

Durham Cultural Advisory Board Summary Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 21, 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

Javiera Caballero, City Council Member at Large Joseph Jordan, Chair Margaret McNab, Vice Chair Karim Baer Pamela Bond	Emily Ensminger Santos Flores R. Scott Frawley Barbara Lau David Long	Joey Medrano Andrew Nurkin Laura Ritchie Vanessa Smart <i>DCAB Student Member(s):</i> Curtis Berzofsky
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Durham Cultural Advisory Board Members Absent

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City of Durham & County Durham Staff and Representatives Present

Jaci Field, City of Durham Rebecca Holmes, City of Durham Stephanie Minor, City of Durham	Jo Palazuelos-Krukowski, City of Durham Annette Smith, City of Durham Harry Turfle, City of Durham
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Members of the Public Present

Margaret DeMott, Durham Arts Council Cara Rousseau, Discover Durham	Tara Kenchen, Durham Next Marylu Flowers-Schoen, Durham resident
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I. Call to Order & Guest Introductions

- i. Jordan (Chair) called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.
- ii. R. Scott Frawley (Member) introduced themselves as a newly appointed City member of the board. They noted they had recently begun a new role as Youth Services Consultant at the State Library of North Carolina. They previously worked as a children's librarian with Durham County Library and bring additional museum studies experience, including time at UNC's Ackland Art Museum and study at the University of Glasgow. They expressed interest in cultural heritage and climate futures and looked forward to supporting the board.
- iii. Members of the public Cara Rousseau ([Discover Durham](#)), Tara Kenchen ([Durham Next](#)) and Margaret DeMott ([Durham Arts Council](#)) introduced themselves.

II. Adjustments to the Agenda

- i. Holmes (City) noted that under Old Business within the Cultural Roadmap item, the board would discuss prioritizing the funding requests previously identified in its goals.

III. Public Questions

- i. No public questions were posed.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- i. Smith (City) requested a correction about one of the grant applicants, Working to Extend Anti-Racism Education, during the September 3, 2025 grant review meeting. While the minutes from that meeting stated the applicant had not attended office hours, the applicant had since clarified that they did meet with Smith on August 5 at 11:30 a.m. Smith requested that the record be corrected and noted they had informed the applicant that this clarification would be entered into the minutes.
- ii. **MOTION:** To approve the December 10, 2025 minutes. (McNab, Ritchie 2nd).
- iii. **ACTION:** Approved (14-0).

V. Announcements

- i. No announcements were made.

I. Old Business

a. [Durham Cultural Roadmap](#)

- i. Holmes (City) shared that the Cultural Roadmap consultants Margie Reese of [MJR Partners](#) and the Creative Engagement team had submitted their report and that staff were reviewing it internally with City and County leadership.
- ii. Field (City) added that while the full report could not yet be shared pending leadership review staff would present high-level highlights relevant to DCAB's upcoming annual report.
- iii. Holmes also shared that the Cultural Roadmap Planning Group would hold its first meeting of the year on February 11, 2026 and that several additional meetings were scheduled prior to presenting the plan for adoption by City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. She noted there would be no major changes to the Phase 3 community report-out, and a town-hall-style engagement session was anticipated in early March 2026.
- iv. Holmes asked DCAB to identify a priority order among three funding requests previously discussed: (1) first-year funding and staffing for Cultural Roadmap implementation (estimated at approximately \$1.5 million), (2) increasing the Poet Laureate stipend from \$5,000 to \$10,000, and (3) increasing festival funding. She also asked the board to recommend a target amount for festival support.
- v. McNab (Vice Chair) said the proposed priority order was Cultural Roadmap funding first, festival funding second, and the Poet Laureate program third. She noted interest in seeking at least a \$100,000 increase for festivals, with another



idea being a 30% increase over the prior year.

- vi. Long (Member) asked about the rationale for doubling the Poet Laureate stipend. Holmes replied that the program had originally envisioned a \$10,000 award to provide competitive compensation and support expanded community engagement. Jordan (Chair) added that stronger pay could improve recruitment and align Durham more closely with peer cities.
- vii. Ritchie (Member) requested examples of those peers. Holmes said staff would follow up after the meeting, and Jordan (Chair) noted earlier committee research may also contain those comparisons.
- viii. Lau (Member) asked whether growth in festival demand could help justify the increase. McNab cited 57 applications this year versus 47 last year. Smith (City) added that, despite more applications, the total dollars requested remained similar, at over \$1 million. Lau said connecting the request to clear data would strengthen the case. Jordan (Chair) agreed that rising participation and continued growth formed part of the board's rationale.
- ix. Field (City) urged members to weigh the broader budget climate and consider how multiple increases might be perceived relative to the Cultural Roadmap request, though staff would support the board's direction.
- x. Jordan (Chair) confirmed with Field (City) that the priority order remained Cultural Roadmap funding first, festival funding second, and the Poet Laureate third. Field (City) recommended emphasizing Cultural Roadmap funding in the annual report given anticipated budget constraints, with the other items framed as subsequent priorities.
- xi. Smith (City) supported that approach, noting applications had climbed from 26 in FY24 to 47 and now 57, with requests growing from just under \$800,000 to over \$1 million.
- xii. Baer (Member) asked about City Council and mayoral support and raised the possibility of more coordinated advocacy ahead of adoption.
 1. Ritchie (Member) supported further advocacy and requested a fact sheet or talking points for members to use, noting staff could not produce advocacy language. Lau, Ritchie, McNab, and Baer (Members) volunteered to assist.

b. City Updates

- i. ARPA ILA with City and County ([St. Joseph's Historic Foundation](#) & Cultural Roadmap)
 - a. [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA) [Cycle Two stipends City Attorney's Office](#)
 - i. Holmes (City) reported that the City was working with St. Joseph's Historic Foundation to help ensure the ARPA funding process proceeds smoothly. In light of recent City Council discussion, staff are coordinating closely with the Hayti Heritage Center and exploring options to use Cultural Roadmap funds in a

reimbursement structure while continuing to pursue the training programs outlined in December 2025. She said additional information would be available in February 2026 and reiterated the goal of maintaining the \$1 million allocation for artists and arts organizations.

2. Festival Planning

- a. Smith (City) said the committee's work was ongoing and welcomed additional members to participate. She noted the committee would bring several items to the retreat for full board discussion, including a possible shift to the festival application timeline beginning next fiscal year. Applications would still open in July for the current cycle, but staff were evaluating adjustments requested by applicants to better align with other funding programs.
- b. Jordan (Chair) said members interested in joining the committee should notify leadership and appointments would be confirmed at the next meeting.
 - i. Holmes (City) added that meeting information would be posted online. Smith (City) confirmed the next committee meeting would take place February 11, 2026.

c. County Updates

- i. Holmes (City) noted that County representatives had no updates.

d. [Public Art Committee](#) (PAC) and Public Liaison Updates

- i. No liaison updates were made regarding the Public Art Committee, [Merrick-Moore Aquatics Center, Public Art Map, and the Unified Development Ordinance](#) (UDO).

II. **New Business**

a. [Discover Durham](#) & [Durham Next](#) Festival Research Presentation

- i. Holmes (City) reminded newer members that DCAB had been working with Durham Next on a festival research study.
- ii. Rousseau (Discover Durham) introduced herself as Chief Marketing Officer of Discover Durham and said the project began in July as part of the Destination Master Plan initiative to strengthen Durham's festival ecosystem. Board and staff members participated through interviews, workshops, and advisory roles.
- iii. Rousseau (Discover Durham) said the project team included community representatives, festival producers, venue partners, Parks and Recreation, and City staff. A consultant group led by Eric Oberstein conducted interviews, workshops, audience surveys, and comparative research.
- iv. She summarized findings from peer and aspirational cities including Richmond, Charleston, Providence, and Austin. Common features included centralized coordination, sustained municipal funding, strong public-private partnerships,



downtown and neighborhood activation, and streamlined permitting. She also noted the significant investment levels and economic impacts achieved in those markets.

- v. For Durham, Rousseau (Discover Durham) stated strengths include entrepreneurial producers, strong community participation, and alignment with the city's creative identity. However, the ecosystem is under-resourced, funding demand exceeds availability, and reimbursement structures can challenge smaller organizations. Additional barriers include fragmented processes, venue constraints, and limited corporate sponsorship capacity.
 - vi. She identified opportunities to improve coordination, simplify permitting, diversify public and private funding, expand producer training and mentorship, and pursue strategies that increase economic impact while maintaining community benefit.
 - vii. Rousseau (Discover Durham) said next steps would include drafting a plan in the spring, continuing stakeholder collaboration, and clarifying which actions Discover Durham and Durham Next could lead versus where broader advocacy would be required.
 - viii. **QUESTION:** Ritchie (Member) asked whether Durham Next anticipated creating new funding sources to supplement existing festival support and requested a sense of timeline and partnership opportunities.
 1. Rousseau (Discover Durham) said Durham Next would not duplicate the City's grants program. She explained their mandate is to advance economic progress through travel and tourism and that financial support would prioritize festivals able to demonstrate or grow economic impact over time.
 2. Kenchen (Durham Next) stated Durham Next was developing its internal plan using the research findings and was coordinating with City staff to avoid overlap and maximize resources. She noted it would likely be several months before specific details could be shared and cautioned against over-promising before the framework was finalized.
 - ix. **QUESTION:** Berzofsky (Student Member) asked whether Durham Next might connect local producers with experienced festival organizers from other markets.
 1. Rousseau (Discover Durham) said that concept emerged from consultant recommendations and would be evaluated during implementation planning. She added that Discover Durham already serves as a convener through its long-running Festivals Roundtable, which connects dozens of producers, brings in speakers, and provides technical guidance on topics such as permitting and fundraising; future efforts could expand on that role.
 - x. Jordan (Chair) said the board would remain interested in updates as the plan developed and noted the possibility of inviting representatives to a future session to continue the conversation.
- b. By-Laws Vote & County Membership
- i. Consideration of DCAB By-Laws Election Amendment
 1. Jordan (Chair) raised the proposed bylaw amendment related to DCAB

elections and said he was not comfortable voting without a single concise written statement reflecting prior discussion. He recommended deferring the vote to the next meeting; no objections were raised.

- ii. County Member Application Process Updates
 - 1. Palazuelos-Krukowski (City) noted staff had received two County member applications for a single open DCAB seat.
 - 2. Minor (City) said the vacancy could be included in the upcoming newsletter distribution.
 - 3. Holmes (City) recommended extending the deadline for approximately two more weeks and closing it a couple weeks before the next meeting to allow time for application review. Jordan (Chair) indicated agreement with extending the deadline and proceeding with outreach.
- c. City Council Presentation, 2025 Year in Review, Annual Report Review
 - i. Holmes (City) said the drafted annual report was available in the DCAB folder and would go to City Council as part of the February 5 work session materials and for acceptance on February 16. She encouraged members to review the executive summary and submit any corrections or concerns promptly, with comments requested by Saturday to allow incorporation before publication.
 - ii. Holmes (City) reiterated that the annual report would be provided for the February 5 work session and accepted February 16, and that it was not planned as a standalone presentation.
 - iii. Caballero (Council Member At-Large) provided budget context, noting significant cost pressures related to the City's living wage commitments and limits on additional tax increases, and encouraged the board to prioritize accordingly.
 - iv. McNab (Vice Chair) suggested that if the annual report messaging focused on Cultural Roadmap funding, it should also clearly articulate how that investment supports broader cultural needs, including artists and related programs.
- d. Retreat Planning: Joint DCAB & PAC Retreat
 - i. Palazuelos-Krukowski (City) reported that retreat scheduling results indicated the best date was Friday, February 27, 1:00–5:00 p.m.
 - ii. Holmes (City) stated the location would be the Museum of Life and Science.
 - iii. Discussion of Retreat Topics
 - 1. Lau (Member) recommended adding advocacy and an advocacy committee to retreat topics, particularly related to the Cultural Master Plan. Jordan (Chair) said he intended to include that topic and asked for volunteers.

III. **Adjournment**

- i. Jordan (Chair) adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:37 p.m.

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			