

JOHN WAYNE AIRPORT ARTS COMMISSION
Airport Commission Room
3160 Airway Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Minutes of the Special Meeting with Teleconference

November 5, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Kim Le called the meeting to order at 9:39 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Chair Kim Le led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Kim Le, Vice Chair Victor Payan, Commissioner Daniel Winn

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT BY TELECONFERENCE: N/A

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Susan L. Petrella, Commissioner Mary-Christine Sungaila

STAFF PRESENT: Joel Aguilar, Eric Freed, Michelle Lai

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioners took some time to read through the minutes of the October 29th Special Meeting minutes.

Chair Le motioned to approve the minutes. Vice Chair Payan seconded, and the minutes of the October 29, 2025 Special Meeting of the JWA Arts Commission were approved.

2. COMMISSION UPDATES

A. COMMISSION GOALS MOVING FORWARD

The meeting began with brief introductions from Eric Freed, Deputy Airport Director, and Joel Aguilar, Customer Relations Manager, followed by quick re-introductions from the Commissioners. Michelle also summarized their work as the intern supporting the Arts Program in the past with Curator Heather Bowling to focusing on social media and visibility for the Arts Program and artists in the current transition with the curator vacancy.

Commissioner Winn inquired about Michelle's internship end date, to which she informed him it would be on Jan 9th. He followed up with asking about what the possibility of an extension would look like. Michelle shared that she and Heather had previously asked for an extension to her internship, which HR replied that unfortunately internships can't be extended, and the Arts Intern position was only approved for a year. Vice Chair Payan asks if it was possible to make a recommendation for the extension, and Joel reassured that he would look to ask for more information for these specific circumstances.

CURATOR REPLACEMENT

Commissioner Winn asked if there was a budget for additional employees for circumstances where the curator leaves, as it is both inefficient to have one Arts Program staff as well as a necessity to balance workload, as supported by his background and experience in similar line of work. Vice Chair Payan suggested to add this point as a goal for the commission to increase staffing for the Arts Program. There were shared concerns that with a new intern hire, they would have to start from scratch again, at a time where training the role is difficult with a vacant position or new, incoming curator.

Joel agreed that the Arts Program has become more robust than anticipated and needs additional employment and support. It was also agreed that Michelle's experience would be helpful transitioning with a new curator. Eric shared that with the airport on a hiring freeze, they would need to justify and propose additional staffing to the CEO's office to get approval. Vice Chair Payan suggested that the focus should

be on extending the internship first and then figuring out how or if it was possible to reallocate the budget while the curator position is vacant.

Chair Le asked about Joel's management and responsibilities, to which he shared that he himself has 16 direct reports, with the Arts Program having a lot more moving parts in comparison to other reports.

BUDGET

In reference to the budget, the fiscal year was confirmed to end July. Commissioner Winn asked if the government was profit or non-profit, and for the parameters to raise money for the program. Joel answered that the conversation of finances is very sensitive to the airport, and Eric chimed in that they would need to consult the airport attorneys.

Commissioner Winn explained the concept of a silent auction where artists get to exhibit their work while buyers purchase it at 100% of the value, as a suggestion of what could be done at the airport. In his experience with non-profits, Joel brought up the OC AirPaws program, where JWA partners with Orange County Animal Allies to bring trained therapy dogs to the airport. The program has installed donation boxes where the profits go back to the OC AirPaws program, which is the workaround to taking profit. Vice Chair Payan suggested this topic to be an action item for the next meeting, innovating within the rules to collect money for the Arts Program without it directly going to the airport. Commissioner Winn added that this process will remove the excuse of money or budget as a reason for hindrances in the Arts Program.

Other alternatives to using airport budget were to partner together with university art programs and student artwork as Vice Chair Payan suggested, or museums and galleries pay for installation and staff as in-kind donations, as Commissioner Winn suggested. Chair Le mentioned that the concept is similar to what was done with Chapman University previously in the Destination Gallery.

Vice Chair Payan expressed his desire to see the Little Saigon exhibit to happen, especially because that exhibit is in the Destination Gallery. Joel expressed his desire to support upcoming exhibits, but finances need to be put into consideration first before moving forward.

Commissioner Winn emphasized the immediate concern with the lack of a curator, to which Chair Le reminded the Commissioners that the ad hoc committee with both curators is ready to go, as we have all the collateral already.

It was noted that the transition with the previous curator was much smoother. Vice Chair Payan commented that Heather worked as both director and curator, to which Commissioner Winn expressed that it would be ideal, moving forward, if both were separate. The internship may not be sustainable to help with the transition, and there were concerns that if this issue was swept under the rug, it may not continue to be addressed.

Vice Chair Payan asked if the budget was "use it or lose it," to which Eric reassured that would not be a concern. The state of the budget for the future, however, will have to be discussed for the next fiscal year. Vice Chair Payan mentioned that there should be acknowledge for the value the Arts Program brings, with a focus on the relation between the Arts Program and JD Powers; even the dogs are looking at the art!

REPAIRS/ DEINSTALLATION

Staff agreed that with the exhibits down, this would be the best time to focus on repairs across the galleries. The main goal is to take down the current artwork and then shift to thinking about how to fill the cases without too many complications. Vice Chair Payan asked what the costs would look like working with institutions, which Joel replied that it would depend on complexity and installer costs.

Deinstallation for most Perceiving the Divine exhibits would be by December 10, while some works like the Pacific Symphony exhibit and Regolith would be extended indefinitely.

There were issues previously with the contract for glass repairs and scheduling, but with the deinstallation of the exhibits in the cases, it will be easier. Staff do anticipate that the repairs could take months. Commissioner Winn, concerned with how empty cases would reflect on the image of the airport and Arts Commission, suggested posters in the cases that mention anticipation for upcoming exhibits or information about the displays undergoing renovation. Joel mentioned that they could keep cohesiveness by using the same “progress is happening” phrase from other airport construction displays.

Commissioner Winn mentioned that he had contacts with artists that could replace Regolith if needed. He also asked what was preventing the Curator’s Collection from happening. Staff explained that there would need to be coordination with Crozier as well as a scope of work. The Commissioners offered to curate the space for the Curator’s Collection to happen during the interim without a curator at the airport, between Commissioner Winn’s experience and the ad hoc committee. The Commissioners will work with the same process with the loan agreements as before and put together a scope of work.

MURAL

The Commissioners asked for the progress on the mural was Heather emphasized needed progression in their last meeting with the Arts Commission. Joel answered that he had reached out to ARC and waiting on an updated file from the artist that met ARC’s required parameters. Vice Chair Payan requested an update for the next meeting.

Chair Le also suggested moving exhibits with Bower’s children art with OC Way or Arts on the Move which can be put anywhere. Joel said that a general layout and scope of work would be needed from them to move forward with it.

Commissioner Winn asked if there was a reason for Commissioner Petrella’s absence, to which it was speculated that it may be in relation to her disagreement (tensions) with Chair Le.

3. PROGRAM UPDATES

A. ONGOING PROJECTS AND REPAIRS

B. CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA MURAL INSTALLATION AND EVENT

4. UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS/ CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE EXHIBITIONS – AS TIME ALLOWS

Commission to consider and discuss future exhibition proposals, concepts, and submissions, vote for recommendation to JWA Administration.

A. VI SMITH GALLERIES

a. TERMINAL A: TBD
Month XX, 2026 – Month XX, 2026

b. TERMINAL B: TBD GLASS EXHIBITION
November 2025 – May 2026

c. TERMINAL C: TBD GROUP EXHIBITION
December 2025 – June 2026

- B. COMMUNITY FOCUS SPACE**
 - a. MARISSA SAYER SOLO SHOW – ARTIST PREVIEW (TBD)
TBD

- C. DESTINATION GALLERY**
 - a. A LITTLE SAIGON STORY EXHIBITION
TBD

5. CURRENT EXHIBITIONS – FOR REFERENCE

- D. VI SMITH GALLERIES**
 - a. Terminal A: Luciana Abait: Paths of Departure
July 18, 2025 –February 23, 2025
 - b. Terminal A: Regolith, an abstract sculpture exhibition
May 2025 – Ongoing
 - c. Terminal C: Perceiving the Divine group exhibition
Deinstalled December 5, 2025
- E. COMMUNITY FOCUS SPACE**
 - a. The Curator's Collection – rescheduled install
TBD
- F. DESTINATION GALLERY**
 - a. Pacific Symphony Exhibition
June 13, 2025 – Ongoing

6. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Other Business – None
Items of Interest from the Public – None

7. ADJOURNMENT OF PUBLIC MEETING Chair Le adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel Aguilar