

Committee for Art and Culture January 14, 2026 Meeting Notes

Present: Ginny Flowers, Melanie LaFontaine (Swell Ceramics), Jeremy Russell, Sam Lock, Peggy Saporito, Kelly Wyatt, Paige Griffin

Staff Updates

Staff provided updates on Winter Markets, fitness programming, and planning items for the upcoming season, noting the first Winter Market went very well.

Fitness and Wellness Programming

Staff provided an overview of yoga and fitness programming for the upcoming season. Coastal Carolina Vacations will continue as yoga sponsor from May through October. Typically, eight instructors rotate through the season, and staff plans to maintain this structure.

The committee discussed coordination of yoga scheduling following the passing of Kerry Oaksmith Sanders. Paige Griffin will work to continue coordination. A shared scheduling document will be used to allow instructors to select available dates, with staff providing updates if changes occur.

Staff noted that Tuesday morning yoga will continue, and Friday programming will remain a rotation of three instructors offering Tai Chi, Stretch, and Core.

The committee discussed interest in adding a Wednesday fitness offering, potentially Pilates. Estimated sponsorship cost is approximately \$600 for an eight-week session. Staff will explore sponsorship opportunities, and committee members were encouraged to share ideas.

Attendance for Friday fitness currently ranges from 18 to 35 participants. Sam Lock noted that YMCA classes are fully booked, and demand for fitness programming continues to increase.

Summer Markets Planning

Staff discussed the Summer Markets acceptance process. Regular vendors from the prior season will be contacted to confirm interest for the 2026 season and identify how many other markets they participate in, as regional competition among markets has increased.

Historical context was provided:

- 2023: 18 vendors did not return, resulting in 92 applications for approximately 22 available spots.
- 2024: Only three vendors did not return, leading to the introduction of rotating vendor spots.

- 2025: Market participation reached approximately 65 vendors, creating tight conditions, particularly with parking.

Staff noted that vendor capacity may need to be reduced due to parking constraints. Acceptance criteria will remain unchanged, with priority given to consumable and perishable vendors.

Members emphasized the need for a pre-season vendor meeting to clearly communicate expectations, including standards of conduct. The committee discussed formalizing a process for addressing vendor behavior, potentially including a “three strikes” policy. Safety was identified as a primary concern, and staff noted there is no tolerance for repeated inappropriate behavior.

Whalebone Park Programming

The committee briefly discussed how to approach programming Whalebone Park, thinking to focus primarily during the off-season. Committee members were encouraged to bring ideas to the February meeting.

Budget and Future Planning

Staff noted that budget requests will be prepared for the Board of Commissioners update in March. Committee input is needed on potential new initiatives.

Ideas discussed included:

- Interpretive elements or displays illustrating the history of Dowdy Park and what the site was prior to development
- An interactive park map with QR codes highlighting past and present features, scavenger hunts, and sensory play
- Additional sensory elements, such as plantings and interactive features
- Enhancements to existing play features, including repair or replacement of the peek-a-boo wall
- Possible additions such as a shark tooth digging area or expanded interactive art elements

Staff also provided an update on the Free Little Art Gallery (FLAG), noting that it continues to be replenished regularly, with artwork received from as far away as Maine and California.

Honoring Kerry Oaksmith Sanders

The committee discussed ongoing and potential ways to honor Kerry Oaksmith Sanders, including functional and integrated elements such as pathways, concrete stamping, benches, and other park features that reflect her values and contributions.

Next Steps

Committee members were encouraged to come prepared with ideas for Whalebone Park programming and budget priorities at the February meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.