



Contra  
Costa  
County

To: Board of Supervisors  
From: INTERNAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
Date: March 29, 2022

Subject: Reorganization of the Contra Costa County Arts and Culture Commission

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**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. ACCEPT the Interim Report for the Arts and Culture Prospectus: Phase One from Art Builds Community.
2. DIRECT staff to move forward with a re-organization of the Arts and Culture Commission.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The budget for the Arts and Culture Commission is expected to have a balance of approximately \$50,000 at the close of FY 2021-22, assuming state grant funds awarded are received and exclusive of Measure X support.

In November 2021, Measure X funds in the amount of \$250,000 (on-going) were allocated to the Commission. These funds have been added to the FY 21-22 budget through an appropriation adjustment but are not expected to be expended. Therefore, the total amount

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☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY  
ADMINISTRATOR

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD  
COMMITTEE

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Action of Board On: **03/29/2022** ☐ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

**VOTE OF SUPERVISORS**

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: March 29, 2022

Contact: L. DeLaney,  
925-655-2057

Monica Nino, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: , Deputy

cc:

of fund balance anticipated at the close of FY 2021-22 is \$300,000.

## BACKGROUND:

The [Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County](#) (AC5) was established in 1994 to advise the Board of Supervisors in matters and issues relevant to Arts and Culture; to advance the arts in a way that promotes communication, education, appreciation and collaboration throughout Contra Costa County; to preserve, celebrate, and share the arts and culture of the many diverse ethnic groups who live in Contra Costa County; to create partnerships with business and government; and to increase communications and understanding between all citizens through art. Most importantly, the mission of the Commission is to promote arts and culture as a vital element in the quality of life for all citizens of Contra Costa County.

The Arts and Culture Commission is to be composed of nine regularly appointed members (one representative from each of the five supervisorial districts and four at-large representatives) and one alternate. Appointments are for a four-year period with terms expiring on June 30 of alternating odd-numbered years. The Commission also includes two non-voting Youth Advisor seats.

In 2019, the Arts and Culture Commission completed a [Cultural Planning Prospectus](#) with the recommendation to develop a set of policy recommendations through collaborations and community partners for countywide cultural development. Calls for racial equity and social justice, particularly heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the need for AC5 to “recalibrate” its focus, shifting to a “community action plan highlighting the value of art by creating an updated Arts & Culture Prospectus for Contra Costa County that identifies a district art project.”

On March 22, 2021, the Family and Human Services Committee received a presentation on the Arts and Culture Commission’s recommendation to create the updated [Arts & Culture Prospectus for Contra Costa County](#), a precursor to a cultural plan. AC5 proposed to identify community stakeholders, hire a consulting firm to facilitate workshops, and present an updated Arts & Culture Prospectus that identified district art projects to the Board of Supervisors. The overall guiding principles for the Prospectus were to increase engagement, outreach and community awareness, highlight art resources, and conduct a community arts evaluation that identifies district art projects in need. The Family and Human Services (FHS) Committee of the Board of Supervisors expressed support for the development of an updated Prospectus and recommended a presentation to the Board of Supervisors. On May 18, 2021, the Board of Supervisors received a presentation on the County Arts and Culture Commission, including the proposal for development of an updated Arts & Culture Prospectus for Contra Costa County [PR. 2](#)).

## Status on Arts and Culture Commission Operations

Since September 2021, several AC5 commissioners and the managing director have submitted letters of resignation:

- September 27, 2021, former Chair Ben Miyaji (District II) resigned
- September 27, 2021, District III Commissioner Grant Taylor resigned
- September 28, 2021, District IV Commissioner Elizabeth Wood resigned; (Commissioner Dawn Lopshire was appointed to the District IV seat by the Board on January 11, 2022.)
- January 3, 2022, Chair Silvia Ledezma (District I) resigned
- January 4, 2022, Commissioner Joan D’Onofrio (At-large 3) resigned
- January 4, 2022, Managing Director Jenny Balisle resigned
- February 4, 2022, Commissioner Joe Arandia (District V) resigned

In addition, a Senior Deputy County Administrator who previously provided oversight to AC5 with assistance from a Senior Management Analyst, resigned from the County Administrator’s Office effective December 29, 2021.

Despite the above-mentioned resignations, the following Arts and Culture Commission programs will be continued through June 30, 2022 with support from contractors and the County Administrator’s Office:

- Poetry Out Loud (*completed--The Board of Supervisors recognized the participants and winners at its March 22, 2022 meeting.*)

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. All Contra Costa County High School students, grades 9-12, are invited to enter Poetry Out Loud. School winners advance to the County competition, then to the State competition, and ultimately to the National Finals.

- ABOUTFACE

Veterans and their family members are provided with a series of free self-portrait painting classes under the ABOUTFACE program for the purpose of addressing the needs of veterans and improving their lives through art programming.

- Art Passages

Art Passages is a changing exhibition program at the County Administration Building (1025 Escobar Street, 1st floor, Martinez) highlighting the Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County’s signature programs and initiatives. Exhibitions showcase artists, arts organizations, and diverse creative expressions representative of Contra Costa County.

- Youth Advisor

AC5 includes two non-voting Youth Advisor member seats for a high school or college student for a one-year term. (Only one seat is currently filled.) Youth Advisors perform individual Commission-approved service projects during their respective terms. The Youth Advisors are expected to attend all Commission meetings and other Commission activities as needed.

- Impact Project

With the California Arts Council's (CAC) grant funding, the County will develop and implement an Impact Project. Conversations are currently underway to confirm the project concept. The purpose of the CAC grant is to highlight systemic/structural racism, education, poverty, cultural/social justice, or environmental sustainability in response to COVID-19.

- Jump StArts

With support from the CAC Jump StArts planning grant, the County will develop the concept for an art project to serve justice-involved youth at Juvenile Hall. The strategy, actions, and timeline for implementation are in development.

### AC5 Budget Information

The FY 2021-22 Approved Budget for the Arts and Culture Commission includes \$104,030 in expenditures and \$37,000 in state aid. Through February 2022, a total of \$70,343 has been expended. An additional \$2,800 in state grant funding has been received; \$45,600 in state grant funds have been awarded but not yet received. CAO staff anticipates that Commission expenditures will total approximately \$100,000 for FY 21-22 based on ongoing expenditures by contractors, program related supplies, and other costs to continue the art signature programs through the end of the fiscal year. At the end of FY 21-22, staff expect that AC5 will have a fund balance of approximately \$50,000 primarily due to the managing director resignation, consultant contract savings, and under-utilization of the Impact Projects grant funds.

In addition, an annual Measure X investment of \$250,000 was approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 16, 2021 to support the following investment in arts and culture programs for the County. (These funds have been appropriated to the AC5 budget in FY 21-22, but they are not expected to be expended.)

#### \$100,000 Support Staff:

- Supplement existing funding for a full-time Managing Director and part-time communication and marketing support.

#### \$100,000 District Public Art Program:

- District Public Art Program: Contra Costa County's first public art program following Bay Area Counties (\$20,000 each District investment).
- Addresses District public art requests through an application process for artists and art organizations.

#### \$50,000 New Programs:

- Youth Advisor in each District: Expand equity and opportunity to every District.

- Arts Connection: Connect artists and art organizations for quarterly meetings for advocacy, opportunities, and data collection.
- AIRS (Artist-in-Residency in the School) pilot program: Place teaching artists in CCC schools to work with students to create art projects.

Staff notes that Board-established advisory boards such as AC5 do not typically manage County funds, particularly at the level of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

### **Phase One Interim Report for the Arts and Culture Prospectus**

In August 2021, the County executed a \$30,000 contract with Barbara Goldstein from Art Builds Community (ABC) consulting team to develop an updated *Arts and Culture Prospectus for Contra Costa County* intended to act as a “community action plan and identify art projects that are specific to the unique needs of the supervisorial districts.” The scope of work included project initiation and research, community outreach and engagement, and the creation and presentation of the Prospectus.

Between August 2021 and December 2021, the ABC consulting team interviewed available AC5 Commissioners (Y’Anad Burrell, Joan D’Onofrio, Sylvia Ledezma, Ben Miyaji, Elizabeth Wood, and Naina Shastri), the Managing Director, and staff from several County departments (County Administrator’s Office, Elections Division, Department of Conservation and Department) and the County Office of Education, and created a cultural asset map that shows the locations of arts facilities and activities in the County. In addition, the consulting team planned to conduct extensive public engagement including pop-up events, focus groups, and other equity-centric outreach.

However, since the Arts and Culture Commission was not able to meet between October 2021 and January 2022 due to lack of a quorum and multiple Commissioners and staff that resigned within a short period of time, collaboration with a subcommittee was not possible, along with other logistical challenges presented by the pandemic: not able to host in-person pop-up events, focus groups, and community workshops due to concerns regarding COVID-19. Thus, the consulting team was not able to conduct the community outreach and engagement activities as planned.

In January 2022, ABC submitted its *Interim Report for the Prospectus* to the County Administrator’s Office. In the Executive Summary of the report, the consulting team stated that “While the Commission supported the development of this prospectus, Commissioner dissent, along with resignations of Commissioners and staff, have left the consulting team without the guidance it needs to proceed.”

The Report also examines the structure of the Commission and provides examples in Appendixes 4 and 5 of how other counties in the Bay Area and other parts of the United States have structured their arts support agencies as public-private partnerships. In the

Bay Area, [Santa Clara County](#), [Marin County](#), [Santa Cruz County](#), and [Napa County](#) all have nonprofit agencies designated as Arts Councils for their counties.

Based on the research conducted to date, the ABC consulting team suggests the following next steps for the County:

- Determine which County officer will lead the rethinking of the County's art support.
- Dissolve the Arts and Culture Commission and create an interim strategy to oversee existing programs.
- Re-budget the remaining FY 2021-22 AC5 funds to commission the development of a 10-year Arts and Cultural Plan for Contra Costa County that includes broad public outreach and proposes a different Arts and Culture Commission structure.

There are some factors to consider when reviewing this Interim Report. First, creating a prospectus or plan requires having an active and engaged client, which was not available to the consultants during the time they developed the report. For example, the public outreach component of the work was dependent upon having a functioning Commission subcommittee, or, preferably, a broader steering or advisory committee that could confer with the consultants and help guide outreach. The AC5 Culture Prospectus ad hoc committee ceased functioning after one meeting due to commissioner resignations, and there is currently no commission leadership for the Prospectus nor staff to assist in forming a broader subcommittee.

Regarding the section of the Interim Report that analyzed facilities and institutions in each Supervisorial District, this section of the report was a cultural asset survey and not intended to reflect arts activities in each district. In an ideal planning situation, focus groups would be conducted along with public activities in each district. The cultural asset survey would serve as a starting point to identifying additional places where arts activities are occurring and other institutions that were not discovered. Finally, conferring with a broader range of County departments to assess opportunities for integrating the arts into other County activities is necessary and important. However, besides the few County departments mentioned above, no interviews with representatives from other County departments which might benefit from arts and culture programs were made available to the consultants. In conclusion, when the Interim Report was submitted, the Art Builds Community consultants expressed that developing a cultural plan or even completing work on a prospectus for a plan was both premature and infeasible at this time.

At the February 14, 2022 meeting of AC5 attended by Commissioners Beverly Kumar, Dawn Lopshire, Y'Anad Burrell, Lanita Mims and Alternate Naina Shastri, ABC made a presentation to the Commission regarding the Interim Report and received input from commissioners. AC5 Commissioners stated that they do not want the Commission to dissolve, rather they would like to discover what the issues have been and figure out how to resolve them. Commissioners stated that AC5 has a long history of supporting arts and culture in the county, and it would be unfortunate to dissolve the work that has been going on for many years after a 90-day observation in the middle of a pandemic.

Commissioners do not want the County to dismantle the work they have done and request that the County consider “rebooting” the Commission so that they can carry the important work forward.

At its [March 14, 2022 meeting](#), the Internal Operations (IO) Committee of the Board of Supervisors (Chair Burgis/Vice Chair Andersen) considered this matter and received input from the public. Staff presented the IO Committee with options for their consideration.

### **Option #1:**

Dissolve the Arts and Culture Commission and establish a public-private partnership Arts Council for Contra Costa County to oversee the administration of County art funds and programs. This option would provide the County the opportunity to leverage existing arts expertise and resources in the community within a nonprofit organization; it would allow the organization/Council to act as the State-Local Partnership (SLP) for Contra Costa County to compete for future California Arts Council grants; it would allow the Council to fundraise from other businesses/individuals/foundations; it would provide the Council with the ability and authority to administer County arts funds; and it would enable the Council to pull together various funding sources to maximize resources and efficiency.

Steps in this transition process would include:

- After direction from the Board of Supervisors, with input from AC5 commissioners, CAO staff develops and issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a nonprofit organization to be the designated public-private partnership Arts Council for the County and coordinate the provision of arts and cultural programs and services countywide.
- The organization selects/appoints a Manager to develop a plan to launch the Arts Council.
- County establishes a contract (with a budget) to support the Council; funding would be administered by the public-private partnership Arts Council to support and provide cultural and arts activities across the county. CAO staff would provide contract oversight.
- A nonprofit organization acting as the Arts Council for the County would include a Board of Directors and supporting staff within its organization to administer arts programs, write grant proposals, re-grant arts funds to other community-based organizations and individual artists, work with school districts for arts education, and seek cooperation with municipalities.
- The Arts Council will serve as a connector, investor, advocate, and leader for the arts and culture in Contra Costa County and be supported by a number of people and organizations including state and local government, school districts, private and public foundations, businesses and community members.
- The Board of Supervisors would dissolve AC5.



## Option #2:

Keep the current Arts and Culture Commission configuration as an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and move forward with the following actions:

- Fill Commissioner vacancies;
- Assign the Commission to a County department other than County Administration;
- Recruit and appoint a new contractor as full-time managing director through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process;
- Update Commission bylaws to better define the roles of commissioners, Managing Director, and County staff in the administration of County arts funds and programs;
- Train commissioners and the new Managing Director on advisory body functions and County fiscal policies and procedures for budget management.

At the IO Committee meeting, Chair Burgis pointed out some errors in the consultant report and described her challenges in filling her District seat vacancy on the Commission. Vice Chair Andersen expressed her disappointment in the disintegration of the Commission and her desire to focus on finding the best way to move forward. Vice Chair Andersen expressed a preference for Option 1 because it offers a fresh start. In addition, she liked the idea of a public/private partnership that can do more than what a public commission could do. Chair Burgis observed the problems that have arisen when County commissions strayed from their advisory role.

The following three people spoke in favor of Option 1:

- Silvia Ledezma (*written comments included in Attachment 5*)
- Jenny Balisle (*written comments included in Attachment 5*)
- Ben Miyaji commented about the high number of resignations from the Commission, few meetings, and flat funding.

Commissioner Lanita Mims-Beal commented that East County has a vibrant arts culture. She said she is also a member of the Women's Commission and cannot understand why these bodies cannot function as expected. Former managing director Roger Renn commented that Option 1 is not a 'silver bullet' but asked the County to appoint a diverse arts/culture steering committee to create a 10-year cultural plan to avoid creation of cultural deserts in lower income communities. ABC staff apologized for errors in the consultant report but explained that the resources and support were very limited and hindered information gathering.

The Committee decided to recommend Option 1 to the Board of Supervisors and directed County Administrator staff to forward the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for further consideration.

Attachment 1 is a current membership roster for the Arts and Culture Commission

Attachment 2 is a copy of the FY 21-22 Work Plan for the Arts and Culture Commission

Attachment 3 is the Interim Report for the Contra Costa County Arts and Culture Prospectus: Phase One

Attachment 4 is the current version of the Arts and Culture Commission bylaws

Attachment 5 includes public comments submitted to the IO Committee

### CLERK'S ADDENDUM

**Speakers: Jenny; Ben, former Chair AC5;**

The Board adopted Option #1 as outlined below: A) With input invited from throughout the County, including cities, education, non-profit organizations, and former AC5 commissioners, CAO staff will develop and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a nonprofit organization to be the designated public-private partnership Arts Council for the County and coordinate the provision of arts and cultural programs and services countywide; B) The organization will select/appoint a Manager to develop a plan to launch the Arts Council; C) The County will establish a contract (with a budget) to support the Council; funding would be administered by the public-private partnership Arts Council to support and provide cultural and arts activities across the county. CAO staff would provide contract oversight; D) A nonprofit organization acting as the Arts Council for the County would include a Board of Directors and supporting staff within its organization to administer arts programs, write grant proposals, re-grant arts funds to other community-based organizations and individual artists, work with school districts for arts education, and seek cooperation with municipalities; E) The Arts Council will serve as a connector, investor, advocate, and leader for the arts and culture in Contra Costa County and be supported by a number of people and organizations including state and local government, school districts, private and public foundations, businesses and community members; F) The Board of Supervisors would dissolve AC5.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Arts and Culture Commission Roster

Attachment 2: FY 21-22 Work Plan

Attachment 3: Interim Report for Arts and Culture Prospectus

Attachment 4: AC5 Bylaws

Attachment 5: Written Public Comments Submitted to IO Committee