

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

In December 2014, the Benicia Arts and Culture Commission (BACC) concluded its fifth year of operation. The Commission annually provides a written report of its activities, along with recommendations for improvements and additions to existing art and culture programs, to the City Council. This report will briefly highlight work the Commission has achieved, work in progress and recommendations for your consideration.

Per Benicia City Ordinance No. 09-15, the purpose of the Commission is to:

- A. Advise and inform the city council and staff on culture and arts related issues
- B. Evaluate the needs and resources of local culture and arts organizations
- C. Facilitate, encourage, promote and stimulate arts and culture in our community
- D. Promote and increase public awareness, locally and beyond the city, of arts and cultural resources and activities
- E. Support and promote the arts and culture as a major element in Benicia's community identity
- F. Ensure that cultural and artistic elements are integral to the city's quality of life and economic vitality
- G. Engage youth in culture and arts

Achievements

Some of the accomplishments from the commission's first four years included:

- Reviewing and revising the grant application documentation to more fully address the needs of arts and culture grantees during the 2013-2015 fiscal cycle.
- Refining a strategy to advertise the grant application process in a manner that would reach all potential grantees.
- Continuing the work of the Film Festival Subcommittee to develop the process for planning, organizing and fundraising for the inaugural Benicia Film Festival.
- Conducting fundraisers to benefit public art programs and pay for the film festival's expenses.
- Creating a city-approved Public Art Program.

In its fifth year, the commission was able to build on previous successes to move forward, completing some of the work started in earlier years and working on other projects as well.

In 2014, its achievements and successes included:

- Sponsoring an independent film festival intended to serve as a fundraiser, and as a way of enhancing the arts and culture offerings in Benicia. In its first year, it successfully raised money for the Commission's Public Art program, with around 400 people attending the three-day event.
- Obtaining approval for two pieces of public art to be placed in the City Library. These paintings by Julius Hatofsky are breathtaking and will expand the depth of public art within the community. A reception celebrating the new exhibit was held on January 30, 2015, from 6-8 p.m. at the Library.
- Working on the two grant projects that were recommended by the Community Sustainability Commission and approved by the City Council. The work for both projects was completed in 2014.
 - Tangled up in trash – Caterpillar Puppets Interactive Eco-Sustainable Programs for Pre-School – Third Grade. A \$12,000 grant was received and 24 programs were presented.

- *Wind, Water, Land* recycled metal and glass art to be placed at the Community Center. Council approved the location and conceptual design for this piece in January 2014 and requested completion by the end of 2014. The work is scheduled for installation in early March 2015, with a reception planned for March 21.
- Hosting a series of receptions for *Arts Benicia Presents...* art exhibits in the City Council Chambers.
- Meeting with a collaborative group to investigate the possibility of future development of the city-owned Depot building to accommodate a gallery site for Arts Benicia and the Benicia Historical Museum.
- Assisting in the inauguration of the Benicia Museum of Art, temporarily located in Studio 621.
- Participating in the Waterfront Enhancement & Master Plan process and providing input and a new framework for the inclusion of public art from the inception of the plan.
- Working with Arts Benicia and Mark Brest van Kempen to get approval for the first of three pieces of temporary art to be placed at the Waterfront.
- Completing several fundraisers to benefit the Benicia Film Festival and the Public art project at the community center.

The Commissioners continued to be active in the community, representing the city at many arts and culture events, meetings and activities. The Commission frequently has had more than one position unfilled, and 2014 was no exception, as two positions were vacant for most of the calendar year.

Committees

As before, the committees continued to function as the engines of the Commission. They reflect the way in which the Commission has developed as a collaborative and synergistic assembly of committed commissioners.

Community Outreach Committee

Mission: Provide leadership to the Commission in its goal to: 1) build collaborative and supportive relationships with arts, culture and other organizations, and 2) raise funds, as needed, to support the mission of the Commission and its grantees.

In 2013, the Commission temporarily suspended the work of the Community Outreach Committee while the dedicated core group continued to work through the Public Art Committee and the Film Festival Subcommittee on two major projects: the public art piece *Wind, Water, Land* and Benicia's first film festival, held in April 2014. In July, 2014, the Community Outreach Committee was revitalized, with a list of projects and primary tasks. These included: 1) BACC Grant Program Management; 2) Revitalizing the Collaboration Subcommittee; 3) Identifying BACC funding strategies; 4) Build/Enhance Relationships with Arts and Culture Organizations; 5) Host BACC Roundtables; 6) Document and Submit BACC Annual Report to the City; 7) Support other BACC Committees as needed.

Public Art Committee

Mission: Exists to support the inclusion of public art in our community promoting its cultural heritage, history and artistic identity, while adding warmth, beauty, and accessibility to public spaces.

The Public Art Committee continued to work with local artists on the creation and installation of a public art piece, *Wind, Water, Land*, for the Community Center. The local artists creating the piece include Brian Giambastiani, Mike Kendall, David Lindsay, Micheal, Nicholas and David Nourot. (Note: this is on the Council's list of priority projects for the city.) In accordance with the strategic plan of the Community Sustainability Commission, this project is complemented with an eco-educational component. Larry Lauber, Benicia Historical Museum Association member, is providing the hardware and software for the eco-educational component. Additionally, John Beck, a well-known filmmaker and resident of Benicia, is filming a documentary of the project.

The Committee also intends to work with staff and appropriate city departments to create a master plan for public art. (Note: this too is on the Council's list of priority projects for the city.)

Looking ahead to 2015

The Commission's activities continue to be a work in progress. Some of the work started in 2013 was completed in 2014 and some of the work has yet to be completed. The commissioners are in the process of assessing those aspects of its mission that have not been adequately addressed and, of course, they are readily open to new and unanticipated opportunities as these arise.

Recommendations:

The following are a few recommendations that the City may take to encourage and promote arts and culture related programs.

- As the city considers its budget for fiscal year 2015-16 and 2016-17, the Commission would recommend that there be consideration of an increase in the budget for non-profit arts and culture organization grants, as these monies are an investment in our community's future and economic vitality¹. These funds were reduced in 2009-10 from 100,375 to \$80,375 in 2010-11 and then in the following year, were reduced to \$60,540. The commission recommends that the level of funding for non-profit arts and culture organizations be returned to the 2010-11 or 2009-10 level.
- In addition, due to the timeline for BACC grant approvals, the Commission recommends that in the spring, early in the budget process, the Council provide guidance to staff on the amount that will be available for distribution to grantees. The current process requires the commission to estimate the total amount to be allocated, pre-determining the amounts to be given to each grantee, and presenting multiple budget options for Council consideration. The availability of a total rather than assumed sum of money would simplify the number of alternative budget options the Commission prepares for each recommended grantee applicant.

¹ Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity IV, National Report. http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information_services/research/services/economic.impact/aepiv/AEP4.NationalSummaryReport.pdf

Work in progress

Public Art

- Complete the creation and installation of a public art piece to be placed in the Community Center.
- Work with Arts Benicia on the installation of three pieces of temporary art in the waterfront area.
- Continue to monitor items to be included in a future Public Art Master Plan for Benicia.

Outreach Committee

- If the Commission has a full complement of commissioners, revive the Community Outreach Committee's efforts to support collaboration of arts and culture organizations within the City.
- Continue to sponsor the Arts and Culture Commission's Roundtables.
- Attend meetings related to creating a permanent Benicia Regional Art Center and/or a Benicia Art Museum and/or completion/remodel of the Depot and report to the Commission on any developments.

Film Festival Subcommittee

- Continue the work of the Film Festival Subcommittee and annually evaluate future events.
- Fundraise as needed for public art and the film festival, with funds raised above and beyond the amount needed for the Film Festival expenses to be used (with Council Approval) to supplement funds for the grantees or for Public Art.

Commission

- Review, evaluate and make a recommendation to Council on 2015-17 grant recipients
- Monitor grantee reports on a quarterly basis and make a site visit to each grantee annually.
- Participate in the Waterfront Park design process to ensure inclusion of art from inception of the plan through completion of the project.

Workplan

A draft Workplan with projects for 2015 is attached. This will be provided as an item for approval on the Council agenda.

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<i>Arts and Culture Commission Proposed Work Plan 2015</i>		
Schedule	Task/Subject related to duties described in establishing Ordinance or Resolution No.	Lead/Team
Annually	Prepare an Annual Report for Council including recommendations for encouraging and promoting art-related programs	Commission/Staff
Ongoing	Support collaborations of arts and culture organizations within the city	Commission/ Outreach Committee
Annually	Sponsor the Arts and Culture Commission roundtables	Outreach Committee
Bi-annually	Review new applications for grants for FY 2015-17 and make recommendations to the City Council.	Commission
Quarterly	Authorize expenditures of grant funds for approved grantees	Commission
Annually	Perform site visits to each grantee	Commission
Quarterly	Conduct fundraisers to support public art or other commission activities	Commission
Ongoing	Sponsor the second Annual Film Festival and any associated fundraising events	Commission / Film Festival Subcommittee / Staff
As needed	Update/revise brochure on Public Art in Benicia	Public Art Committee
Ongoing	Sponsor receptions for the "Arts Benicia Presents" series of art in the Council Chambers	Commission
Will be completed in March 2015	Work with local artists on the installation of a public art piece in the Community Center. Host a reception/unveiling of the artwork	Public Art Committee / Commission / Staff
Schedule	Special Projects related to duties described in City's Priority Project List, General Plan, or Annual report	Lead/Team
Occasional	Attend meetings to gather information on: 1) the Benicia Regional Art Center (BRAC), 2) a permanent Benicia Art Museum, and/or 3) conversion of the Depot to provide a First Street arts/historical/cultural gallery. Keep Commission apprised of any developments on these projects.	Chair /Commission/ Outreach Committee/ Staff
March 2014 – March 2016	Work with artist Mark Brest van Kempen & Arts Benicia on the installation of temporary art pieces on the First Street Green	Public Art Committee/ BACC/Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission/Staff
Occasional	Participate in the Waterfront Park design process to ensure inclusion of art from the inception of the plan through completion of the project.	Public Art Committee / Urban Waterfront Enhancement Master Plan Committee Liaison

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