



CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION
MEETING
OFFICIAL MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2023

ALPHARETTA CITY HALL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS | 2 PARK PLAZA | 6:00 PM

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I. CALL TO ORDER

- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

- **Cultural Arts Commission Members - Present**
 - Melody Cookson (Chair)
 - Michael Barsky (Vice Chair)
 - Sabine Genet
 - Dianna Smeal
 - Shital Foster
 - Sumita Patel
- **Cultural Arts Commission Members - Absent**
 - Gene Andrews
- **Staff**
 - James Drinkard – City Administrator, City of Alpharetta
 - Kim Manning – Cultural Services Manager, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services
 - Amber O'Dwyer – Administrative Office Coordinator, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services

III. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. Cultural Arts Commission Meeting Minutes from March 28, 2023

- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called for a motion to approve the minutes.
 - Commissioner Barsky offered a motion to approve the minutes, as written, from the March 28, 2023, Cultural Arts Commission meeting.
 - Commissioner Patel seconded the motion.
- ❖ The motion was approved unanimously (5-0).

b. Cultural Arts Commission Special Called Workshop Minutes from May 23, 2023

- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called for a motion to approve the minutes.
 - Commissioner Patel offered a motion to approve the minutes from the May 23, 2023, Special Called Workshop of the Cultural Arts Commission.
 - Commissioner Barsky seconded the motion.
- ❖ The motion was approved unanimously (4-0-1) with Commissioner Smeal abstaining.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- There was no old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Public Art Review – Off Leash Alpharetta “Happy Dog” Sculpture

- Cierra Brown and Wendy Newman with Off Leash Alpharetta came forward to present the item.
- Off Leash Alpharetta is opening at 142 South Main Street and will be a luxury dog park and eatery (including restaurant and bar).
- The location of the sculpture will be at the corner of Main Street and Old Milton Parkway where the gazebo currently stands.
- The sculpture has been nicknamed “Alphie” short for “Alpharetta”. He is about 6 feet tall and 10 feet in length.
- The material used for the sculpture is one that works well in nature and should age with no damage and develop a nice patina over time.
- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called for a motion to approve the public art sculpture.
 - Commissioner Foster offered a motion to approve the "Happy Dog" public art structure for Off Leash Alpharetta to be installed at 142 South Main Street, Alpharetta, GA, 30009.
 - Commissioner Barsky seconded the motion.
 - Chairwoman Cookson called for discussion of the art sculpture (reference Cultural Arts Commission Q &A, RE: “Happy Dog” Sculpture below).

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION Q&A:

RE: Off the Leash Alpharetta “Happy Dog” Sculpture

Q Will the sculpture be lit? (Barsky)

A Currently, there no plans to up-light the sculpture. The corner has a streetlight which may yield enough lighting. As part of the conditional use permit, specific landscaping is required, and lighting incorporated for the landscape design may provide incidental lighting for the sculpture. There are plans to have the sculpture sit on a small slab to make it more prominent and to maintain the lawn maintained near the sculpture. (Off Leash Alpharetta)

Q Is this a one-of-a-kind piece of art? Will it be elsewhere in the country? (Smeal)

A A site visit to Greenville led to the discovery of a dog sculpture (similar to but not “Happy Dog”). The business then explored the possibility of a sculpture with the artist. Similar

dog sculptures from the artist may be found outside of the Atlanta area but none are relatively local. This particular sculpture will be designed to order.

To add, the sculpture was a requirement of the Community Development Department's conditional use permit and not a requirement by the business for branding. The sculpture will actually sit on the city's property. The options presented to the applicant were to either present a sculpture that met the requirements of the permit or to donate funding to the city for an art installation. The sculpture will not (and was not intended to) include the name of the business but rather proposed to meet specifications and to recognize Alpharetta as a dog friendly community. (Off Leash Alpharetta)

- C Commissioner Smeal expressed concerns that the sculpture is not unique to the business nor Alpharetta and that someone could see the piece elsewhere.
- Q What would be a reasonable geographical location? (Cookson)
- A There should not be one. It should be unique to Alpharetta. (Smeal)
- A The sculpture will be unique in that it is custom made for the client, i.e., the head tilt, stance, etc. In addition, the way in which the sculpture would be worn from elements could differ based on its location. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- Q In the event the business became a "cat café" (because cats become more popular), what would be the plan for the dog sculpture? (Genet)
- C The sculpture is a requirement of the conditional use permit and not a requirement of the business. If the city is not happy with the sculpture presented, the applicant would be happy to defer to the funding alternative to let the city choose the sculpture. The sculpture would not actually belong to the business but to the city. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- C Commissioner Smeal expressed concerns about the space being highly visible and whether or not the sculpture would appear to be branding the business in addition to not being a unique enough design.
- A Dogs never get old and as long as Alpharetta is around, "Alphie" could be around. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- Q Who decides on donation versus art? (Barsky)
- A This would be further established in the Cultural Arts Master Plan recently approved by the budget. (Manning)
- Q Who would own the art? (Patel)
- A Off Leash Alpharetta would own the piece and be responsible for maintenance of the sculpture despite it being on city property. (Manning)
- A While the hope is to be at the location, operating the business for many years, when the time comes, we could remove it and take it with us, donate it to the city, etc. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- Q What is the timetable for the Cultural Arts Master Plan in the event the Commission considers tabling the issue until the plan is in place? (Cookson)
- A The hope is to have the plan finished in February and then have the plan presented before City Council for approval. That said, it would be a while. (Manning)
- Q What is the applicant's timeline? Would February be okay for revisiting the issue? (Genet)
- A Currently, the gazebo is dilapidated, in disrepair, and should be replaced with another structure as it's somewhat of an eyesore. Waiting until February is not ideal. We would much rather provide the donation of funds than wait until February. (Off Leash Alpharetta)

- C Commissioner Smeal stated the Commission should move cautiously in terms of the future of the structure as this proved to be an issue with the "A" sculpture and the cost for restoration/removal.
- A We are happy to write an amendment to include a maintenance commitment for the sculpture, or donation terms. Whatever the city's preference. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- C Kim Manning recommended that the Commission visit the location and then consider alternative on-site locations once the sculpture is ready.
- C We are unsure if that recommendation works as we do not wish to pay twice; once for the sculpture's creation and once for donation should the sculpture be denied. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- Q Was the location of the sculpture precisely approved by the Design Review Board? If so, alternative locations may not be an option. (Drinkard)
- C Commissioner Smeal stated her issue is that the sculpture is only 6 feet tall, not unique to Alpharetta, and would be placed in a very prominent place in Alpharetta. That said, it should have a little more pizzazz.
- Q Commissioner Genet voiced that her concern is not just the location, but the lack of clarity as to who owns the sculpture, is responsible for maintenance, etc. She proposed the Commission revisit the issue in another month.
- A A massive investment has been put into the business for the Alpharetta location. This is the last component to get the business approved and up and running. The applicant would prefer not to come back before the Commission but defer to the donation of funds. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- C The question posed as to whether the city moves forward with art, or the donation is the decision placed before the Cultural Arts Commission. In terms of rules of parliament, a substitute motion can be made in lieu of the motion on the table. (Drinkard)
- Q How much is the donation? (Barsky)
- C The condition of zoning was either a \$15,000 donation or installation of art with the intent that the donation would be used to identify a piece of art of the city's choosing. (Drinkard)
- Q Would the art install from the donation impede the business's timing of opening the business? (Patel)
- C No, the two do not have to coincide. Of course, the City would try and move expeditiously to not impede the opening of the business. (Drinkard)
- C Commissioner Foster believed it to be a sweet idea. If [the city] did not have an out-of-pocket expense for the sculpture via a maintenance agreement and the sculpture proved to be unique to other sculptures made to order, she was in favor of the sculpture which showed support of local businesses.
- C We would ensure proper care of the sculpture from installation through maintenance. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- Q The piece is not made from a mold, but welded, correct? (Foster)
- A Yes, welded. (Off Leash Alpharetta)
- C Commissioner Patel stated while this will be a significant improvement to what exists at the location now, and wishes the business the best success, because it is high traffic area, she wished to proceed with a substitute motion in approval of the donation of funds for a sculpture better suited for the City and not the business. (Patel)

- ❖ Commissioner Patel offered a substitute motion to except the mandatory donation in lieu of the “Happy Dog” public art structure presented by Off Leash Alpharetta.
 - Commissioner Barsky seconded the motion.
- ❖ The motion was approved (5-1).

VII. STAFF PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

a. Public Art Overview – The Longest Continuous Outdoor Mural Trail in the World

- Thomas Nolf with North Fulton Rotary came forward to present the item.
- He requested the Commission imagine the impact cultural arts could play in Alpharetta twenty years from now.
- Three to four decades ago, city leaders envisioned a day of establishing a city defined separately from Atlanta. Now, Alpharetta has established a corridor with a great image of “live, work, and play”.
- Today, we could expand upon that vision by establishing the longest continuous outdoor mural trail in the United States or even the world.
- That said, North Fulton Rotary wishes to realize the idea through a true “trash to treasure” project by beautifying the raised turrets along the Big Creek Greenway trail.
- This will be the third project that North Fulton Rotary has collaborated on with Alpharetta to enhance the lives of the community. Other projects included the peace garden and the first all-access playground at North Park. The success of those projects brings North Fulton Rotary to the city once more for another promising initiative.
- The project lends itself to opening up the minds of artistic students who may not have ever considered mural-work as another source of income for commissioned art.
- With the Cultural Arts Commission’s blessing, the initiative is to engage local students in the National Arts Program in creating designs that could be realized as murals along nine manholes ranging from Haynes Bridge Road to Kimball Bridge Road that would be maintained by North Fulton Rotary.
- In working with Kurt Kirby, the most promising manholes for the project have been identified and are those closest to the walkway to ensure visibility and practicality of the murals.
- As the manholes are owned by Fulton County, the organization first approached the county to seek approval of the project. Fulton County has not only given permission to proceed but also supports the project so much so, the county plans to donate drop cloths, paint brushes, etc. for completion of the project.
- The organization is now approaching Alpharetta for approval to proceed.
- Fulton County’s ideal timeline would be to complete the project by their clean water initiative taking place the last weekend of October. That said, the hope is to have the public art approved by the Cultural Arts Commission at the next meeting.
- Should the Cultural Arts Commission support moving forward with the project, a professional muralist and art teacher, Annalisa Kimball, would help realize the designs of the students which would then be presented to the Cultural Arts Commission for final approval prior to execution.

- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called for a motion.
 - Commissioner Genet offered a motion to approve the initiative in concept and authorize the applicant to proceed with the next steps of the process.
 - Commissioner Patel seconded the motion.
- ❖ The motion was approved unanimously (6-0).

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION DISCUSSION

RE: The Longest Continuous Outdoor Mural Trail in the World

- Q Twenty years from now, how would painted cement hold up? We would like to see a maintenance plan and also visuals of similar murals to see how well they preserve. In addition, I would like to see the artwork designed by the students prior to approval. (Smeal)
- A The hope is not to engage the students until the nod is received. (Nolfa)
- C Commissioner Genet stated it would be a good idea to have the students experience the pragmatism and “red tape” of mural installations and public art approval and believed it would be wise to have the students bring their proposed design directly before the Commission for approval. (Genet).
- Q Are the mural designs on a rotation? (Genet)
- A In answer to Commission Smeal’s question, the mural covered manholes in the visuals presented in the agenda packet are 15-20 years old and should be a good indicator of how well such murals are maintained and withhold weathering. The “A” sculpture that deteriorated was not made of concrete. (Nolfa)
- Q Some neighborhoods with access points to the Big Creek Greenway have requested branding along the trail and there has been discussion on what a common theme would be. How would the murals play a role in that long-term plan, and would the artist need to adhere to the theme designed by this current project? (Genet)
- A At this point, I cannot discuss how the theme would play into the plan. If the idea was approved, it was discussed whether the Commission would you like for [North Fulton Rotary] to come up with the theme... (Manning)
- A The mural designs will be based on the “clean-water” initiative. Imagine what a student thinks about when considering “clean-water”. The design would likely be molded around that concept. (Nolfa)
- Q Are you presenting the idea to Forsyth County since the greenway extends into that county? (Barsky)
- A No. We are the North Fulton (not South Forsyth) Rotary. (Nolfa)
- Q What is your deadline for the project? (Foster)
- A Yesterday. The North Fulton Rotary is only waiting on the blessing from the Cultural Arts Commission to proceed with the project. (Nolfa)
- C Commissioner Genet mentioned she would love to see some sort of rotation in the art not just the same murals indefinitely.
- C Chairman Cookson agreed with Commissioner Genet as rotational art would help teach and incorporate future generations of artists. She was also pleased to see the initiative involves various organizations and students working in collaboration.

- A There are several manholes to be covered to permit generations of involvement and by the time the murals are complete, the organization could revisit the first of the painted manholes for renewed designs. (Nolfa)
- Q Could this initiative be displayed on the Cultural Services website? (Genet)
- A Yes. (Manning)
- Q What are manholes? (Patel)
- A Overflow repositories of Fulton County sewage. (Nolfa)

b. Cultural Services Division Monthly Report – August 2023

- Kim Manning, Cultural Services Manager for the Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services Department came forward to present the item.

Monthly Highlights

- The division experienced the most successful summer camp season to date, having been completely booked. The campers complete a weekly gallery show and camps range from Rock Band Camp to the Log Cabin.
- The new Art Guide has been released! The guide features Willy Wonka from City Center Players, an open house at the Log Cabin which incorporated ceili dancing, songwriting for teens, and art-Lego printmaking. The last two pages of the guide show various programs such as the pocket park performance program and other upcoming cultural happenings and city events hosted by art leader groups.
- The Bailey-Johnson High School Basketball Team Championship Ring Ceremony presentation before City Council was a huge success. Since then, a few local news outlets such as Fox 5 have shown interest and the players have been featured in photo shoots, etc.
- *The Eclectic Lawn Concert Series* had a wonderful inaugural year.
- As part of the Alpharetta Music City initiative, speakers have been installed at the various recreation facilities to play music around the clock.

Monthly Initiatives

- *The Visitor* art sculpture needs restoring. Only one artist responded to the call for artists, so the division extended the call for an additional five weeks and have now identified a qualified artist.
- *The Wave* crosswalk mural at Wills Park pool will include a secondary, 3-D component. The new sculpture will be comprised of the inside harp from the old baby grand piano. The open sections on the sculpture will be filled with orange and yellow hues to resemble the sun. The install should be completed in six weeks.
- Resthaven Cemetery has a wall built in 1860 that is in disrepair. Unfortunately, a footer was never included in the original build leading to the deterioration. Staff is working on finalizing the rebuild of the wall. The Alpharetta Old Milton County Historical Society donated \$2,500 towards the project. The vendor requested by the society has experience in restoration and has estimated \$14k to complete the rebuild. The inside of the wall will consist of cinderblock with the perimeter comprised of historic rock.

Current & Upcoming Happenings

- Speaking of the cemetery, the Historical Society is reactivating *Restless in Resthaven* which will likely be available the last weekend in September.

- The *Whimsy* gallery exhibit is on display and includes over 200 pieces of art. The opening reception took place last weekend and was well attended.
- *12 Angry Jurors* is currently being showcased at the Arts Center.
- Family Day will be October 7, 2023, at the Arts Center.

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION DISCUSSION

RE: Cultural Services Division Monthly Report

Q When is the cemetery wall project to be done? (Smeal)

A Hoping for fall but unsure. Definitely hope to finish before winter. (Manning)

Q Is there an update on the Community Theater at North Point Mall? (Patel)

A Currently the MOU is being renewed by North Point Mall and staff's hope is to present the item to Council in September.

Q Commissioner Genet recently spoke with the social events coordinator at the Windward Community that has two city parks and a few private locations. Is it possible to create pocket performance locations in the zip code as they are really looking to be a place for art and music on the other side of 400? (Genet)

A Staff would be happy to explore that option and had recently reached out to the coordinator to begin discussion. (Manning)

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

- Commissioner Barsky attended the *Joy of Improv* and stated it was a blast, consisted of a diverse group of people, and was very well attended.
- Commissioner Genet mentioned she had heard from several people that the variety in the programming offered by the Arts Center is being well received and is successfully leading to a diverse audience of attendees.
- Commissioner Genet stated she recognized that it may be difficult for artists to paint on outdoor materials such as fiber glass, concrete, etc. and that tends to deter artists from applying for public art projects on account of the lack of certainty in maintaining the art for several years. Perhaps the city could provide educational opportunities for such artists as to how to maintain or work with these intimidating materials.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

X. ADJOURNMENT

- ❖ Chairwoman Cookson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - Commissioner Smeal made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - Commissioner Patel seconded the motion.
- ❖ With there being no further business to consider or discuss, Chairwoman Cookson adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amber O'Dwyer". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Amber" in a smaller, more delicate script, and the last name "O'Dwyer" in a larger, more prominent script.

Amber O'Dwyer
Administrative Office Coordinator
Recreation, Parks & Cultural Services