

May 6, 2019  
Item 4

**TITLE: REVIEW RECRUITMENT FOR LITERARY ARTS AMBASSADOR**

**SUMMARY**

In 2017, the City of Pleasanton selected its first Literary Arts Ambassador, Meg Fleming, who was appointed for a two-year term. As Literary Arts Ambassador, Meg has worked to raise awareness of the importance of literature as it relates to lifelong literacy and education. She has hosted literary workshops for writers at the Firehouse Arts Center, presented an engaging demonstration on picture book art, collaborated with Teen Poet Laureates, participated in the Little Free Library committee and will launch a StoryWalk© interactive picture book event in downtown Pleasanton this summer, as her term closes.

The term of appointment for the Literary Arts Ambassador is two years and recruitment for the next term is currently open, with applications being accepted until June 3, 2019.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Review the recruitment of a new Literary Arts Ambassador and provide feedback for the program.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The City's Adult Literary Arts Ambassador Program would receive no remuneration. Any expenses related to the program, i.e. supplies for workshops, readings, etc. are allocated within the Library and Recreation Department's operating budget, not to exceed \$2,000.

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 17, 1998, the City Council approved the Civic Arts Commission's recommendation to create the position of Pleasanton Poet Laureate. The primary role of the Poet Laureate was to provide poetry at civic events and promote the appreciation of the literary arts in the community, with a focus on poetry.

These individuals established a wonderful tradition of poetry readings at the Century House, while using their unique styles to develop new programs for the community. Some of the programs included television broadcasts and the establishment of the Poetry, Prose and Arts Festival. In 2001, the City's Poet Laureate Program won an award from the National Conference of Mayors.

Past Poet Laureates included:

- Charlene Villella (1999 – 2001)
- Jim Ott (2001 – 2003)
- Kirk Ridgeway (2003 – 2005)
- Cynthia Bryant (2005 – 2007)
- Martha Meltzer (2007 – 2009)
- Deborah Grossman (2009 – 2011)
- Cynthia Bryant (2011-2012)
- Sandra Harrison Kay (2013 - 2015)

In August 2012, the City started the formal process to recruit and officially appoint Teen Poet Laureates. The primary role of the City's Teen Poet Laureates is to provide poetry at civic events, and promote the appreciation of the literary arts, with the focus on poetry in the community, during the school year.

While the Adult Poet Laureate program was successful for many years, the focus on poetry was singular and only drew smaller specific crowds for events. Despite multiple recruiting efforts, the City was unable to secure a new Adult Poet Laureate after 2015. During discussions with community members and past Laureates, the concept of broadening the program to promote all types of literature for all ages was discussed. As a result, the Adult Poet Laureate program was changed to a Literary Arts Ambassador program.

In 2017, the first City of Pleasanton Literary Arts Ambassador, children's author Meg Fleming was selected and appointed for a two-year term. During the course of her appointment, Meg has hosted literary workshops for writers at the Firehouse Arts Center, presented an engaging demonstration on picture book art, collaborated with Teen Poet Laureates, participated on the library's Little Free Library committee and will

launch a StoryWalk© interactive picture book event in downtown Pleasanton this summer.

The term of appointment for the Literary Arts Ambassador is two years and will be opening for recruitment on June 1, 2019.

### **DISCUSSION**

The mission of the Literary Arts Ambassador Program is to raise awareness of the importance of literature as it relates to lifelong literacy and education toward the development and enhancement of the lives of Pleasanton residents.

The Literary Arts Ambassador shares poetry and/or literary pieces at public events and dedications, as well as conducts literary workshops, readings and events. One of the goals of the program would be to have this position be a supportive mentor to the City's current Teen Poet Laureates.

The term of appointment for the Literary Arts Ambassador is two years and recruitment for the next term is currently open, with applications being accepted until June 3, 2019.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTION**

Any other action as determined by the Civic Arts Commission.

Submitted by:



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Attachment:

1. Literary Arts Ambassador Recruitment Flyer