



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA ARTS & CULTURE COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: April 14, 2026

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, City Hall, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Sarah Buckman, Xander Hazel, Barbara Hedlund, Robert White

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Abby Heras

STAFF PRESENT: Olivia Jovine, Rachel Storm

OTHERS PRESENT: Hannah Andresen (via telephone)

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Urbana Arts and Culture Commission was called to order at 4:30 P.M. by Chair Hedlund with a quorum declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Jovine offered the following amendment to the agenda under NEW BUSINESS: *Item 1 [Selection of Artist and Design for Downtown Urbana Mural] should be struck and should read "Reviews of qualified artists, discusses portfolios, and makes recommendations."*

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

No minutes were provided for approval.

D. PUBLIC INPUT

Chair Hedlund opened the Public Input portion of the meeting and Nancy Yeagle came to speak in support of her son, Langston Allston, one of the finalists to design the Parking Deck Mural. She mentioned that he was named as 2010's Alum to represent University High School's "Class of the Century". She also shared that he has good practice with using lifts and scaffolding and was reliable. No further public input was given.

E. COMMUNICATIONS

1. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Jovine gave an update on the decommissioning of “ICE POPS” (Craig Gray, Florida) and installation of “Heal Us” (Nicole Beck). Ms. Storm informed the commission that as Mr. Gray resides in Florida and is unable to remove this sculpture himself, it is therefore viable to have an agreement in writing that states it may be removed and disposed of by the city at the same time “Heal Us” is installed. A tentative date in July has been noted, but nothing has been officialized yet. More information will be presented as it comes.

- Murals on Glass: Ms. Jovine informed the commission that 2 new installations were set, with both located at Lincoln Square Mall.
- Boneyard Arts Festival Weekend was April 10-12.
- The Poet Laureate application selection: Ms. Storm noted that this was underway and will be announced at the May meeting.
- Arts Grants were still available, and the application period has not closed.

F. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

G. NEW BUSINESS

Olivia Jovine and Rachel Storm gave an update on what the mural selection process currently was. Ms. Jovine then noted that the Mural Process needed to be further clarified, and guided Commissioners to discuss the following: goals, their vision as it relates to the mural, and the qualities of the artists that they sought to reflect that vision. Ms. Jovine stated that no action needed to be taken at this time, this serves as a general discussion.

A discussion regarding the commissioners preferred selection of the artist, qualifications of each applicant, the overall goal, and the preliminary screening criteria ensued. Ms. Jovine explained that approximately 15 to 20 total artist submissions were initially received. Staff, along with technical expertise from Kelly White, the Executive Director of 40 North, narrowed the pool down to five finalists using specific parameters: restricting international entries, prioritizing domestic artists with a local or Illinois connection, and evaluating technical capacity to paint a large-scale exterior wall, including familiarity with lift operations and scaffolding.

Commissioners discussed potential additions to the overarching goals of the program, with an agreement from all the commissioners stating that prioritizing local artist connections should be formally integrated into the vision statement. Ms. Storm clarified that while geographic filtering helped establish the finalist group, criteria had not been explicitly weighted, leaving room for the Commission to assign value to specific factors in their recommendations.

Ms. Jovine highlighted that the selection process was still early and abstract, as the Commission was evaluating portfolios rather than site-specific artwork. She suggested recommending a top two or top three ranking rather than a single choice to maintain flexibility for further refinement, artist availability, and stakeholder input. Commissioner Hazel emphasized that community involvement, collaborative spirit, and mentorship were key qualities to seek in an artist, noting that Urbana’s identity centers around community.

The Commissioner reviewed the top-ranked artists, specifically Alexandria (Casey, IL) and Langston Austin. Commissioners expressed support for submitting the top two candidates to the building owner

and selection team, noting that they present distinct artistic directions, one focusing on human and community storytelling, and the other offering a more abstract or natural concept. Commissioner White noted a personal preference for introducing work that has not yet been seen in Urbana to foster visual diversity, while Commissioner Buckman reiterated the importance of evaluating how new murals complement existing public art in the downtown area.

Mr. White noted that standard artistic etiquette dictates selecting an artist before requiring a full design proposal, as asking artists to create uncompensated custom renderings is discouraged in the art community. Ms. Jovine agreed and added that an interim communication step could be established to confirm artist's availability and discuss general scope with the review committee before entering the design phase.

Ms. Jovine affirmed that the selected artist would work alongside a mural review committee, the building owner, 40 North, and local stakeholders to finalize the design before installation. Commissioners identified key overarching qualities they hope the mural will embody, including a strong sense of place, reflecting Urbana's unique identity and diverse community, and serving as a landmark that attracts visitors downtown.

Ms. Jovine concluded the discussion by noting that staff would present further details on the evolving mural review framework at the next meeting and invited Commissioners to submit any additional feedback via email.

H. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Jovine noted that the City of Urbana was in the process of having a Housing Needs Survey done which is reflective of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and enables information to be obtained by those who complete it that would not otherwise be noted on a census report. With this data, the city can then better develop and inform policy that meets the marketing gaps between the census report and development within Urbana. It is not limited to near-future timelines; it is one step of many within the housing and development within the city.

I. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Hillary L. Ortiz
Executive Assistant