



LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITY LEADERS GATHER TO CELEBRATE NEW COUNTY COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Convening Timed to Help Commemorate Arts, Culture and Creativity Month

SAN DIEGO – April 26, 2023 – On April 25, arts leaders and County elected officials convened at the San Diego County Administration Center to celebrate the first meeting of the newly formed **San Diego County Arts and Culture Commission**. Established in June of 2022 by the Board of Supervisors, the Commission is responsible for promoting greater cultural equity, access, and inclusion; championing the arts as essential to daily life by investing in a vibrant arts community; shaping innovative cultural policy; and building public awareness of the value and benefits of the arts and cultural diversity.

Wednesday marked the first meeting of the 13 volunteer Commissioners appointed by the Board of Supervisors. They represent the wide reach of the County and represent all six districts. It will be supported by Giang Meyers, Program Manager, Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs. Also on hand was Caroline Smith, Director, Economic Development and Government Affairs, County of San Diego.

The newly appointed Commissioners are Monica Hernandez, Lucas O'Connor, Renée Richetts, Ladan Akbarnia, Jay Bell, Felicia Shaw, Bob Lehman, Mary Perhacs and Jim Gilliam. One additional commissioner will be appointed at a later date. Three youth members include Ever Parmely-Rose, Ada Shido and Natalia Ventura.

There is already a strong network of vibrant and effective arts commission across the County. In addition to the City of San Diego Commission for Arts & Culture, there are agencies in places like La Mesa, Coronado, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside and Chula Vista.

“Our sincere thanks to County Supervisors for moving this initiative forward. Arts, Culture and Creativity Month is a perfect time to recognize the value of local arts agencies to help put tax dollars to work and manage the public investment in the arts. It reaps dividends we all can share,” said newly named Commissioner Bob Lehman. Lehman also Chairs the San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition and is Director of the San Diego Museum Council.

The Commission will explore measures the county can take to directly support the arts, including the potential use of county properties as workspaces for local artists. It is also tasked with examining how to increase equity in arts, noting that arts are some of the first programs cut from schools during budget reductions, and that low-income and communities of color “have historically used arts and culture to navigate and survive systemic racism and oppression.”

Pictured from Left to Right: Renée Richetts, Jim Gilliam, Jay Bell, Ladan Akbarnia, Felicia Shaw, Bob Lehman, Lucas O'Connor, Monica Hernandez, Ada Shido (youth) and Natalia Ventura (youth.)

PHOTOS BY Ken Jacques

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Media Contact: Toni Robin, tr@trprsandiego.com

858 483 3918