

City of Newport Beach

Newport Beach City Arts Commission Thursday, February 10, 2011 – 5:00pm Central Library Friends Room

Convened at 5:03pm

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Commissioners Present: Robyn Grant – Chair, Robert Smith – Vice Chair, Carole Boller, Gil Lasky, Chris Trela, Rita Goldberg – Secretary, Wendy Brooks

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Cynthia Cowell, Library Services Director; Jana Barbier, Cultural Arts Coordinator

Public Present: Approximately 100 people attended, with 61 persons writing their names on a roster requested by Arts Commission Chair, Robyn Grant.

Public Comments: Commissioner Grant called the meeting to order. Arts Commissioners and staff introduced themselves. Ron Hendrickson said that the Reagan Statue would be on the agenda at the February 22 City Council Meeting.

Approval of Minutes: It was MSP (Lasky/Brooks) to approve the January 13, 2011 minutes.

Continued Business:

Staff Report /Calendar/Correspondence – Reviewed and filed.

Correspondence/Press – Reviewed and filed.

Committee Updates - Commissioner Grant requested postponing committee updates.

New Business –

1. **Discussion of President Ronald Reagan Sculpture Location**

Commissioner Grant introduced Councilperson Keith Curry. Councilman Curry discussed that he had introduced this topic and that City Council had authorized creating a stature of Ronald Reagan for the celebration of his 100th birthday (centennial in 2011). He noted that celebrations were taking place all over the world. Councilman Curry stated that Newport Beach residents had given \$54,000 to date for the creation of a Ronald Reagan statue, and that tonight the Arts Commission would be discussing where to place the statue. He noted that he had suggested the new Civic Center, but would consider other locations that would be good for placement of the statue. Councilman Curry talked about President Ronald Reagan and noted that these types of memorials are touchstones for

children. He provided quotes from Ronald Reagan as well as Ted Kennedy. Councilman Curry noted that this statue would be a good way to celebrate American history, that Reagan had received 77% of the vote in Newport Beach, that he would be open to discussing the proper location for this memorial, and that he felt a memorial was the right thing to do.

Public Comments: Arts Commission Chair, Robyn Grant invited the public to speak on the issue of where to place a Ronald Reagan memorial sculpture and asked speakers to state their names.

Harry Sauberman noted that the new Civic Center should represent all of the people in the community.

Carrie Reynolds stated that she was the chair of the Reagan Donor Committee and noted that the artwork selected was beautiful and worthy of Newport Beach.

Bill Ficker brought a watercolor rendering of the Civic Center plaza which he showed to the group and suggested that perhaps the Reagan statue could be placed in a centennial memorial park.

Robert Shelton noted that it was odd that the Reagan sculpture was a done deal and asked why the Arts Commission had been bypassed. He noted that this was not just a matter of where to place the sculpture, but asked why the matter had been fast tracked.

Wilbur Davis, a priest noted that he felt a poor decision had been made and that Ronald Reagan was not admired by many people. He thought the topic could be divisive and that this was an ideological decision and not an ethical one.

Ron Hendrickson said that he was not opposed to a Ronald Reagan sculpture on public property, but noted that the public was not involved in this resolution, and that the item had been the last item on the City Council Consent Calendar and that City Council Policy I-9 was approved so that the Arts Commission could take the lead on the sculptor being commissioned.

Jene Witte noted that she was an expatriate from Connecticut and would not be in favor of placing a Ronald Reagan sculpture on public property.

Marilyn Alexander stated that she does not get involved often, but had to say that she felt a lack of democracy with this matter.

Polly Stanridge suggested a statue of Ronald Reagan's horse.

Therese Lynch said that she loved Ronald Reagan, but was against a statue.

Angela Mains suggested not putting a Reagan statue in a public park, but using the 50k raised for a Ronald Reagan scholarship fund.

Joan Templeton Morris noted that she was from the Huntington Beach design board and that this group had commissioned sculptures of natural elements in the environment, including animals and symbols that represent the sea life in the region.

Dr. Suzanne Savary of the Women's Democratic Organization proposed not engaging in representing any one party. She noted that she did not agree with the revisionist history that was offered and suggested that a sculpture commission should be bipartisan. Savary asked the Arts Commission to send this proposal back to the City Council for review.

Arlene Cartozian stated that she was a proud Trojan, had worked on the Ronald Reagan Presidential campaign, and also had been on the Arts Commission for 10 years. She urged the Arts Commission to follow the process in place for requesting proposals from artists for this sculpture.

Mary Pilcert noted paying a lot of money in taxes and mentioned that Ronald Reagan had closed all of our mental institutions.

Dr. Kirwan Rockefeller noted being on the Arts Commission for seven years, serving 3 ½ years as chair. He felt creating and placing this sculpture was the wrong thing to do and urged the Arts Commission to follow the process in place, as well as Council Policy I-9.

Walkie Ray noted that he was a long-time resident of Balboa Island, and that he was concerned, and objected strongly to this sculpture. Ray noted that he felt placing a statue of Ronald Reagan in the Civic Center was a political act.

Jim Warren stated that the civic center was supposed to be a people's park and that whatever is placed will have to be looked at every day.

Diana Blaisure had lived in Newport Beach for fourteen years. She noted that she was so impressed by the landscape architect, Peter Walker.

Don Carte (spelling?) noted that he was the president of the Newport Heights Homeowner's Association and that he had received 5 calls from the Cliff haven Association. He thought that the entire project was fast-tracked, and stated that there were many people living near Castaways Park that were not happy with the Marine 1/1 Memorial.

Nancy Gierling noted that she does not want public property politicized.

Nancy Skinner noted that she was strongly opposed to politicizing public property, but not opposed to private property.

Karen Clark noted that she had spoken to Councilman Curry about the project beforehand. She stated that Ronald Reagan is a divisive figure and suggested using the money raised for the sculpture to support an Alzheimer's fund.

Laura Curran spoke about the many good comments that had come out of the process and noted that she serves at the pleasure of the President, and that the issue was not divisive.

Kathy Temple Vrebalovich stated that no one person is representative of the community, and that all presidents should be depicted, or none.

Pam Gilmore asked how many people would like City Council to reconsider this project.

Judy Rosener spoke against the project, and noted that she had been a professor in the UCI Business School for 20 years.

Connie Glenn noted that she had lived in Newport Beach for 40 years and felt that the Arts Commission had been blindsided. She noted the proposed sculpture by Stanley Watts was not art by professional standards and was not conceived for a particular site.

Councilperson Rush Hill made a comment about throwing arrows and knowing where they will hit. He noted that he had assisted with the building of the Reagan ranch in Santa Barbara. He also mentioned that this was the beginning of the process and that if people do not believe that the Civic Center was an appropriate site for a Reagan sculpture, to provide alternative suggestions to City Council.

Additional comments: None

Arts Commission Chair, Robyn Grant thanked the attendees for coming and for their comments at the meeting, and those that had been mailed in. She encouraged the public attending to socialize outside. Grant asked the Arts Commission to provide their comments.

Commissioner Brooks asked to defer her comments until later.

Commissioner Goldberg asked for clarifications. She asked if City Council could accept or deny the artwork proffered and whether there was a resolution which allows the city to collect funds. She also asked whether Council had asked the Arts Commission to weigh in on the artist and location of a Reagan sculpture. Councilman Curry responded that the monies raised had been through a private donor committee who preferred the artist being considered. He noted that the committee would have to take heed of the people attending this meeting.

Commissioner Lasky stated that he had been listening to the comments and has come to the conclusion that the procedure has not been followed. He suggested asking for the Arts Commission's input, and developing a group knowledgeable about the arts to consider the artwork and location. Lasky suggested putting out bids to artists and urged the Arts Commission to ask City Council to start again at the beginning.

Commissioner Brooks noted that the process was fete accompli and reminded the Arts Commission that in previous public art projects designs came in from all over the world and the public had a chance to give their input.

Commissioner Trela brought up a few issues including the lack of direction from City Council on the Arts Commission not recommending a suitable artist and following the City Council Policy on donations of art to the City of Newport Beach. He recommended an open call for artists and ultimately forming a subcommittee to review the proposals.

Commissioner Grant asked Commissioner Smith his opinion, and noted that some topics could be discussed in a subcommittee meeting. Commissioner Smith asked for more direction from City Council on whether this was a donation, or a public art project.

Commissioner Boller agreed wholeheartedly and noted that she was a lifelong professional in the arts, having received many awards, and that she was passionate about keeping public art in Newport Beach. However, she noted that public art should be world-class and appropriate.

Commissioner Grant noted that she hoped the group could make a recommendation to City Council. She reminded the commissioners that a resolution had already been passed on a Reagan Memorial, and that there had been a great deal of public comment about that. She suggested the Arts Commission should advise on artists, designs and appropriate locations for art installations. She noted that one could not select art without knowing the site first and that these concerns should be shared with City Council.

Commissioners discussed producing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) subcommittee, and following due process. Commissioner Smith asked for guidance from City Council. Smith suggested a motion on finding out whether City Council wanted the Arts Commission to follow the resolution on placement or if there was an affirmation for the Arts Commission to do a call for artists. Commissioner Goldberg seconded the motion and noted that it was stated clearly in Policy I-11 that the Arts Commission should select the highest quality art. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Lasky noted that the resolution did not comport with City Council Policy I-9 regarding the City, artists and funding. He mentioned that there was not enough guidance to be fair to the citizens and wondered if City Council's opinions had changed. Lasky asked if the City Council report on February 22 would consider a policy on recognizing persons.

Councilman Curry stated that unless otherwise noted, the report could be referred back to Council for consideration of the process. He noted that there would have to be a discussion about the location of the statue.

Commissioner Smith asked that the matter go back to City Council for clarification on February 22.

Commissioner Grant moved to recommend to City Council to follow Policy I-9 (Art in Public Places), suggesting that there be a "Call for Artists" and further discussion on a location. Commissioner Goldberg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Trela noted that there was another piece of this to consider and made a motion that artist Stan Watts' proposed sculpture be brought before the Arts Commission for a recommended placement in a public location, using Policy I-11 (Donation of Art to the City of Newport Beach). Commissioner Boller seconded the motion. Discussion ensued, the motion was withdrawn and the second to the motion was withdrawn.

Commissioner Grant suggested moving on with committee reports.

Commissioner Goldberg noted that the performance committee had identified performers for the 2011 Concerts in the Parks Series. She asked if the planned August 14 concert could be moved to June 26 at Grant Howald Park. Staff agreed to check on this option. Goldberg noted that the suggested performers would be The Showcase Singers on June 26 at Grant Howald Park, and The Gregg Young 2nd Street Band on July 31st at Bonita Canyon Sports Park. Commissioner Lasky made a motion to accept The Showcase Singers

and The Gregg Young 2nd Street Band on the proposed dates. Commissioner Goldberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Staff agreed to find out the costs of these performances.

Future Agenda Items – Commissioner Goldberg asked if staff had made arrangements for a museum trip in the spring. Staff would provide information on a trip to the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in May.

Commissioner Announcements –

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:48p.m.