



## CITY OF URBANA ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION

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**DATE:** Tuesday, July 14, 2026  
**TIME:** 4:30 PM  
**PLACE:** 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

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### AGENDA

- A. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum
  - B. Changes to the Agenda
  - C. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
  - D. Public Input
  - E. Communications
    - [1.](#) Staff Report
  - F. Old Business
  - G. New Business
  - H. Announcements
- Adjournment

### PUBLIC INPUT

The City of Urbana welcomes Public Input during open meetings of the City Council, the City Council's Committee of the Whole, City Boards and Commissions, and other City-sponsored meetings. Our goal is to foster respect for the meeting process, and respect for all people participating as members of the public body, city staff, and the general public. The City is required to conduct all business during public meetings. The presiding officer is responsible for conducting those meetings in an orderly and efficient manner.

All City meetings are broadcast on Urbana Public Television and live-streamed on the web. Details on how to watch are found on the UPTV webpage located at <https://www.urbanail.gov/executive-department/page/urbana-public-television>.

Public Input will be taken in the following ways:

### **Email Input**

Public comments must be received prior to the closing of the meeting record (at the time of adjournment unless otherwise noted) at the following: **Rachel.Storm@UrbanaIL.Gov**. **The subject line of the email must include the words “PUBLIC INPUT” and the meeting date.** Emailed public comments labeled as such will be incorporated into the public meeting record, with personal identifying information redacted. Copies of emails will be posted after the meeting minutes have been approved.

### **Written Input**

Any member of the public may submit their comments addressed to the members of the public body in writing. If a person wishes their written comments to be included in the record of Public Input for the meeting, the writing should so state. Written comments must be received prior to the closing of the meeting record (at the time of adjournment unless otherwise noted).

Verbal Input Protocol for Public Input is one of respect for the process of addressing the business of the City. Obscene or profane language, or other conduct that threatens to impede the orderly progress of the business conducted at the meeting is unacceptable. Public comment shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes per person. The Public Input portion of the meeting shall total no more than two (2) hours, unless otherwise shortened or extended by majority vote of the public body members present. The presiding officer or the city clerk or their designee, shall monitor each speaker's use of time and shall notify the speaker when the allotted time has expired. A person may participate and provide Public Input once during a meeting and may not cede time to another person, or split their time if Public Input is held at two (2) or more different times during a meeting. The presiding officer may give priority to those persons who indicate they wish to speak on an agenda item upon which a vote will be taken. The presiding officer or public body members shall not enter into a dialogue with citizens. Questions from the public body members shall be for clarification purposes only.

Public Input shall not be used as a time for problem solving or reacting to comments made but, rather, for hearing citizens for informational purposes only. In order to maintain the efficient and orderly conduct and progress of the public meeting, the presiding officer of the meeting shall have the authority to raise a point of order and provide a verbal warning to a speaker who engages in the conduct or behavior proscribed under “Verbal Input”. Any member of the public body participating in the meeting may also raise a point of order with the presiding officer and request that they provide a verbal warning to a speaker. If the speaker refuses to cease such conduct or behavior after being warned by the presiding officer, the presiding officer shall have the authority to mute the speaker's microphone and/or video presence at the meeting. The presiding officer will inform the speaker that they may send the remainder of their remarks via e-mail to the public body for inclusion in the meeting record.

### **Accommodation**

If an accommodation is needed to participate in a City meeting, please contact the Arts & Culture Coordinator at least 48 hours in advance so that special arrangements can be made using one of the following methods:

Phone: (217) 384-2444

Email: Rachel.Storm@UrbanaIL.Gov



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

### Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the Month– July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Prepared by Rachel Lauren Storm, Interim Arts and Culture Coordinator

#### Introduction

The following Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report describes activities of the Arts & Culture Program for the Urbana Arts & Culture Commission. The report includes information regarding projects that are in progress, recent requests and recommendations from the public, staff activities, and upcoming events.

#### Staffing Update

- **Part-time Interim Arts and Culture Coordinator, Rachel Storm**

Dr. Rachel Lauren Storm is currently serving as the part-time Interim Arts & Culture Coordinator for the City of Urbana's Arts & Culture Program. This role builds on her previous leadership within the City of Urbana's arts initiatives, where she developed and implemented programs that expanded access to the arts and supported local artists and organizations. Her initial Interim Arts and Culture Coordinator appointment was until June 30<sup>th</sup>, but has been renewed. The City of Urbana plans to fill the full-time Arts and Culture Coordinator position as part of overall hiring planning for the City of Urbana, and Rachel will continue to support the program until that time.

- **Welcome new UAC Commissioner, Sheila Parinas**

The Urbana Arts and Culture Commission welcomes new commissioner Sheila Parinas, a registered nurse, experienced grant reviewer, and longtime advocate for arts and culture whose background bridges healthcare, nonprofit leadership, and community engagement. Parinas currently serves as a Registered Nurse at Carle Health and brings more than a decade of experience reviewing federal grants for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A former board member and executive producer for Station Theatre and current member of the Chicago Lyric Opera Young Professionals Board, her appointment adds valuable expertise in nonprofit governance, grant evaluation, and arts advocacy to the Commission.

- **Urbana Arts and Culture Commission Vacancies**

The Urbana Arts and Culture Commission currently has vacancies and encourages community members with interests in the arts, cultural programming, education, event planning, neighborhood organizing, business, or related fields to apply for service. More information about the Commission and the City's Board and Commission application process is available through the City of Urbana website.

## Updates on Current Projects

- Urbana Arts Grants:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program received nearly 80 applications in this 2026 cycle. The program completed its jury process last month for Tier I, II, and Arts in the Schools grants. A total of \$90,000 was awarded to artists, arts organizations, and festival presenters for creative projects that enrich the lives of Urbana residents and visitors in the 2026 cycle. A full list of awardees is attached to this month's staff report.
- SNEAK PEEK Celebration:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program held its annual grant awardee celebration at Gallery Art Bar on June 18<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-8pm featuring a recognition of the 2026 Urbana Arts Grantees and a showcase what's in store in the coming year for the Urbana arts and culture scene. Staff particularly want to thank commissioners Barbara Hedlund, Xander Hazel, and Ty Lewis for their attendance and support, as well as Matthis Hemlick of Plant Mode, who performed DJ music (Beats by Otter) as part of the reception.
- Urbana Poet Laureate Program:** The application period for the 2026–2027 Urbana Poet Laureate Program has concluded, and staff are pleased to announce the selection of Ninetta DeBoni as the 2026–2027 Urbana Poet Laureate. Following a competitive review process, DeBoni was selected to serve a one-year term as an ambassador for poetry, language, and creative expression in Urbana. During their term, they will engage residents through public readings, literary programming, workshops, and community-based projects that promote poetry and encourage creative participation throughout the community. DeBoni is an Urbana-based poet, writer, and collage artist whose work has been published in *Prairie Light Review*, *Tributaries*, and SEZ Publishing's *Ghost Stories* anthologies. They were the recipient of the 2023 Arthur W. Hinnners & Louise Hinnners Siple Prize, and their poem "Crystallized Repentance" is featured on Poets.org. DeBoni currently works as a publication assistant for a nonprofit research organization and is an active member of the Champaign-Urbana literary community through the CU Poetry Workshop and Gallery Art Bar's open mic series.
- Poet Laureate Inauguration Celebration:** The Poet Laureate Inauguration Celebration was held on June 16, 2026, from 6–8 p.m. at Analog Wine Library. The event celebrated the newly appointed Poet Laureate and recognized poetry's role in fostering civic dialogue, creativity, and community connection in Urbana. Staff particularly want to thank Mayor DeShawn Williams for his thoughtful remarks, as well as past Poet Laureates, Will Reger, Ja Nelle Davenport Pleasure, and Angie Patton and CU Poetry Group Co-Founder, Jim O'Brien. Their statements and support helped make for a wonderful program. Staff thank commissioners Xander Hazel and Abby Heras and Community Development staff for their presence. Inaugurated Poet Laureate, Ninetta DeBoni spoke at the mic and shared their excitement for this next term.

- **115 Main Mural Project:** Following a competitive Call for Artists process, the Mural Review Committee recommends the selection of José Vazquez as the artist for the proposed mural at 115 W. Main Street. Staff will begin working with the artist on the design development phase, which will include collaboration with the property owner, project partners, and community stakeholders. A final mural concept will be presented to the Commission for review at a future meeting prior to fabrication and installation. Project completion is anticipated in late summer/early fall 2026.
- **Urbana Sculpture Project:** The installation of *Heal Us* by artist Nicole Beck was successfully completed on June 12, 2026, at the Boneyard Creek Crossing near the corner of Race and Griggs Streets in downtown Urbana. Sponsored by the Urbana Arts and Culture Program in partnership with 40 North, the sculpture is the newest addition to Urbana's growing public art collection. Staff extend their appreciation to the Urbana Public Works Department and project partners for their collaboration in completing the installation. *Ice Pops* was de-installed and disposed of as per contract and with artist, Craig Gray's recommendation.
- **PostMark Urbana:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program and 40 North 88 West continued the 2026 PostMark Urbana series with two additional themed events in downtown Urbana. On June 6, "Color!" featured live mandala painting by Courtney Dennis, bubble activities with Joyful Bubbles, artmaking with Uniting Pride, music, family activities, and a color-themed scavenger hunt that encouraged visitors to explore participating downtown businesses. On July 11, "Theater Arts!" celebrated the performing arts through live performances, children's activities, and a costume and prop scavenger hunt featuring materials from Krannert Center for the Performing Arts displayed throughout downtown businesses. Both events activated downtown Urbana through free, family-friendly arts programming while supporting local artists, businesses, and community partners.
- **Pop-up Concerts with Urbana Pops Orchestra:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program partnered with the Urbana Pops Orchestra to present its annual summer concert, *From Sea to Shining Symphony*, on June 27 at Urbana High School. Conducted by Stephen L. Larson, the standing-room-only performance featured the Urbana Pops Orchestra alongside 20 student musicians, guest vocalist Makynna Rice and the Urbana Park District Youth Summer Theatre cast of *Frozen*, pianist Jason Yan, Mayor DeShawn Williams as narrator for *Lincoln Portrait*, and a community choir performing with the orchestra. The concert concluded another successful season of partnership between the Urbana Arts and Culture Program and the Urbana Pops Orchestra, providing free, high-quality musical experiences for the community.
- **Urbana Fall Fusion Festival:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program, in partnership with 40 North 88 West, will present the fourth annual Urbana Fall Fusion Festival on October 10, 2026, in downtown Urbana. The free community celebration will feature live music curated by the C-U Folk & Roots Festival, live art demonstrations, performances,

children's activities, interactive experiences, and seasonal attractions. The festival continues to activate downtown Urbana through collaborative arts programming that highlights local artists, organizations, businesses, and community partners.

- **Downtown Festival Season:** Staff continue to coordinate with community partners in preparation for a robust fall festival season in downtown Urbana. Confirmed event dates include the Pygmalion Festival (September 24–27), the C-U Folk & Roots Festival (October 8–10), the Urbana Fall Fusion Festival (October 10), the C-U Jazz Festival (October 15–18), and CU Pride Fest (October 17). Collectively, these events are expected to attract thousands of visitors to downtown Urbana while supporting local businesses, artists, musicians, and cultural organizations through a diverse slate of arts, music, and community programming.

*Arts & Culture Commissioners and the public are encouraged to get involved with the Urbana Arts & Culture Program's ongoing events and initiatives.*