



Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Pierson and the Honorable Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Kristin Riesgo, Community Services Deputy Director

Reviewed by: Jesse Bobbett, Community Services Director

Approved by: Reva Feldman, City Manager

Date prepared: September 18, 2020 Meeting date: October 12, 2020

Subject: Malibu Poet Laureate

RECOMMENDED ACTION: At the recommendation of the Cultural Arts Commission, approve the nomination of Dr. John Struloeff to serve as the Malibu Poet Laureate from October 13, 2020, to June 1, 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action.

WORK PLAN: This item was included as item 7c in the Adopted Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2020-2021.

DISCUSSION: The Malibu Poet Laureate program was established in 2016 and includes the appointment of the City's Poet Laureate, poetry programs, events, and the Poetry and Art Anthology.

The City's first Poet Laureate, Ricardo Means Ybarra, served a two-year term from 2017 to 2019. While working with the Malibu Poet Laureate Committee (Committee), Mr. Ybarra expanded poetry programming by leading several poetry workshops, conducting the first Poetry Summit, producing the City's first and second edition of the poetry and art Anthology, and attending community events.

In March 2019, Ellen Reich was appointed to serve a two-year term as the City's second Poet Laureate, before passing away unexpectedly in May 2020. She devoted her time to teaching and conducting poetry readings, read poems at several City events, and worked tirelessly to promote the literary arts.

On September 22, 2020, the Cultural Arts Commission accepted the nomination and recommended Council approval of Dr. John Struloeff as the City's third Malibu Poet Laureate. Dr. Struloeff serves as the Director of Creative Writing at Pepperdine University and has been involved in the Poet Laureate program since its inception. He is the recipient of multiple literary awards, including the Stegner Fellowship from Stanford University, an NEA Literature Fellowship, a Sozopol Fiction Fellowship from the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation (Bulgaria), and the Tennessee Williams Scholarship from the Sewanee Writers' Conference. Additionally, Dr. Struloeff's work has been published in more than 50 literary journals and magazines.

The Cultural Arts Commission and Committee were also made aware of the reduced budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021, which included the elimination of the Poet Laureate stipend. Dr. Struloeff has agreed to serve as Poet Laureate without receiving a stipend; however, the Committee determined they will seek outside donations to secure a stipend for Dr. Struloeff.

ATTACHMENT: Malibu Poet Laureate Selection Committee Letter of Recommendation

September 11, 2020

Dear Malibu Cultural Arts Commission and Malibu City Council,

After the sudden passing of the Malibu Poet Laureate, Ellen Reich, the Poet Laureate Committee discussed the importance of filling the City of Malibu's Poet Laureate position to continue our mission of promoting the arts in the community.

The Poet Laureate Committee reviewed the list of past applicants in addition to community involvement and came to a final decision to recommend Dr. John Struloeff for the City of Malibu's third Poet Laureate for a one-year term.

Dr. Struloeff is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing and English at Pepperdine University. He has been an active member of the Malibu Poet Laureate Committee and has been key in our relationship between connecting student poets with the City's program. Dr. Struloeff is well-recognized in the field and has been recognized for numerous published works of poetry and creative writing.

We have contacted Dr. Struloeff to request his formal acceptance of this position (pending final approvals by the Commission and the Council), and he has accepted.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need further information or have any questions.

On behalf of the Poet Laureate Selection Panel,

Ann Buxie

Full Selection Panel Membership:
Ricardo Means-Ybarra, Malibu Poet Laureate
Ann Buxie, Community Member
Lotte Cherin, Cultural Arts Commissioner
Ellen Cohen, Community Member