



**Minutes
Cultural Commission - Regular Session
Thursday, February 19, 2026 - 7:30 AM**

The Cultural Commission convened in regular session in the Conference Room of the Creativity Center at 7:30 AM.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioner Faisal Rashid
Commissioner Crystal Bricker
Commissioner Treyce' Gaston-Spears
Commissioner Amber Collins
Commissioner Dallas Long
Commissioner Peter Pontius

ABSENT: Commissioner Katherine Browne
Commissioner Angelique Racki
Commissioner Shweta Shukla
Commissioner Rakshith Reddy Venumuddala
Commissioner Ricardo Alvara

3. Public Comment

No emailed Public Comment was received.

4. Consent Agenda

Items listed on the Consent Agenda are approved with one motion; Items pulled from the Consent Agenda are listed and voted on separately.

- A. **Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of the January 08, 2026, Regular Cultural Commission Meetings.** (Recommended Motion: The proposed Minutes be approved.)

Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pontius, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Chair Rashid directed Staff Liaison Kathy Sawyer to call roll:

Ayes: Chair Rashid, Commissioner Bricker, Commissioner Gaston-Spears, Commissioner Collins, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Pontius

Motion passes.

5. Regular Agenda

A. Discussion on 2026 Bloomington Center for Performing Arts Upcoming Shows and Updates. (Recommended Motion: None; Presentation Only.)

Director Nelson explained that Aaron Lewis and the Stateliners were coming up February 19, 2026. Kiwanis would have their Pancake Breakfast fundraiser on the mornings of February 21 and 22. On the evening of February 22, Dinosaur World Live would be onstage. Dr. Reed Timmer would be here on February 27 for Dominate the Storm. March 1, Here Come the Mummies would be at the BCPA, followed by Wizard of Oz on Ice March 5. On March 15, Christopher Cross would be here, and that show is nearly sold out. The March 19 show, Trisha Yearwood, is already sold out. March 21 Jake Owen would be here. Reed Timmer and an earlier performer, Josh Gates, are part of a trend of big tech talks that are getting more popular as people listen to more podcasts.

B. Discussion on 2026 Grossinger Motors Arena Upcoming Shows and Updates. (Recommended Motion: None; Presentation Only.)

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Dance and Cheer competitions have been at the Arena already. Dance was the last weekend in January, and Cheer was the first weekend in February. Dance had an attendance of 9,500 (about the same as last year) and Cheer had an attendance of 13,000 (an increase of about 250). Together, these two competitions have an economic impact of more than \$2.5 million on the community. For future reference, the Friday night of Cheer competitions is not the ideal time to go out to dinner. Nearly all the restaurants nearby are full that night. There were 104 teams here for Cheer, 100 of them were from out of town. One team, ICC from Chillicothe, could only find a hotel in East Peoria that weekend because all rooms here were booked. IHSA Wrestling would be at the Arena during the last weekend of February, with individual Girls and team Duals for Boys competing. Girls wrestling has grown tremendously, up more than 750% in the past 5 years.

The Bison would be hosting the Maine Mariners this weekend. The Maine Visitors Bureau has advertised all over this community for residents to come to their state for a getaway. The Maine Mariners play at a 6700-seat arena in Portland, Maine.

On April 2, the Arena would host Keith Sweat and Ginuwine. Summer shows would include the Monster X Tour on May 9 (2 shows), Men at Work and Toad the Wet Sprocket with Shonen Knife on August 6, and the Goo Goo Dolls with Neon Trees on August 9.

C. Discussion on 2026 Cultural Commission Events. (Recommended Motion: None; Presentation Only.)

For our Bloomington Meals & Music event, we need 6-8 restaurants to participate. Here is the current status of restaurants asked as of March 2 (List continues on next page):

(Chair Rashid) Signature Cafe: Most likely a Yes. Please confirm.

(Commissioner Racki) Crawford's Pub: Yes, but after Beer Garden is open.

(Commissioner Racki) Garden of Paradise: No.

(Commissioner Venumuddala) Bloom Bawarchi: Any decision?

(Commissioner Venumuddala) Flame @ Bloom: Any decision?
(Commissioner Pontius) Eastside BloNo: Yes
(Director Nelson) Pop-up Chicken Shop: Probably Participating. Please confirm.
(Director Nelson) Wok to Bowl: Any decision?
(Director Nelson) Breweries - Lil Beaver: Last resort
(Director Nelson) Breweries - Casper: Last resort
(Director Nelson) Breweries - Keg Grove: Last resort
(Director Nelson) Breweries - White Oak: Last resort
(Commissioner Gaston-Spears) Whiskey River Smokehouse: Any decision?
(Commissioner Gaston-Spears) Wesley's Grill: No.
(Commissioner Shukla) Lido Lounge: Any decision?
(Commissioner Shukla) Scramblers: Any decision?
(Commissioner Shukla) Divine Barrel Pub: Any decision?
(Development Manager Sawyer) Parkview Inn: No, unless outside
(Commissioner Bricker) Flingers Pizza: Any decision?
(Commissioner Bricker) Gill Street Sports Bar and Restaurant: Any decision? (This might have been someone other than Commissioner Bricker; there was no name on it)

Timeline: Decide on restaurants by late March, then schedule a Dine to Donate at each location to raise money. Artists (musicians or other such as painters) will be in restaurants in late May/June/July. We can post the schedule of Dine to Donate events on the BCPA social media and send emails out with the schedule.

Other ways to fundraise: Once concession stands re-open for the Fall, the Commission may sign up for some events, even signing up for a booth on a regular basis. Money raised at the concession stands can fund future activities. One group, Fundfetti, raises money this way for Washington School and other groups.

Arts & Health Day: Ideally, the event won't get rained out this year like it did last year. Since it's a date with a proclamation attached, it should be on a date that's near the date of the proclamation. It's also part of a national effort, so linking it with the national date is also a good move. Let's do at least one Arts & Health Day really well as a standalone event, then think about combining it with other efforts such as Peoria's Big Picture Festival.

Make Music Normal will be Friday, July 17, 5-10pm and Saturday, July 18, 12-10pm. Last year, we timed Arts & Health Day for the Saturday morning of the Make Music Normal weekend, then had shuttles available to Normal for their event.

There are grants that pertain to Arts & Health activities. Arts Midwest has a GIG Grant for Arts & Wellness for grants of \$2,000-\$15,000. Last year, it was open in September, so that is the anticipated time to apply this year. If we time another Arts & Health Day similarly to last year, we can apply in September 2026 for Arts & Health Day 2027.

Arts Midwest's standard GIG Grant will fund an artist. That may be a grant to consider for another Commission activity, such as Meals & Music but we would need to verify whether that would be able to fund one artist or several.

If we look for a grant for a festival sort of setup, one option may be a Mimi & Mortimer Levitt Foundation grant. If they repeat their Festival grant for next year, it will fund a related series of events, such as Arts & Health Day or perhaps musicians and artists in restaurants. This can be explored.

John M. Scott Health Care Trust Category III grant application is due February 27, 2026. Because the Trust is managed by the City and it contains City funds, City staff cannot write the proposal, but Development Manager Sawyer can advise, review, and edit the proposal.

Illinois Prairie Community Foundation (IPCF) has a Spring grant cycle that may fit Cultural Commission activities. That application is also due February 27, 2026. They have another round of grants in the Fall; applications for those will be due in September and are generally disbursed in January or February.

D. Discussion on the Cultural Commission Meeting Time. (Recommended Motion: None; Presentation Only.)

If we change the time of the Cultural Commission meetings, it's possible more members will be able to attend.

Wording needs to go out, then Commissioners will vote during the next meeting on whether to change the meeting time. One proposal is starting the meeting at 5pm on the second Thursday of the month.

Development Manager Sawyer will work with Deputy City Clerk Amanda Stutsman to get the wording correct.

Commissioner Gaston-Spears also asked whether the list of Commissioners is up to date on the website. Development Manager Sawyer will also ask the Deputy City Clerk about that.

Commissioner Long wants to be sure to be appointed for another term. Some Commissioners got mysteriously extended. Commissioners should check their emails to find out if they got an email from Cecilia Reichert in Admin.

6. New Business

A. Discussion on the Cultural Commission Mission Statement., as requested by the Arts & Entertainment Department. (Recommended Motion: None; Presentation Only.)

The Commission is supposed to support widespread arts in the community overall, rather than specifically supporting the BCPA. For example, the Commission can support what Tony Jones is doing with CultureFest and Juneteenth. The Commission can also support the community with various Diwali-focused events.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 AM.

Commissioner Pontius made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long.

Ayes: Chair Rashid, Commissioner Bricker, Commissioner Gaston-Spears, Commissioner Collins, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Pontius


Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion passes.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

ATTEST



Commission Chair Faisal Rashid



Anthony Nelson, Staff Liaison