



CITY OF NOVATO
PARKS & RECREATION

Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Advisory Commission

REGULAR MEETING

Minutes

Thursday, March 13, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Larsen at 6:00 PM.

Commissioners Present: Dennis Bentley, Erin Lacey, Beverly Winsor, Zachary Schmechel, Emily Larsen

Commissioners Absent: Suzanne Crow, Mavi Pilloton, Betsy Ricketts, Nancy Weber

Staff Present: Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Katie Gauntlett; Community Services Division Manager, Drew Bendickson, and Recreation Division Manager Alexandra Kambur.

B. APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentley and seconded by Commissioner Lacey, the Commission voted **5-0-0-4** to approve the final agenda.

Ayes: Bentley, Lacey, Winsor, Schmechel, Larsen

Noes:

Abstain:

Absent: Crow, Pilloton, Ricketts, Weber

Motion Carried

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Lauren Vreeland Long

D. CONSENT ITEMS

D.1. Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes from January 9, 2025.

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Winsor and seconded by Commissioner Bentley, the Commission voted **5-0-0-4** to approve the consent calendar.

Ayes: Bentley, Lacey, Winsor, Schmechel, Larsen

Noes:

Abstain:

Absent: Crowe, Pilloton, Ricketts, Weber.

Motion Carried

E. UNFINISHED AND OTHER BUSINESS

None

F. GENERAL BUSINESS

F.1. Review utility art box art submissions and consider making a recommendation to the Novato City Council to approve up to 7 submissions for the Utility Art Box Program Led by the Leadership Novato Team Big Rock Ridge.

Team Big Rock Ridge of the Leadership Novato Class of 2025 presented an overview of their volunteer project, a City of Novato beautification initiative focused on enhancing the downtown area. The Team shared that as part of their planning process, they researched successful beautification efforts in other jurisdictions and collaborated with Novato Public Works Department to identify seven City-owned utility boxes along Grant Avenue that would be suitable for artistic enhancement. Team Big Rock Ridge developed and proposed a utility box art concept that was reviewed and approved by the Recreation, Cultural and Community Services (RCCS) Commission on November 21, 2024, and then by the Novato City Council on December 3, 2024.

Team Big Rock Ridge explained the "Call for Artist" process, which included promotion through various platforms: the City of Novato e-newsletter, City of Novato press release, City of Novato website, City of Novato social media platforms, NUSD's electronic flyer distribution service called "PeachJar," through a Novato Chamber of Commerce e-blast, and added to the Novato Chamber of

Commerce's weekly newsletter. The Team indicated that they also reached out to artists at Marin School of the Arts, MOCA, and the Museum of the American Indian.

Team Big Rock Ridge explained that artists were encouraged to draw inspiration from natural landscapes, cultural moments, historical narratives and community spirit. To ensure the project's long-term success, they explained that each of the artists signed a contract which includes maintenance provisions and contact information so that they could be called back to assist with touch-ups that might be needed in the future. Additionally, the Team explained that the utility boxes would be sanded and primed prior to artist painting, and that the final artwork would be coated in an anti-graffiti coating. The Team noted that the typical lifespan of utility art is 3-5 years and recommended that the City of Novato evaluate artwork every 3 years, and as needed. Team Big Rock Ridge shared that the Rotary Club of Novato had generously agreed to volunteer their time to sand and prime the utility boxes and that primer would be donated by Pini Hardware.

Team Big Rock Ridge explained that a total of thirteen artwork submissions were received, and that after careful review, they were recommending seven for the utility art boxes along Grant Avenue. Each of the seven art submissions were carefully reviewed and chosen based on the meaningful and thoughtful connections they had to Novato. The team explained that they matched the artwork to specific utility box locations based on thematic connection and visibility considerations. The Team explained that artwork that was not selected as part of this process could be held in reserve for future projects. Team Big Rock Ridge then provided an overview of their recommendations for the Commission's consideration:

- Honor Henningsen – Grant & Sixth
- Frances McCorkle – Grant & Seventh
- Lauren Burke – De Long & Reichert
- Eleni Kelley – Grant & Reichert (next to Dr. Insomniacs)
- Sara Paculdo – Grant & Redwood
- Dhyanis Carniglia – Grant & First
- Ellen Lovelidge – Grant & Reichert (next to Druids Hall)

One member of Team Big Rock Ridge was not supportive of Honor Henningsen's artwork due to the inclusion of the Pride flag and raised concerns about the potential for vandalism. This team member expressed their dissatisfaction with the overall decision of Team Big Rock Ridge to recommend that Honor Henningsen's artwork be selected for the downtown beautification project.

Vice Chair Schmechel thanked Team Big Rock Ridge for spearheading this beautification project.

Commissioner Winsor expressed interest in artwork submissions that highlighted Novato's schools. The Team indicated that one of the artwork criteria was to avoid

text – as the art will deteriorate over time and fine text may not legible long-term. They indicated that one submission highlighting elementary schools was not recommended for that reason.

Commissioner Lacey disclosed that she was appointed by Leadership Novato as an advisor to Team Big Rock Ridge but was not involved in art procurement or review and had no personal interest in the selections. Commissioner Lacey asked for clarification in the artwork selection process. Team Big Rock Ridge indicated that the group met together in-person to review each application and artwork submission and then engaged in a ranked choice voting process to narrow down the group recommendation.

The Commission discussed risk of graffiti and other wear and tear that may appear on the utility boxes, Katie Gauntlett, PRCS Director, indicated that all boxes would be covered in an anti-graffiti coating to help preserve the art underneath. Gauntlett indicated that Novato Public Works Staff are familiar with the anti-graffiti coating and is experienced in graffiti removal. She explained that Public Works will promptly respond to graffiti on City property. Team Big Rock Ridge added that if there was any damage to the artwork, the artists would be contacted and asked to come back and repaint or adjust the piece, as is stated in the maintenance provision.

The Commission discussed Honor Henningsen's artwork submission and the inclusion of the Pride Flag in relation to the placement of the American Flag. Henningsen was present during the RCCS meeting and indicated that they were amenable to changing the placement of the Pride Flag to ensure compliance with US Flag Code guidelines.

Public Comment:

- Allison Skinner

Commission Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentley and seconded by Chair Larsen the Commission voted **5-0-0-4** to accept the art work submissions as recommended by Team Big Rock Ridge with modification to the flag placement on #7 to be overseen by Parks and Recreation Community Services.

Ayes: Bentley, Lacey, Winsor, Schmechel, Larsen

Noes:

Abstain:

Absent: Crow, Pilloton, Ricketts, Weber

G. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

G.1. Staff Updates

Recreation Division Manager, Alexandra Kambur presented department updates highlighting upcoming programs, activities and special events.

Kambur shared that the Summer 2025 Activity Guide was live and available online at www.novatofun.org, listing all the fun activities, camps, and events happening this summer. Kambur explained that while summer camp registration is now open, registration for summer swim season passes, summer swim lessons and summer gymnastics classes will open on Tuesday, May 6 after Staff has had a chance to better gauge part-time Staffing availability.

Kambur highlighted summer camp offerings including: Camp ton-of-Fun, Camp ton-of-fun Minis, All Sports Camp, Gymnastics Half and Full Day Camps, and Junior Guard Camp.

Kambur presented adult league information including volleyball, softball, basketball and cornhole. She explained that this summer, PRCS will be piloting new open gym basketball opportunities for teens and adults. Teen Open Gym held on Mondays from 5-7 PM and Adult Open Gym held afterwards from 7-9 PM at the Hill Gymnasium.

Kambur highlighted several upcoming special events:

- 2025 Novato Classic Gymnastics Meet the weekend of March 14, 15 and 16.
- Trash to Treasure Flea Market on March 29.
- Kambur shared that the City's Multicultural Advisory Commission will be hosting an interactive cultural game night to celebrate Diversity month with the beloved Mexican game Loteria on April 23, 2025 at 6 PM.
- The 4th Annual Spectrum Safety Event on April 26.
- The 5th Annual Pride Raising Ceremony on June 1st. Kambur shared that this year's event includes a new component, "The Pride Voices Contest" to create a platform for the community to share their stories through creative writing. Kambur explained that the contest is open to residents of Novato, 13 years and

older. Winners will present their pieces at the Pride Raising Ceremony and one selected participant will also be invited to accept the Pride Month proclamation at the June 10 City Council meeting.

Kambur shared that the new playground at Josef Hoog Community Park had been installed and that other elements of the project including enhancements to the walking paths and ADA upgrades to restrooms are scheduled over the next couple months.

In conclusion, Kambur reminded the Commission that the City of Novato began the official spring recruitment for Commissions, Committees and Boards last week. Reminding Commissioners that the application period will be open through April 6 at 5pm.

Commissioner Lacey asked about a ribbon cutting opportunity for Hoog Park. Director Gauntlett confirmed that there would be a ribbon cutting event to celebrate the grand re-opening when the full project was completed. Sharing that a date had not yet been finalized.

Vice Chair Larsen asked for clarification on the day/time for the City of Novato's Pride Flag Raising Ceremony. Community Services Division Manager, Drew Bendickson, confirmed that the event will be held on Sunday, June 1 around 11 AM. Larsen also inquired if the bands had been finalized for Concerts on the Green. Bendickson shared that a few bands had been confirmed for Concerts on the Green and that the rest would be finalized in the coming weeks.

Director Katie Gauntlett shared that PRCS Department now oversees the Farmer's Market, which will return on Tuesday, May 6. Commissioner Lacey asked about the general footprint and any changes to the weekly event. Gauntlett confirmed that the Farmer's Market will be held on Sherman Avenue, like last year, and indicated that additional parking opportunities had been identified and would be included in promotional materials. Additionally, the Farmer's Market will close at 7 PM, one hour earlier, in the month of October

G.2. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Winsor shared the theme, "Novato – The Greatest Town on Earth," for this year's Fourth of July Parade. Winsor encouraged Commissioners to get involved and to help spread the word.

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM by Chair Larsen.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly adopted at the RCCS Commission meeting of May 8, 2025.

/ Alexandra Kambur /

Alexandra Kambur, Recreation Division Manager