

**ASHLAND PUBLIC ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
August 20, 2026**

4:30 – 6:00 p.m. – Siskiyou Room – 51 Winburn Way

These are DRAFT minutes until approved by the committee.

I. Call to Order (4:30)

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM.

Present were Chair Susan MacCracken Jain, Jay Bowen, Kate Phillips, Heather Warden, Tish Way, Russell Copley, Monique Abbonizio, and staff liaison Jordan Rooklyn.

Also present were guests Peter Finkle, and Mariane Rowland.

1. Welcome & Announcements
2. Quorum confirmation

A quorum was established. Rooklyn requested that members state their names for the benefit of the recording clerk. Way corrected that her first name should be 'Tish' in the minutes, and Phillips corrected for her new last name moving forward.

Bowen read the Land and Labor Acknowledgments.

3. Land Acknowledgment - We acknowledge and honor the aboriginal people on whose ancestral homelands we work- the Iikirakutsum Band of the Shasta Nation, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here today. We denounce the egregious acts of the colonizers and government and recognize the horrific impacts that still exist today. We honor the first stewards in the Rogue Valley and the lands we love and depend on: Tribes with ancestral lands in and surrounding the geography of the Ashland Watershed include the original past, present and future indigenous inhabitants of the Shasta, Takelma and Athabaskan people. We also recognize and acknowledge the Shasta village of K'wakhakha - "Where the Crow Lights" - that is now the Ashland City Plaza.
4. Labor Acknowledgment - We also pause to recognize and acknowledge the labor upon which our country, state, and institutions are built. We remember that our country is built on the labor of enslaved people who were kidnapped and brought to the U.S. from the African continent and recognize the continued contribution of their survivors. We also acknowledge all immigrant labor, including voluntary, involuntary, trafficked, forced, and undocumented peoples who contributed to the building of the country and continue to serve within our labor force. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor. To the people who contributed this immeasurable work and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather today. It is our collective responsibility to critically examine these histories, to repair harm, and to honor, protect, and sustain their contribution to our society.

II. Approval of Minutes (4:35)

1. Minutes from the regular meeting on July 16, 2026 (see agenda packet).

Way asked that her name "Patricia Way" to be corrected to "Tish Way" throughout the minutes and moving forward. Kate Womack also asked to be recognized with her new last name as Kate Phillips moving forward.

Phillips moved to approve the minutes as amended to change "Patricia Way" to "Tish Way." Bowen seconded the motion. All ayes. Motion passed.

III. Public Forum (4:35)

Finkle addressed the committee regarding the City Council's directive requiring all committee and subcommittee meetings to be video recorded and posted publicly. He argued the requirement was legally unsupported and impractical, noting that subcommittees do not make decisions but only bring recommendations to the full committee, and that the flexible, informal nature of subcommittee meetings makes mandatory recording burdensome.

Rooklyn clarified that video recording is not a state mandate, but a policy choice made by the City Council, and that the requirement takes effect September 1st. Committee members, individually or as a body, are welcome to submit comments to the City Council.

Committee discussion included concern that the recording requirement may hinder the committee's productivity and deter volunteer participation, particularly for subcommittees that meet flexibly and frequently. Discussion also included what legal obligations applied to members personally and what consequences could follow from non-compliance. An informal "temperature check" confirmed no committee member supported the new video policy as applied to this body.

Rooklyn clarified that members attending by Zoom may turn off their cameras, though a recording must still be made, and MacCracken Jain indicated she would raise the committee's concerns at the upcoming Committees and Commissions Conversation ("CoCo Convo") on the following Friday.

IV. Liaison Reports (4:40)

1. Meeting schedule

MacCracken Jain confirmed the committee has returned to a monthly meeting schedule, which was welcomed. She noted the committee currently has two vacant seats and encouraged outreach to prospective members. Specific names raised included Xavier Penetary, who had reportedly applied approximately eight months prior without receiving a response, and Kristen Clark of the New Place Festival, with whom follow-up had not yet occurred. The Chair committed to pursuing both contacts.

2. Guanajuato Heart: Confirmation of permanent installation

MacCracken Jain noted that City Council approval for the permanent installation of the Guanajuato Heart sculpture had not yet been placed on the council agenda. Rooklyn confirmed there is no installation cost, as city staff would perform the work, with only a plaque cost anticipated and committed to placing the item on a forthcoming council agenda.

Rooklyn also reported that DuQuenne, the committee's council liaison, was unable to attend due to a conflict with the Transportation Advisory Committee meeting, and shared about DuQuenne's concept of designating Exit 14 as an Ashland "Gateway District" and interest in public art investment in that area.

V. Discussion & Decision Items (4:50)

1. Traffic Signal Boxes

A. Current updates and funding request (Finkle)

Finkle reported that several boxes are in active stages of production:

- The YMCA box (Ashland Street and Tolman Creek Road) is awaiting ODOT permits before painting can begin, expected in September.
- The box near the fire department is scheduled, with the artist meeting fire department staff the following Monday and community participation planned.
- The box near the Astro gas station is being coordinated with nearby businesses and youth for community involvement, also targeting September.
- The library box is on hold following a family emergency affecting the selected artist; the subcommittee is awaiting word on whether she can proceed in the coming months or spring.
- Central Art Supply in Medford has renewed its discount arrangement: 15% on Chroma paints and 13% on Golden paints for Ashland public art projects.

Rooklyn added that a request has been submitted to open additional signal boxes at Exit 14.

B. Process Simplification (Rooklyn)

Rooklyn proposed establishing a spending threshold of \$250 below which the staff liaison may authorize expenditures without requiring a full committee vote, in order to streamline tasks such as graffiti cleaning. The committee expressed unanimous agreement.

C. Graffiti problem (discussion)

Traffic signal box painted by Jessica Lee Findleton near corner of Mountain Ave. and Siskiyou Blvd. Photos before and after graffiti tag were taken May 4, 2026 and June 27, 2026 respectively.

The committee discussed that at least two signal boxes have been tagged, with one box near the high school ("Hello, My Name Is Art") graffitied on a recurring basis. Substantive discussion was deferred due to time constraints.

Rooklyn asked that committee members email her directly whenever graffiti is observed so that a facilities work order can be placed promptly. The committee was also informed that the city uses VandalGuard coating and the companion VandalClean product on its infrastructure, compatible with the boxes' existing treatment.

The committee also engaged in a broader discussion regarding the possibility of allowing private sponsors to fund the painting of additional signal boxes to accelerate the program. The Signal Box Subcommittee reflected that subcommittee members had reservations about introducing sponsorship, primarily around the risk of compromising the community-based selection process and creating a financial mechanism the committee is not equipped to manage. Committee discussion included that a sponsor could contribute funds without altering the vetting, design selection, or governance process, effectively adding resources without changing the program's character.

Abbonizio noted that any sponsorship arrangement would also need to account for ongoing maintenance costs. The committee reached general agreement in principle that the process itself need not change under a sponsorship model, but that a formal proposal with more detail is needed before any decision is made.

The subcommittee was directed to develop a proposal. MacCracken Jain also committed to raising the question of business sponsorship of public art generally with the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and noted the Chamber's existing role in receiving donations for the Playwrights Walk as a potential model.

2. Year of Public Art: Family Celebration of Public Art Proposal, Brochure update (Susan)

MacCracken Jain deferred substantive discussion of this item to the September meeting, noting it connects to the strategic plan discussion.

3. Strategic Plan -- 'Plan for a Plan' discussion and vote (Susan, Jordan)

MacCracken Jain presented a draft "Plan on a Page" framework, synthesizing the committee's prior strategic planning workshops into a who/what/where/how structure intended to serve as the foundation for a formal strategic plan. Key themes emerging from earlier workshops included a democratization of public art, broad community engagement, and a particular focus on families and children, with art positioned as an accessible and inclusive civic experience rather than an elite or gallery-centric one. MacCracken Jain noted this framework would also directly inform the committee's annual work plan submission to City Council in December, and expressed that the timing provides an opportunity to produce a more intentional and rigorous work plan than in prior years.

Bowen noted long-standing interest in a community mural program, citing Medford's approach of city-facilitated spaces, arts commission artist selection, and artist-led execution as a model. She offered to draft an application framework based on prior research and asked that murals be added to the September agenda. The committee was enthusiastic. It was noted that the committee's current budget of approximately \$27,000–\$30,000 could potentially fund such a program without waiting for external grants. Abbonizio suggested the committee consider holding an informal workshop session to collectively revisit the strategic vision with the current, somewhat changed membership, and to explore new ideas such as interactive or textile-based public art.

Rooklyn and MacCracken Jain affirmed that developing a project matrix aligned with strategic focus areas is consistent with the next phase of the planning process and indicated a working session could be scheduled, in late fall. Copley observed that the strategic framework will also serve as a valuable tool for grant writing, providing the focused, purpose-driven language that funders need to see in a proposal.

VI. Ongoing Updates / Sponsored Initiatives (5:40)

1. Pugh Mural

MacCracken Jain reported that negotiations with JPMorgan Chase's corporate risk management team continue, with progress being made primarily on insurance matters. The item is expected to be resolved soon.

2. Playwrights Walk

The committee discussed recent publicity, including outreach regarding a story in development by an Oregonian reporter who reached out recently. Ten plaques are currently in development and expected to be completed before year-end. Two plaques are ready to cast; at least three more are expected to be ready by early September, when casting will resume following the foundry operator's travel. MacCracken Jain elaborated that an upcoming plaque is intended for prominent placement on the Ashland City Plaza in direct connection to the Land Acknowledgment.

A. Publicity Links:

- <https://kobi5.com/news/ashland-playwrights-walk-celebrates-citys-art-and-theater-history-312838/>
- <https://www.ashlandoregon.gov/m/newsflash/Home/Detail/544>
- <https://ashland.news/peter-finkle-playwrights-walk-adds-six-new-plaques/>
- <https://theashlandchronicle.com/ashlands-playwrights-walk-comes-to-life-with-public-art/>

3. Story Maps

A. Links:

- ashlandoregon.gov/playwrightswalk
- ashlandoregon.gov/publicart

No discussion was recorded beyond the reference links included in the agenda.

4. BlackLight Sculpture

The committee noted that the sculpture is progressing and available to view at the Langford studio.

5. Mural Fest

Phillips volunteered to follow up with Jared regarding the status of the prior year's Mural Fest donation and to determine what process exists for formally accepting it into the city's public art inventory. Rooklyn confirmed that formal City Council acceptance is required for works to be added to the public art inventory and asked to be copied on any follow-up correspondence.

VII. Meeting Planning (5:50)

The committee reflected on its work in previous years and discussed the upcoming work plan presentation to the City Council in December. The September agenda is expected to include: the mural program proposal (Bowen), signal box sponsorship proposal (Subcommittee), Year of Public Art / Family Celebration update, and continued strategic plan development. A future working session on the strategic plan was discussed for a date to be determined, with November noted as a challenging month due to holidays.

VIII. Adjournment (6:00)

1. Next Meeting: September 17, 2026

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:00 PM.