

**ARTS COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 28, 2025  
City Hall, Conference Room #6**

**Attendees:** Chairman Mary Lee Ryba, Commissioner Cynthia Newkirk, Commissioner Charlotte Doutriaux, Commissioner Duncan Menzies, Commissioner Lindsey Sichelstiel, Commissioner Sally Shortridge, Commissioner Tracey Benson, Commissioner Nora Crabtree, and Commissioner Alysyn Amaya.

**Guests:** Jennifer Passaro, Chelsea Cordova, Jocelyn Johnson, Bri Cohen, and Mark Cruson

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

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION:** There was none.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

Chair Ryba introduced Alysyn Amaya, who was recently appointed as the Alternate Student Representative to the Arts Commission. Commissioner Amaya shared that she is currently a junior at Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy and plans to pursue a major in International Relations.

Chair Ryba also introduced two senior students from Coeur d'Alene High School: Jocelyn and Bri and they are fulfilling their government class requirements.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Shortridge, seconded by Commissioner Doutriaux, to approve the September 9, 2025 meeting minutes. **Motion carried.**

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT:** Chair Ryba provided a brief overview of the September 2025 financial report. She noted that Fund 076 is generating interest income with no expenditure. Fund 074 is also earning interest, with expenses including \$3,565.00 for the community art partnership with Emerge CDA and \$42.33 for the 2025 ArtCurrents application fee. Fund 077 (Maintenance Fund) has earned \$724.27 in interest income. Expenses under this fund include monthly lighting costs for the feather art installation on Northwest Boulevard, postage for mailing letters to selected ArtCurrents 2025 artists and invitations for the Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards event.

**MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Sichelstiel, seconded by Commissioner Newkirk to approve the September 2025 Financial Report. **Motion carried.**

**COMMISSIONER/ STAFF COMMENTS:** Chair Ryba expressed her heartfelt appreciation for the outstanding teamwork that made the 29th Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards a beautiful celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community. She acknowledged the contributions of Commissioner Sichelstiel for being a warm and engaging emcee, Commissioner Doutriaux for designing the event materials and capturing memorable photographs, and Commissioner Walker for overseeing the silent auction and printed materials. She thanked Vice Chair Light for the physical awards and

PowerPoint presentation, and Ms. Mateski for contributing the ArtCurrents slides and managing last-minute details. Commissioners Shortridge, Commissioner Newkirk, and Lee Ann added a special touch to the venue with floral arrangements, and Commissioners Ethridge and Menzies ensured smooth logistics and a beautifully arranged venue. Chair Ryba also extended gratitude to Councilmember Amy Evans for leading the evening and Commissioner Benson for presenting the Art Spotlight Awards, Matt Goodrich for coordinating performances and playing the piano, and Poet Laureate Jennifer Passaro for sharing her original poem. Additional thanks were given to the participating arts organizations, Dan Pinkerton, Jenny Shotwell, and all performers, as well as sponsors: ICCU, CDA Resort, Mike Dziak for filming the event, and the Butera Family for sharing the film *Recollection*. She concluded by thanking all award presenters, including Student Representative Nora Crabtree, noting that the evening was a shining reflection of Coeur d'Alene's vibrant and passionate arts community. Commissioner Shortridge, speaking on behalf of the group, expressed heartfelt appreciation to Chair Ryba for her outstanding coordination of the event. Chair Ryba acknowledged the success of the gathering, attributing it to the strength of the team. The event was well attended, with approximately 170 participants.

**PRESENTATION OF POET LAUREATE YEAR-IN-REVIEW:** CDA Poet Laureate Jennifer Passaro read a poem by Melissa Kwasny from the book *Pictograph* entitled *the crux of weather changing*. Ms. Passaro's year-in review report was included in the meeting packet detailing her past year activities and upcoming events. She thanked the Arts Commission for the opportunity to be able to share her poems with the community, attend workshops, and be able to work with various artists. The most recent event she participated was at a panel discussion "Poet Laureates of the Inland Northwest" at a library in Spokane with the poet laureate from Spokane and the poet laureate from Ellensburg, WA. Ms. Passaro is looking forward to another two years in the Poet Laureate program. She shared her business cards with the Commissioners to help distribute to community members for poem ideas. She shared her excitement about being accepted to present at the annual Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) Conference in Baltimore, Maryland from March 4-7, 2026, alongside other poet laureates, and mentioned her need for potential funding support for the travel. She also outlined plans to collaborate with the chaplain at the Kootenai County Jail to offer poetry workshops. Chair Ryba asked the Commissioners to volunteer to help Ms. Passaro in this undertaking. She also suggested outreach to local poets. Ms. Passaro stated that next year, she intends to become more involved with the schools. Commissioner Shortridge suggested the possibility of Ms. Passaro serving as an artist-in-residence at Sorensen and other schools.

Chair Ryba acknowledged Ms. Passaro's request for additional stipend and travel support for attendance at the AWP conference, noting that she will discuss this with City Administrator Troy Tymesen, and the Arts Commission to determine the appropriate course of action. She added that any funding allocation would require approval from the City Council.

**RECOMMENDATION OF REAPPOINTMENT AND NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE ARTS COMMISSION:** Chair Ryba noted that her appointment and Commissioner Kate Walker's appointment terms lapsed in May. She explained that when a term ends, members must reapply and submit an updated data sheet to Ms. Mateski to keep records current. She mentioned that Commissioners Sichelstiel and Shortridge term will lapse in December and will be taken up for next meeting.

**MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Menzies, seconded by Commissioner Benson, to recommend to Council the reappointment of Mary Lee Ryba and Kate Walker for another term. **Motion carried.**

Chair Ryba shared that on October 13th, she and Councilmember Amy Evans interviewed Denise Yost. She stated that the interview process was more structured this time, using a set of questions to ensure fairness. She passed around a copy of the interview questions. She mentioned that Ms. Yost recently returned to Coeur d'Alene and brings expertise in cross-disciplinary collaboration, strategic program development, community engagement and leadership, experiential learning design, creative problem-solving, grant organization, and arts-integrated education. Chair Ryba confirmed that Ms. Yost met expectations and they were impressed by her qualifications.

**MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Menzies, seconded by Commissioner Shortridge to recommend to Council the appointment of Denise Yost to the Arts Commission. **Motion carried.**

**CREATION OF A SUBCOMMITTEE FOR NORTHERN JOURNEYS PUBLICATION:** Commissioner Newkirk proposed forming a subcommittee to support the launch of a Coeur d'Alene edition of *Northern Journeys*, a biannual arts, humanities, and sciences magazine published by Jason Thomas. Inspired by the Sandpoint edition, the goal is to highlight local artists and events. Jason previously attempted a Coeur d'Alene edition, but it paused due to limited resources. The new edition is planned for spring/summer with a content deadline in February. Proposed features include: a feature article regarding the Coeur d'Alene Arts Commission and interview with Chair Mary Lee Ryba; Poetry and Prose Section with Jennifer Passaro as featured poet; Interview with Jackie Butera of Paradox Films; and a science section possibly an interview or an article by Melissa Cole, artist of the Sid the Energy Dragon. A calendar of arts events from April to October will also be included. Artists will submit their own articles and photos. The guidelines for this project will be developed.

Chelsea Cordova, Sales Representative of Northern Journeys, explained that her primary role involves securing local advertising to support the publication and gathering artist stories and community content. She emphasized the importance of creating a hub for the arts in Coeur d'Alene and highlighted plans for regional distribution, including Hayden, Post Falls, and parts of Spokane. She expressed excitement about the project and its potential to elevate awareness of the local arts scene. Ms. Cordova shared that *Northern Journeys* currently has around 20 distribution points, with plans to expand to approximately 100. She emphasized the importance of strategic placement to reach the desired demographic, while noting that copies can also be shared informally in places like dentist offices. She shared her contact information for advertising inquiries. Commissioner Newkirk added that Jason Thomas has a list of existing advertisers and distribution sites and suggested expanding to include new restaurants and meeting spaces.

Chair Ryba explained that a subcommittee would be formed to work with Commissioner Newkirk on the *Northern Journeys* project. Ms. Cordova will collaborate and expressed interest in joining the subcommittee. Commissioner Newkirk emphasized the importance of aligning schedules for meetings and suggested hosting a launch event at Art Spirit Gallery to celebrate the first issue, featuring advertisers and contributors. Chair Ryba, Commissioners Menzies, Shortridge, and

Crabtree expressed interest in joining the Northern Journeys Publications Subcommittee.

**MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Doutriaux, seconded by Commissioner Crabtree to create the Subcommittee for Northern Journeys Publication. **Motion carried.**

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:**

Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards: Chair Ryba noted that a post-event meeting will be held to review what went well and identify areas for improvement in preparation for next year's 30th Annual Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards.

ArtCurrents: Commissioner Shichelstiel reported that all new sculptures have been successfully installed. She presented a PowerPoint showcasing the 2025 ArtCurrents selections and their installation sites in downtown Coeur d'Alene and Atlas Waterfront Park. She noted that this year's pieces are larger in scale, and while the display period is up to two years, the selection committee votes annually to determine whether each sculpture remains for an additional year. Chair Ryba added that participating artists receive a \$1,000 stipend per year of display, and all artworks are available for purchase. She also suggested that beginning in January, each Commissioner selects a favorite piece, either from the city's collection or ArtCurrents, to highlight on social media, offering personal insights and promoting the local art scene.

Arts Commission Applicant Review: Chair Ryba noted that there is one more vacancy that needs to be filled up.

Performing & Music Arts: Commissioner Benson shared that several performances wrapped up in October, including *Hamlet* by Shakespeare Coeur d'Alene, *The Sound of Music* by Lake City Playhouse, and *Sweeney Todd* by Aspire. Upcoming shows include *Little Women* at Lake City Playhouse from November 21 to December 7, and Aspire's *Offbeat Christmas* on December 18 offering a unique and delightful compilation of unconventional holiday performances.

Chair Ryba shared that the Art Spotlight grant award recipients had asked about receiving their \$5,000 checks. Ms. Mateski confirmed that the grant agreements have been sent out to them for signature and will be processed as soon as the signed grant agreement and documentary requirements are received. Chair Ryba expressed appreciation for staying on schedule, and Commissioner Benson noted the success of the inaugural year. Chair Ryba also acknowledged the recent press coverage and thanked Commissioner Duncan for his presentation at the City Council meeting, where the Council voted on the recipients of the Art Spotlight CDA grant.

Commissioner Newkirk shared that The Music Conservatory will present its 4th annual production of *Messiah* on Sunday, November 16th at 3:00 p.m. at the Schuler Performing Arts Center. Additionally, the Music Conservatory is collaborating with Dance Theater Northwest to provide a youth choir and small orchestra for *The Nutcracker*, also at the Schuler, on Saturday, December 13th.

Marketing & Technology: Commissioner Sichelstiel reported that she and Vice Chair Light shared several social media posts highlighting the various arts events happening throughout the month.

**Emerge Art Scholarships:** Chair Ryba shared the 90-day (July – September 2025) report of Emerge CDA. She noted that four scholarships were awarded in July for programs such as exploring paint summer camp focused on painting and abstraction. In August, 13 scholarships supported summer camps including Week of Clay, Science in Art, comic book creation with 3D modeling, and pottery. September saw two scholarships for an illustration class that emphasized sketchbook use and overcoming perfectionism in art.

**Mural Projects:** Chair Ryba shared that the Tomlinson Sotheby's Welcome to Coeur d'Alene mural unveiling took place last Friday, October 24, featuring artist Gabrielle Lewis. The event was well attended, and the mural, located at Sherman and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, received positive press coverage. She mentioned that the Arts Commission's support for the mural wasn't acknowledged in the press, despite the Commission's early involvement and Vice Chair Light's participation.

Chair Ryba mentioned that Vice Chair Light is working on a public mural program proposal, which may include a 10% contribution from the Arts Commission toward future murals, to be presented either next month or will be included in the Guidelines discussion at the January meeting.

**Budget:** Chair Ryba stated that she plans to request an increased budget allocation for next year's Coeur d'Alene Arts Awards.

**New Member Training/ Policies:** Chair Ryba noted upcoming new member training if Denise Yost's appointment is approved.

**Poet Laureate:** Chair Ryba thanked Jennifer Passaro.

**Guidelines Development:** This will be discussed for the January meeting.

**CDA October Arts & Humanities Month:** Chair Ryba shared that the Coeur d'Alene October Arts and Humanities Month was successfully kicked off with an event at Art Spirit Gallery on October 1, featuring artist Dale Young and his performance on the Indian flute. A printed calendar of events was distributed, and Vice Chair Light uploaded the schedule of events to the Arts and Cultural Alliance's online calendar. The calendar included over 30 events from organizations such as Emerge, the Museum of North Idaho, and North Idaho College. Chair Ryba noted the importance of securing funding earlier in the year for future sponsorships and suggested that a printed monthly arts calendar could be a valuable resource for the community.

Commissioner Doutriaux shared highlights from the second annual NoID Film Festival, which took place last month. The festival saw strong growth, selling nearly 300 tickets and passes, and featured a sold-out screening of *Recollection*, directed by the Butera Brothers of Coeur d'Alene. The organizers aim to elevate the festival to a level comparable to Sundance, with plans for monthly screenings, networking events, expanded marketing efforts, and sponsorships. Commissioner Doutriaux emphasized the need for community support such as financial, promotional, and organizational, and suggested adding a film-focused subcommittee to the Arts Commission's next meeting agenda. Commissioner Benson expressed interest in supporting the initiative, and Commissioner Doutriaux stated that the NoID film festival will continue annually

in September, with recurring events throughout the year.

Chair Ryba shared that she received a suggestion to dedicate a month, possibly in March or April, to celebrating arts and education, highlighting youth involvement in both visual and performing arts. This initiative could include spotlighting the three organizations currently receiving grant funding and promoting their work through press releases or other outreach. Additionally, Chair Ryba mentioned an upcoming event called *Legends Remembered: Echoes of Lore*, a Renaissance faire planned for spring 2026 in Coeur d'Alene.

The next Arts Commission meeting will be on November 25.

**ADJOURNMENT: MOTION:** Motion by Commissioner Sichelstiel, seconded by Commissioner Newkirk to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carried.**

The meeting ended at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jo Anne Mateski  
Executive Assistant