

Durham Cultural Advisory Board Summary Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Virtual

To learn more about how to join the meeting, visit:

<https://durhamnc.gov/452/Durham-Cultural-Advisory-Board>

Durham Cultural Advisory Board Members Present

Margaret McNab, Vice Chair	Barbara Lau	Laura Ritchie
Karim Baer	David Long	DCAB Student Member(s):
Emily Ensminger	Andrew Nurkin	Curtis Berzofsky

Durham Cultural Advisory Board Members Absent

Javiera Caballero, City Council Member at Large	Joseph Jordan, Chair (Excused)	R. Scott Frawley (Excused)
Pamela Bond	Aya Shabu (Excused)	Joey Medrano (Excused)
	Santos Flores	Vanessa Smart

City of Durham & Durham County Staff Present

Jaci Field, City of Durham	Stephanie Minor, City of Durham
Brenda Hayes-Bright, Durham County	Jo Palazuelos-Krukowski, City of Durham
Rebecca Holmes, City of Durham	Annette Smith, City of Durham
Sarah Martin, Durham County	Harry Turfle, City of Durham

Members of the Public Present

Alicia Anglin, NCCU intern	Chris Vitiello, Durham Poet Laureate
Amara Barnes, NCCU intern	Katie Wyatt, Durham Arts Council
Cara Rousseau, Discover Durham	

I. Call to Order & Guest Introductions

- i. McNab (Vice Chair) called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.
- ii. Attendance was taken and members of the public introduced themselves. Cara Rousseau of Discover Durham announced that she had been named incoming CEO for the organization.

II. Adjustments to the Agenda

- i. None.

III. Public Questions

- i. None.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- i. **MOTION:** To approve the January 21, 2026 minutes. (Lau, Ritchie 2nd).

- ii. **ACTION:** Approved (8-0).

V. Announcements

- i. No announcements were made.

I. Old Business

a. City Updates

i. ARPA ILA with City and County

- 1. Holmes (City) reported that St. Joseph's Historic Foundation had been working with staff to transfer the remaining ARPA Cycle 2 scope of work to another nonprofit. She explained that the remaining work included \$5,000 stipends for eligible artists, businesses, and nonprofits through an application process, as well as professional development programming. She stated that staff hoped to market and promote this work alongside ARPA Cultural Roadmap training sessions and aimed to finalize the related contract that month. Holmes noted that staff remained confident the funds would be distributed to artists by the spring and that the training sessions would conclude by November, ahead of the December expenditure deadline. She added that a more thorough update would be provided at the March meeting once the contracts were approved and signed.

ii. City & County Budget Updates

- 1. Holmes (City) reported that both the City and County were in the budget retreat phase and noted that the City had completed its retreat sessions the previous week. She said the next step for the City was for the City Manager to meet with departments to finalize the budget for presentation in May 2026. She added that the County was following a similar process and was also working toward presenting its budget to the Board of County Commissioners in May 2026.

b. County Updates

- i. Hayes-Bright (County) reported that there were no new updates since the presentation of the Board of Elections Public Art Project to the Public Art Committee.

c. Durham Cultural Roadmap

- i. Holmes (City) said she would share the recommendations that MJR Partners had presented to the Cultural Roadmap Planning Group. She encouraged members who had not attended the previous meetings to join the Zoom feedback session on February 19 to ask questions and provide input on the recommendations and presentation materials. She noted that members who could not attend could submit written comments directly to Margie Reese of MJR Partners. Holmes added that the goal was to move forward in March 2026 and present the materials to the City and County Managers in mid-March 2026.

- 1. Katie Wyatt (Durham Arts Council) noted that, although the meeting had been well attended with about 50 participants, only a few people spoke. She and McNab (Vice Chair) encouraged board members who attended the next feedback session to speak up and provide feedback.

- d. Durham Poet Laureate Chris Vitiello Updates
- i. Vitiello shared an update on his recent work as Durham Poet Laureate, highlighting a busy fall that included school visits, workshops, and public events. He described a residency at Durham School of the Arts, workshops with students at Lakewood Middle School, and several public poetry programs, including an event at the North Carolina Museum of Art, a CreativeMornings talk, a Boxyard RTP appearance, and a reading at Durham Pride. He also discussed his “I See in Words” series, which combined subtitled films with live writing prompts, and noted that the series would move to the Skin and Bone space when it opens downtown.
 1. Looking ahead, Vitiello announced several upcoming events, including a poetry reading that evening at Shadow Box, his role as a judge for the state Poetry Out Loud finals, Library Fest programming in April 2026, an April 30 reading at Durham County Library, and the Durham Typocalypse event planned for June 23 in celebration of National Typewriter Day. He said the Poet Laureate program had received strong public interest and that he was encouraged by the community’s excitement about its future.
 - ii. Smith (City) noted that she and Vitiello had advised Raleigh arts staff and poets as Raleigh developed its own Poet Laureate program. She also shared that Vitiello was expanding Paulus Press to Durham, where chapbooks would be printed locally. Vitiello added that he had been screen-printing the covers at Supergraphic and was also working with Smith on a sidewalk poetry project in downtown Durham.
 1. Smith further noted that April was National Poetry Month and said City Council would present a proclamation at its first April meeting, which she believed would be April 6. She added that Vitiello would accept the proclamation and likely present a poem for Durham.
 - iii. Ritchie (Member) asked Vitiello whether he had any feedback or requests for the board and whether he felt he was receiving the support he needed. Vitiello said he felt very well supported, especially in his work with Annette Smith (City), and noted that discussions were underway about possible office space for the Poet Laureate program, which he said would strengthen the role for future laureates.
 - iv. In response to a question from Ensminger (Member) about whether the program should remain poetry-focused or broaden to other artistic disciplines, Vitiello explained that the former Piedmont Laureate Program had rotated among literary genres across multiple counties but had been paused for reassessment. He said he was not aware of a broader artist laureate program in Raleigh, though he noted Raleigh had other artist opportunities. Holmes (City) added that Raleigh also had an artist-in-residence program and that Durham was developing a project-based artist residency with Parking Services.
 - v. Long (Member) thanked Vitiello for the range of his work and praised his dedication, recalling his commitment while performing outdoors in extreme

heat. Vitiello responded appreciatively and said he had enjoyed bringing his energy to the role.

II. **New Business**

a. FY27 Festival RFP Changes Presentation

- i. McNab (Vice Chair) introduced a presentation from the Festivals Committee on proposed changes to the Festivals and Special Events Grant Program and said she was excited to share the committee's thinking. Smith (City) clarified that neither staff nor the committee was asking DCAB to make any decisions at that meeting and said the proposals could be discussed further at the retreat and at a future board meeting.
- ii. Smith outlined three proposed changes.
 1. First, she described revisions to the review process intended to reduce reviewer burden and improve consistency. She said the committee planned to create a reviewer handbook, require reviewer training for all participants, and divide eligible DCAB reviewers into smaller review groups so that each member would review no more than 10 applications. She explained that all applications would still be reviewed, but the smaller groups would allow members to spend more time on each proposal, document feedback more thoroughly, and bring forward detailed rankings and recommendations for the full board to consider. In response to a question from McNab, Smith said that, for now, the review process would remain limited to DCAB members, though expanding the reviewer pool could be considered in the future.
 2. Second, Smith described a proposed tiered funding structure in which applicants would apply for one of three maximum funding levels. Using sample amounts for illustration, she explained that the levels might include \$5,000, \$15,000, and \$35,000 categories, each with different expectations and a set maximum number of awards. She said new festivals would generally enter at the lowest level unless staff approved a compelling reason to apply at a higher tier. She explained that the tiered structure would simplify the application process for smaller grants, allow expectations to increase at higher funding levels, and better distinguish between smaller community-based or start-up festivals and larger festivals with stronger economic impact. She noted that the largest funding tier would likely be the most competitive and would place greater emphasis on economic impact, organizational capacity, audience data, artist compensation, and attracting out-of-town audiences.
 3. Third, Smith explained a proposed shift in the application timeline, beginning in the next fiscal cycle, so that applications would open earlier in the year. She said this change responded to longstanding feedback from applicants who found the current timeline burdensome because it

required them to apply in the middle of festival season. She added that an earlier process would better align with other grant programs, allow award notifications to be made at the beginning of the fiscal year, and make city contracting more efficient. As an example, she noted that under the current timeline the City was sometimes still contracting with organizations after their events had already taken place, requiring Council to ratify contracts retroactively. Under the proposed schedule, the RFP would open in March, applications would be due in early April, staff review would take place in April and May, DCAB scoring and review meetings would occur in late spring, and funding recommendations would be submitted in time for award notifications on July 1.

- iii. McNab thanked Smith for the presentation and noted that the committee had been grappling with competing priorities in the grant process, including how to support smaller festivals while also investing in larger events that generated broader community and economic impact. She said the proposed tiered structure might help clarify the process for both applicants and reviewers and make award decisions easier to understand.
- iv. Berzofsky (Student Member) asked whether the proposed structure would allow any flexibility above the suggested top funding tier, noting that some festivals, such as ADF, had previously received awards above \$35,000. Smith responded that the proposed cap was illustrative and somewhat arbitrary, based on the highest grant amount awarded in the current cycle. She explained that DCAB would ultimately determine the funding levels and said that establishing clear maximums could help organizations budget accordingly while also helping the board balance whether to award fewer, larger grants or support a greater number of festivals. McNab added that the proposed levels were recommendations only and noted that the Cultural Roadmap process also encouraged coordination with other funding entities.
- v. Lau (Member) asked for clarification that the awards would be made for the budget year beginning in July, with recommendations occurring as the new budget was being approved so adjustments could still be made if funding changed. Smith confirmed that this was the intent. Lau then praised the committee's work, particularly the proposals for reviewer training, smaller review assignments, and review groups presenting recommendations to the full board. She also suggested waiting to approve the changes until there was more clarity about the future funding landscape, including possible support from Discover Durham and Durham Next for larger, high-impact festivals.
- vi. Smith (City) said the presentation PDF would be shared in the DCAB Google Drive and encouraged members to review it individually and provide feedback to staff. Holmes (City) added that the goal was to allow enough time in April and May 2026 to vet the board's recommendations so changes could be implemented in time for a July RFP release.

b. Governance: County Membership Vote

- i. The board discussed two applicants for the open County-appointed seat. Members noted Flowers-Schoen's long-standing arts and education background and Robinson's financial and nonprofit experience.
- ii. **MOTION:** To approve Marylu Flowers-Schoen for the open DCAB County seat (Long, Lau 2nd).
- iii. **ACTION:** Approved (5-0, McNab, Nurkin, and Ritchie abstained).

c. Governance: DCAB Advocacy Subcommittee

- i. Ritchie (Member) reported that the Advocacy Subcommittee had held its first meeting and invited interested members to attend the next meeting on March 4, 2026, at noon. She said the group planned to meet every couple of weeks to build momentum. Ritchie explained that, although advocacy could cover several areas, the subcommittee would focus first on advocacy for the Cultural Roadmap, based on guidance from staff and board leadership. She said the group would work on prioritizing roadmap recommendations, developing talking points, shaping advocacy efforts for both board members and the broader community, building connections with related groups, and helping strengthen support for arts and culture with public and private stakeholders. McNab and Lau both encouraged members to get involved, and McNab noted that this work reflected DCAB's broader role in helping advance the Cultural Roadmap.

d. 2026 Joint DCAB & PAC Retreat

- i. McNab (Vice Chair) reminded members that the annual retreat had been structured differently this year to include presentations from grantees, nonprofit partners, and participants connected to the public art program. She said the goal was to give board members a stronger understanding of the local cultural landscape and how City funding fit within it.
- ii. Holmes (City) reviewed the presenters confirmed for the retreat, including Durham Art Guild, Weird Productions, Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Durham Arts Council, Black Farmers Market/Black August in the Park, El Futuro, Durham Symphony Orchestra, and Planning Department staff involved in public art and UDO discussions.

e. DCAB's Community Connections

- i. Holmes (City) encouraged members to visit Weird Productions' month-long residency at Downtown Durham Inc.'s Parish Street location.
- ii. Lau (Member) also highlighted the upcoming Black Genius Fest and encouraged members to attend.
- iii. Additional events and opportunities shared by board members included Third Friday, the SMASH professional development event, and an exhibition at the Ackland featuring Bill Bamberger's work with Durham School of the Arts students.
- iv. Members also recommended the Bull Ride downtown circulator and the Mosaic House near the Museum of Life and Science as local arts experiences to explore.

III. **Adjournment**

- a. McNab (Vice Chair) adjourned the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

Submitted respectfully by,
Jo Palazuelos-Krukowski, City of Durham

2025 DCAB Goals

DCAB's Goals

As of 2023, DCAB adopted priorities to shape and inform the year ahead, with specific focus on the Durham Cultural Roadmap. Based on inputs from board members, staff, and elected officials, DCAB established the following priorities:

- Advocate for more city and county funding and support for arts and culture in Durham
- Support the implementation of a new Cultural Roadmap
- Strengthen and improve relationships with artists, arts and cultural organizations, communities, neighborhoods, and people of Durham.
- Support and strengthen the work of the Public Art Committee

DCAB also adopted the following as core values to guide their work:

- DCAB will act as stewards of the Durham Poet Laureate program.
- DCAB defines historically excluded communities as any group of people (by gender, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other identity) who have been or are currently underrepresented either numerically, systemically, in ways of power, in positions of authority, or in adequacy of resources in Durham's arts and cultural social structures.

DCAB's Identified Future Needs

- Continued engagement by City and County leadership, residents, and community leaders throughout the planning process to robustly inform the Durham Cultural Roadmap.
- Budgeted investment in FY25 to support the Durham Cultural Roadmap's identified goals, initiatives and strategies, throughout the plan's initial implementation.
- Partnerships and alignment with all City and County departments working in the arts & cultural sector.
- Poet Laureate honorarium increases to align with a living wage and to match similar peer cities' poet laureate programs.
- Increasing staff to implement adopted Durham Cultural Roadmap's goals.
- With assistance from the Public Art Committee, define best practices for public art & private development in the updated Unified Development Ordinance

FY25 RFP for Festival & Special Event Contracting Status Updates.

As of 3/25/2025 22 contracts have been executed for the City.

Organization	Festival	FY25 Final Recommended 9/18/24	Festival Dates	Contract Status	Deliverable Due
American Dance Festival Inc	FY25 American Dance Festival	\$40,960.40	6/12/2025	Executed	9/26/2025
Association for the Preservation of the Eno River Valley, Inc.	FY2025 Festival for the Eno	\$21,970.40	7/4/2025	Executed	9/5/2025
Be Connected Durham & Beyond, Inc.	Hayti Legacy Kwanzaa	\$6,982.00	12/26/2024	Executed	2/27/2025 late
Be Connected Durham & Beyond, Inc.	Annual Durham Juneteenth Week: Unified by Our Pride	\$32,176.40	6/14/2025	Executed	8/22/2025 Accepted and paid
Book Harvest	2025 Dream Big Book Drive and Community Celebration / 2025 Summer Block Party	\$12,736.40	1/12/2025, 7/12/2025	Executed	9/15/2025
Boston Urban Music Project, Inc.	Slingshot Festival	\$17,596.40	10/3-5/2025	Executed	12/5/2025
Duke University	Full Frame Documentary Film Festival	\$43,960.40	4/3-7/2025	Executed	6/10/2025 late
Durham Arts Council, Inc.	Centerfest	\$17,110.47	9/21-22/2024	Closed	2/7/2025; Accepted and Paid
Durham Central Park, Inc.	PLAYlist Concert Series	\$15,652.40	5/2/2025 - 10/3/2025, first Friday each month	Executed	12/5/2025
Durham Public Schools Foundation	13th Annual Durham School of Arts Fall Art Festival: Dia de los Muertos	\$11,764.40	10/25/2024	Executed	7/25/25 Accepted and paid

**CULTURAL & PUBLIC ART PROGRAM**

General Services

CITY OF DURHAM

Engineering and
Environmental Services**PUBLIC ART PROGRAM**

Organization	Festival	FY25 Final Recommended 9/18/24	Festival Dates	Contract Status	Deliverable Due
Durham Symphony, Inc.	Voices of the Unarmed: Justice, Love, Resilience	\$11,764.40	2/14/2025	Closed	4/18/2025; Accepted and paid
Get Happy	Beats n Bars Festival	\$17,110.40	10/10/2025	Executed	11/7/25
Liberty Arts Inc	Iron Pour	\$9,500.00	11/16/2024	Closed	2/7/2025; Accepted and paid
North Carolina Folklife Institute	Fandango de Durham	\$12,250.40	4/26/2025	Closed	6/24/2025; Accepted and paid
Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice	Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice Grand Opening	\$14,680.40	9/7/2024	Closed	2/7/2025; late, 4/16/25; Approved & paid
St. Joseph's Historic Foundation, Inc.	Hayti Heritage Film Festival	\$17,596.40	3/15-16/2025 and 10/25/2025	Executed	5/5/2025
St. Joseph's Historic Foundation, Inc.	CELEBRATE HAYTI!	\$18,568.40	---	Executed	10/31/2025
The Carolina Theatre of Durham, Inc.	OUTSOUTH Queer Film Festival	\$13,708.40	8/8/2024	Closed	2/7/2025; late, 6/9/25; Approved and paid
The LGBTQ Center of Durham, Inc.	Pride: Durham, NC	\$12,250.40	9/27/2025	Executed	11/26/2025
Triangle Cultural Awareness Foundation	20th Annual NC Juneteenth Celebration	\$15,652.40	6/21/2025	Executed	8/18/2025
Unmanageable	Biscuits & Banjos Festival	\$27,316.40	4/25-27/2025	Executed	6/27/2025; Approved and paid
Unmanageable	Missy Lane's Block Party	\$8,692.40	10/4/2025	Executed	12/1/2025
		\$400,000.07			