



**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
**Cultural Affairs Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, September 25, 2023**  
**5:35 – 8:40 PM**

**Members in Attendance:** Vanessa Whang (Chair), Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Jennifer Easton, Michelle Mush Lee, Jim Santi Owen, Theo Aytchan Williams

**Members Absent:** Ilana Lipsett, Shannon Price

**Staff in Attendance:** Roberto Bedoya, Neha Balram, Raquel Iglesias, Kristen Zaremba

**Guest Speakers:** Laurie Earp (Huey P. Newton Foundation)

## **Roll Call/Call to Order**

### **1. Welcome**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Whang at 5:35 PM.

### **2. Land Acknowledgement + Official City of Oakland Motto/Love Acknowledgement**

As part of Chair Whang's Land Acknowledgement, she reminded meeting participants and listeners about the [Shuumi Land Tax](#).

Vice Chair Choice read the abridged version of the City's [Love Acknowledgement](#).

### **3. Informational Presentation: Black Panther Party National Monument (Laurie Earp, Earp Events & Fundraising)**

Laurie Earp, the Special Projects Lead of Huey P. Newton Foundation, presented an informational report to the Commission on the Foundation's efforts to designate [DeFremery Park as a U.S. National Park](#). This is an effort to highlight and preserve the history of Oakland's Black Panther Party. The Foundation is petitioning the National Park Service for the creation of a national monument in DeFremery Park through the deed of a parcel of land. This will not change the open space designation at the park.

### **4. Public Comment**

Daghe Esoimeme introduce himself to the commission.

**5. Debrief on Advocacy Activities**

Commissioner Whang thanked the Commissioners and the arts community for their advocacy efforts during the City’s latest budget process. She acknowledged Commissioner Lipsett’s efforts to create an online petition that resulted in approximately 1,200 signatures and comments from the community. She also acknowledged the Commission’s efforts to attend town hall and City Council meetings and schedule one-on-one meetings with elected officials. She invited the Commissioners present to debrief on their individual activities. Commissioner Santi Owen noted that he and Commissioners Lee and Lipsett met with Councilmember Kalb. He and Commissioner Easton met with Councilmember Ramachandran. Commissioner Santi Owen also noted that he co-hosted a virtual advocacy town hall with Visit Oakland and arts community leaders. Commissioner Easton noted that she spoke to a member of Assemblymember Mia Bonta’s staff to talk about arts policy at the state level. Vice Chair Choice noted that he attended Council President Bas’ town hall meeting and City Council meeting. He also share the petition with his network. Commissioner Williams noted that the Commission should strategize its framing of arts as essential workers.

**6. Cultural Affairs Division Update**

Roberto Bedoya provided an update on the Cultural Affairs Division’s activities. He invited Raquel Iglesias (Cultural Funding Program) and Kristen Zarembo (Public Art Program) to provide updates on their program’s activities.

**7. Action Item 1: Approval of Minutes from May 22, 2023**

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from May 22, 2023, made by Commissioner Easton; seconded by Chair Whang.

Choice	AYE
Easton	AYE
Lee	AYE
Lipsett	Absent
Santi Owen	AYE
Price	Absent
Whang	AYE
Williams	AYE

The motion passed.

**8. Action Item 2: Vote on the Vice Chair Position (Term: July 2023 - July 2024)**

The Commission voted to re-elect Commissioner Choice to the Vice Chair position for a term from July 2023 – July 2024.

## **9. Acknowledgement of Service on the City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Commission**

The Commission took a moment to recognize Commissioners Theo Aytchan Williams, Diane Sanchez, and Shannon Price for their contributions to the Commission and service to Oakland's cultural community, who were coming off of the Commission.

## **10. Cultural Affairs Commission Chair's Update**

Chair Whang She invited the Commissioners to participate in an open discussion regarding their priorities over the next year. She noted that the Commissioners should work on a its community engagement strategy, so members of the public and cultural sector are actively invited to attend Commission meetings. She also noted that advocacy efforts in the midcycle budget and filling the five vacancies on the Commission are additional priorities. Vice Chair Choice agreed with Chair Whang's priorities, adding that Commissioners should be more active in advising elected officials and work more closely with the City's PIO's to increase visibility for arts and culture. He also noted that the advocacy ask should include a substantial increase for the Cultural Affairs Division. Commissioner Santi Owen noted that the Commission should recognize community members for their contributions to Oakland's cultural sector at meetings. Commissioner Williams agreed that the Commission's visibility and accessibility should be a priority. Commissioner Easton acknowledged the City's boards and commissions reception. She noted that Commission should broaden its approach to its ad vocacy strategy and draw the connection between arts and economic development. Commissioner Lee noted that community engagement needs to include intentional outreach efforts that make underrepresented communities feel seen.

## **11. Open Forum**

No comment from the public was made.

## **12. Announcements & Acknowledgements**

Commissioners took a moment to provide updates on activities and funding opportunities for the arts.

Commissioner Williams took a moment to remember Melanie Wofford who passed away recently.

## **13. Closing**

A motion to end the meeting was made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Easton.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.