

MINUTES

Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture (GJCAC) Wednesday, August 26, 2026 – Lincoln Park Hospitality Suite

Commissioners Present: Robbie Breaux (Chair), Julie Matthews (Vice Chair), Hank Braxtan, Pamela Blythe, Libbie Early (TEAMS), Bill Lebach (TEAMS), Gilberto Ramirez Macias, Porcia Silverberg, TJ Smith, Cynthia Zaitz

Commissioners Absent: Mayor Laurel Lutz, Amy Wall

Others Present: Paige McNamara, Haley Van Camp, Jonathan Wheatley

Chair Robbie Breaux called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. and brief introductions were made. Guest Paige McNamara is interested in joining the GJCAC and was sitting in for the meeting to get an idea of what the GJCAC does.

The GJCAC reviewed the July 22 meeting minutes. A correction was made to reflect that Cynthia Zaitz attended in person rather than via Teams. Bill Lebach also requested that the minutes note his previously submitted document containing recommended changes to the funding application process. Julie Matthews moved to approve the minutes with the noted corrections, Cynthia seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

BUSINESS

The GJCAC reviewed the results of 38 artist submissions for the Riverfront Trail mural project. A total of \$9,000 was available for nine projects, with one project consisting of two smaller murals, requiring selection of ten designs.

For the bridge location, the GJCAC reviewed four proposals and discussed design quality, durability, educational components, the artists' demonstrated abilities, and how well the proposed artwork could be executed in the designated space. Following discussion, Cynthia moved to select Karrie Steely's salamander design as the primary selection and Melissa Piazza's floral design with a black background as the secondary selection. TJ seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

For the remaining mural locations, there was discussion about whether to prioritize a greater number of individual artists or strictly follow the scoring results, including whether artists should be permitted to complete multiple murals. The Commission ultimately approved using the scoring matrix in order of average score. The motion was moved by Cynthia, seconded by Porcia Silverberg, and it passed unanimously. If an artist declines an additional location, or if a design is no longer eligible because the bridge location has already been filled, staff will proceed to the next highest-rated submission.

There was continued discussion regarding revisions to the funding program and application process. Existing restrictions included scholarships, fundraisers, certain capital expenses, general operating expenditures, previously incurred deficits, and organizations receiving City Council funding for the same project. There was discussion moving toward a less restrictive funding model that would provide organizations greater flexibility in using awarded funds, including the possibility of supporting general operating expenses.

There was broad support for evaluating organizations based more on their mission, credibility, history, and ability to carry out their work rather than requiring organizations to develop specific projects solely to qualify for funding. Staff noted that this change would require substantial revisions to the application but could be incorporated into the broader application overhaul already planned.

The Commission reached consensus to remove the existing section identifying categories the Commission does not fund outlined in the Criteria and Goals document. The discussion indicated that the primary remaining geographic stipulation would be that funded events, projects, or programs take place within Grand Junction city limits.

There was also discussion on whether applicant presentations should continue. Because the overall application process will be substantially revised, the consensus was to retain presentations for the upcoming funding cycle and revisit the requirement next year. Commissioners discussed concerns that presentation skills can influence funding decisions independently of the quality of an organization or project.

CITY STAFF REPORTS/UPDATES

Staff presented a preliminary concept for the greenhouse project and discussed approximately \$1,600 in available 1% for Art funding. The greenhouse is envisioned as the first component of a larger project that could expand with additional greenhouses as future funding becomes available. Future phases have not yet been approved.

Commissioners discussed possible artwork including stained glass, metalwork, outdoor sculpture, and interactive or educational art. The Commission favored issuing a broad call to artists rather than prescribing a specific medium, allowing artists to propose work appropriate for the space and available budget. Staff noted the limited timeline because the funds must be expended and the final product received by the end of December. Direct purchase of existing artwork was also identified as an available alternative if the call does not produce a suitable proposal.

Staff shared completed artwork updates, including the Story Wall and Recognition Wall pieces at the Community Recreation Center. Staff also reported concerns with the execution and quality of the Community Room mural, including differences from the approved proposal and issues with paint consistency and finishing. Following discussions with the artist and project staff, the hallway mural was retained after touch-ups, while other portions were painted over. Staff noted that the experience reinforces the importance of evaluating an artist's previous work and ability to execute the proposed project when reviewing future applications.

Artwork installation at the Convention Center was scheduled for September 3 at 11:00 a.m., with commissioners invited to attend. Staff also reported that work was underway to schedule the first Strategic Cultural Plan subcommittee meeting and that Third Sector Innovations was being engaged to assist with facilitation and community engagement.

Staff noted Commissioners will receive a ranking survey to assist in selecting local photography for the City calendar. More than 900 photographs were submitted, with City Communications staff narrowing the submissions before Commission review. Commissioner rankings were requested by September 8.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Commissioners were reminded to contact staff after attending GJCAC funded events so an evaluation form can be provided. The next regular meeting was scheduled for September 23 at 4:30 p.m. As there was no further business, Julie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:46 p.m., Hank Braxtan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Haley Van Camp