will soon open *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Kroc Center.

Marketing & Technology: Commissioner Sichelstiel mentioned that she has not posted anything recently and invited others to share any content they'd like posted to social media.

Emerge Art Scholarships: Commissioner Walker stated that Emerge CDA was approved for another year and will continue to submit regular reports regarding the youth art scholarship program.

Mural Projects: Vice Chair Light shared that there has been a noticeable increase in mural requests from both artists and businesses. One proposal that stood out came from Tomlinson Sotheby's,

located in downtown Coeur d'Alene. They submitted a comprehensive plan for a mural on their prominent white corner building, featuring a "Welcome to Coeur d'Alene" theme with nature-inspired illustrations. The proposal included a full design and budget breakdown, totaling approximately \$38,000. Vice Chair Light shared her intention to explore successful public art models from other cities, including reaching out to the program director at Spokane Arts and reviewing the City of Coeur d'Alene's Public Art Master Plan. She is currently drafting a proposal and outline for the Commission's consideration. As part of the planning process, she inquired about potential funding options, outlining two approaches: one where the Arts Commission serves as the project manager, and another where Tomlinson Sotheby's leads the project and seeks partial funding support from the Commission. An alternative option would be for the Commission to issue a public call for artists.

Mr. Tymesen noted that issuing a call for artists could result in a wide range of submissions that may not align with the business's vision. Since Tomlinson owns the building, it was suggested they take the lead and cover most of the cost. The potential risk of the mural being removed if the building is sold was also mentioned. Vice Chair Light agreed that a business-led model would be more practical and proposed developing a framework around that approach. She mentioned that Tomlinson has already selected artist Gabrielle Lewis, known for her exceptional mural work. The proposal has been shared with local organizations, including the Downtown Association and Chamber of Commerce, to build community support. Chair Ryba recommended that the subcommittee meet to refine the proposal and present it at the next meeting.

Poet Laureate: Commissioner Shortridge shared that she and Chair Ryba will be meeting with Jennifer Passaro. Chair Ryba added that Ms. Passaro's most recent presentation was delivered at the North Idaho Alliance Women's Conference.

Guidelines Development: Chair Ryba shared that she has been working with Max Mendez, a music professor at North Idaho College and a prominent figure in the regional performing arts scene, to develop a more concise and structured set of program guidelines. They plan to present a written draft at the next Commission meeting. She also noted that Commissioner Newkirk had proposed ideas to enhance community engagement in alignment with the Commission's strategic plan. These ideas include setting up information booths at the farmers' market, local park events, and Riverstone summer concerts to raise awareness about the Commission and promote local arts. These outreach efforts would be volunteer based, depending on commissioners' availability.

CDA October Arts & Humanities Month: Chair Ryba noted that planning is underway for Coeur d'Alene's October Arts and Humanities Month, with new subcommittee members, including Marilee Wallace, the new chair of the CDA Arts and Cultural Alliance. The subcommittee is currently reaching out to visual and performing arts organizations for collaboration, and the response has been very positive.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Ethridge, seconded by Commissioner Light to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

The meeting ended at 4:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jo Anne Mateski
Executive Assistant